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Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa. *Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War.* Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2008. 188 pp. \$49.95. ISBN: 9780313352416 (hardcover).

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Author's Response from Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

Is a 146-page assessment on the end of the Cold War that relies on published secondary sources and primary published articles and opinion pieces very promising? In the context of the growing scholarship on this subject by international historians who explore newly- available primary sources, will a survey of this nature do more than provide a useful introduction for students who may not have been born when the Cold War ended? The answer provided by the H-Diplo reviewers to both questions is an unqualified “yes.” The authors, the distinguished historians Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa (who collectively have close to 40 books to their credit) promise a forthcoming and larger volume on the topic -- *America’s Cold War, 1941-1991*.

The most valuable contribution of their book under review is their realist critique of assessments on the end of the Cold War with primary emphasis on the policies and interaction of Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. Rejecting both neoconservative applause for Reagan as the winner of the Cold War and the enthusiastic neoconservative endorsement of the global war on terror, the authors advance a realist philosophy “grounded on a forthright calculation of the necessities, possibilities, and parameters of foreign policy action related to war and peace since the costs of miscalculation could become exorbitant.” (See also the authors’ response for their concept of realism).

Furthermore, they propose a series of questions to be answered “before embarking on a war of choice: Are objectives clearly defined, and do they include precise, generally recognized national interests or danger? Do the ambitions and abilities of the enemy of the moment endanger vital national economic or global security interests? Would victory enhance the equilibrium of the region? Is victory assured at a cost commensurate with the interests at stake, and will the costs be sustained by necessary public and government support?” (viii)

The reviewers raise a number of questions and call for further evaluation of some issues.

1.) Both Ralph Levering and Wilson Miscamble note that the study is concise and comprehensive; there a very few extra words or illustrations. A graduate reading course on the 1980s and end of the Cold War could make very good use of the book for an overview. The reviewers also highlight the value of the inclusion of contemporary assessments of Reagan’s policies, particularly the views of anti-Soviet hardliners and neoconservatives, with emphasis on their increasing criticism when Reagan initiated negotiations with Gorbachev and their disbelief that the Cold War was really over by 1990 before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2.) The authors are critical of Reagan’s views on the nature of the Soviet challenge to the U.S. before 1985 and his policies from the defense build-up to policies in particular areas like Central America that became part of the Reagan doctrine. On Central America they conclude that “if the goals of policy remained elusive, the means for effective U.S. action remained equally so.” (17) The Reagan doctrine asserting the U.S. right and obligation to

both assist governments threatened by communist expansion and to aid forces attempting to undermine communist regimes is dismissed as an expression of the flawed American rejection throughout the Cold War “of reform movements out of fear that nationalism was destabilizing and synonymous with Soviet expansionism.” (86) Levering, Miscamble and Jeff Bloodworth endorse the authors’ overall critique, although they do raise questions as to whether it is sufficiently developed. Levering, for example, would appreciate more analysis on Soviet-American competition in less developed nations, most notably Central America, and suggests that there was more Soviet involvement with Marxist leaders and movements than the authors admit -- “an indigenous and international” dimension “with the U.S. led side and the Communist side seeking to advance their objectives.” (2) The authors’ response is that neither side “could have hoped to establish any control over Third World affairs commensurate with their efforts” and neither power was prepared to risk much besides advisers and weapons. (1-2) Vietnam, however, certainly involved far greater costs for the U.S.

3.) Since much of the literature on the end of the Cold War has revolved around perspectives linked to revisionism, post-revisionism, and revived traditionalism, the reviewers welcome the authors’ realist assessment, even if they are not completely persuaded by either its application or its essential nature. Bloodworth and Miscamble suggest that the authors excessively minimize the influence of ideology on the Cold War and its end. The authors rarely discuss this. (See, for example, pp. 139 and 146). Although they imply that American anticommunists including Reagan were influenced by their rejection of communist ideology and concerns about Soviet efforts to advance and support communist movements and regimes, the authors depict the Soviet Union by 1980 as having long since abandoned any serious interest in ideological expansion and definitely unwilling to risk very much in this respect from Korea to Africa to Central America. Recent works by Melvin Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* and Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War From Stalin to Gorbachev*, both subjects of H-Diplo roundtables, agree on the importance of ideology in shaping perspectives and influencing policy on both sides in the Cold War. Robert English’s *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* also provides a fascinating account of Gorbachev’s efforts to free himself from ideological preconceptions and beliefs and the difficulties he faced in persuading other Soviet officials also to break with Soviet Marxist-Leninist precepts. The authors are certainly on solid ground to emphasize considerations of security, power, and decisions on war and peace in their analysis, but studies such as Odd Arne Westad’s *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, the subject of another H-Diplo roundtable, makes extensive use of Soviet documents to demonstrate the degree to which ideological preconceptions influenced Soviet engagement in African countries and Afghanistan.

4.) The authors devote Chapter 7 “The Vanishing Cold War” to George H.W. Bush’s handling of relations with Gorbachev and the Soviet Union and, generally, present without much criticism or approval Bush’s cautious approach to Gorbachev, his unwillingness to provide extensive funds to help the Soviet leader deal with his economic problems, and Bush’s maneuvers to encourage Moscow to let Eastern Europe become independent and allow Germany to be united and a member of NATO. They do include some contemporary

opinion, mostly conservatives against any aid that might have prompted the Soviet Union to throw off its disguise and resume a communist offensive. If the authors presented liberal and media critics of Bush's stance, it would provide some balance for an assessment of the wisdom of the policies of Bush and Secretary of State James Baker.

5.) The reviewers have some reservations concerning the authors' conclusion regarding the end of the Cold War which gives primary credit to Gorbachev for taking the initiative to end the arms race which the authors consider the heart of the Cold War conflict. (145-146) Reagan, in contrast to his anti-communist advisers, is given credit for his recognition of Gorbachev as a different Soviet leader who would negotiate. Yet they also criticize Reagan for "his administration's rigid adherence to the institutionalized precepts of the Cold War" and his refusal to compromise on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which denied him his best opportunity to get rid of nuclear weapons—his most important objective—at the Reykjavik summit conference. (94, 142-145) Bloodworth suggests that the authors have missed "the roots of Reagan's strange and accidental brilliance—his visionary idealism" as a "starry-eyed nuclear abolitionist," whom Bloodworth considers as being much more consistent from 1980 to 1988 than do the authors. (2-3) Miscamble would welcome more attention to the overall impact of U.S. containment policies and especially the impact of the revolution of 1989 in Eastern Europe which he depicts as a moral revolution against Marxist-Leninism. (4)

6.) Finally, Beth Fischer raises the question of "lessons to be learned" from the Cold War and its end, reflecting on the Vietnam War and September 11 2001. Rejecting as historically inaccurate the narrative of triumphalism on Reagan's objectives, his stance on negotiations with the Kremlin, his view of SDI, and the ending of the Cold War ended before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Fischer notes the distorting impact of triumphalism on the George W. Bush administration and the recent campaign debates between Senator John McCain and President-elect Barack Obama. The authors' realist prescriptions certainly should be considered by historians and policy-makers.

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, is an internationally acknowledged authority on U.S. international affairs. He is a leading exponent of the realist school in the study of American diplomacy. Widely acclaimed as an outstanding speaker, Dr. Graebner has 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 is 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 and former chair of the History Department at California State University, Los Angeles. He has authored and edited more than a dozen books and two-dozen in-depth articles covering arms control, diplomatic history, international law, and American foreign policy. He most recently coauthored *The Quest for Missile Defense, 1944–2003* (Regina Books, 2004). A bibliographer, essayist, and editor, Burns has long been involved in preparing reference books such as the internationally recognized *A Guide to American Foreign Relations Since 1770* (1983) and the critically acclaimed twentieth century presidential bibliography series. Dr Burns designed and edited a three-volume *Encyclopedia of Arms Control and Disarmament* (1993) that also received two national awards, coedited, with Alexander DeConde and Fredrik Logevall, the three-volume *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, second edition (Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002) and was the consulting editor, with Lester Brune, of a three-volume *Chronological History of United States Foreign Relations* (Routledge, 2002) and a *Cold War Chronology, 1917–1992* (Routledge, 2005).

Joseph M. Siracusa is Professor of International Diplomacy and Director of Global Studies in the School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, where he is a specialist in nuclear politics and global security. A native of Chicago and long-time resident of Australia, he is internationally known for his writings on nuclear history, diplomacy, and presidential politics. Professor Siracusa is also a frequent political affairs commentator in the Australian media, including ABC Radio National. He has worked with Merrill Lynch, in Boston, the University of Queensland, and for three years served as visiting fellow in the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University. Among his numerous books are *A History of United States Foreign Policy; Depression to Cold War: A History of America from Herbert Hoover to Ronald Reagan* (with David G. Coleman), *Presidential Profiles: The Kennedy Years*, and *Real-World Nuclear Deterrence: The Making of International Strategy* (with David G. Coleman).

A recently minted Ph.D., **Jeff Bloodworth** is an assistant professor of history at Gannon University in Erie, PA. He has published articles in *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, and the *International Social Science Review*. His manuscript, "Farewell to the Vital Center: A History of Liberalism, 1968-1980," is under review with the University of Kentucky Press.

Beth A. Fischer is an assistant professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Toronto, where she teaches courses on international security and American foreign policy. She is the author of *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (1997), and *Triumph: The Reagan Legacy and American Politics Today* (forthcoming). She has also published articles on the Cuban Missile Crisis, foreign policy making, and Canadian foreign policy. Fischer is the former editor of *International Journal*, Canada's leading journal on international affairs. In 2002 she was a Senior Nobel Fellow at the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo.

Ralph B. Levering is Vail Professor of History at Davidson College in Davidson, North Carolina. He received his B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University. He is the author or co-author of eight books, including *American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 1939-1945* (1976); *The Public and American Foreign Policy, 1918-1978* (1978); *The Kennedy Crises: The Press, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy* (1983); *Citizen Action for Global Change: The Neptune Group and Law of the Sea* (1999); *Debating the Origins of the Cold War: American and Russian Perspectives* (2002); and *The Cold War: A Post-Cold War History* (2nd ed., 2005). Currently he is doing research on the arrival of the Cold War in North Carolina during the mid-1940s.

Rev. Wilson D. (Bill) Miscamble, C.S.C. joined the permanent faculty at Notre Dame in 1988 after completion of the Ph.D. at Notre Dame in 1980 and was ordained a priest by the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1988. Miscamble's primary research interests are American foreign policy since World War II and the role of Catholics in 20th century U.S. foreign relations. His book entitled *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950* was published in 1992 by Princeton University Press and received the Harry S. Truman Book Award. He published *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War* with Cambridge University Press in 2007 and this book also won the Truman Book Award. His next major project is a book-length survey entitled – “The Search for Influence: Catholics and American Foreign policy from the Spanish-American War to the War in Iraq.” This study will shed further light on the intersection of religion and foreign policy.

With one eye cast toward the Cold War and the other on Iraq, Norman Graebner, Richard Burns, and Joseph Siracusa penned *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*. Seeking to counterbalance and negate the Reagan Victory School's "Cold War triumphalism," *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev* is a realist's swipe at neo-conservative foreign policy. (viii) While the Pentagon's shoddy post-war plans for Iraq prove ideology can undermine America's national interest, this book also reveals realism's explanatory limits.

Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev is a slim and concise appraisal of the Cold War's final years, the late 1970s through the early 1990s. Written by a highly accomplished troika of scholars, Norman Graebner, Richard Burns, and Joseph Siracusa, the book is an expertly-written and a classically-argued realist interpretation of the Cold War. Ignoring ideology, except when chiding Americans for their "mindless... anticommunism," the authors challenge the Cold War's very validity, proclaim Jimmy Carter a success, praise Mikhail Gorbachev, and implicitly confirm Clark Clifford's accusation that Ronald Reagan was little more than an "amiable dunce." (viii)

To these realists, Reagan's anticommunist obsession caused him to fundamentally misread "the realities of the existing international order" and wage a useless "Second Cold War." (137) With the Kremlin no longer guided by revolutionary ideology, Reagan's "Second Cold War," as the authors term it, was a misguided adventure from the very start. The Soviets not only posed no ideological rivalry, but the authors claim Reagan should have understood how much the Kremlin's internal troubles had undercut its "superpower" status. (51) Operating under a skewed understanding of the geopolitical situation, Reagan launched a dangerous and misguided defense program (\$1.6 trillion over 5 years) designed to spend the Soviets into submission.

The authors are on firmer ground when they criticize the president's monolithic worldview. Armed with gigantic defense outlays and convinced that all communist-inspired turmoil emanated directly from Moscow, Reagan confronted the Soviets in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. (17) Employing what came to be called the "Reagan Doctrine," the US moved beyond simply supporting democracies to aiding anti-communist insurgencies. (76) While Reagan grossly oversimplified the communist world's dynamics, the authors' assertion that the Kremlin bore no blame for third world turmoil or ever "threatened world peace and stability" is problematic. (22) Leaving aside the Soviet-backed North Korean invasion of the South and the Kremlin's aid to the Palestinian Liberation Organization's terrorism, surely Soviet tanks rolling into Budapest or Khrushchev's placement of nuclear weapons in Cuba endangered "peace and stability."

To the realists, Gerald Ford and the 1975 Helsinki Accords "opened the door to the winds of change" more than Reagan. (2) While this contention has much to recommend it, the authors never develop the argument. Instead, they praise Jimmy Carter. Though his administration was wracked by internal divisions and hamstrung by an obscure Shia cleric,

acknowledging Jimmy Carter's foresight has become *de rigueur* for many historians. Following form, the authors praise Carter's human rights policy, recognition of China, and passage of the Panama Canal Treaty. While treating Carter with kid gloves might seem strange, it is only by ignoring the fullness of his ineptitude that the authors can claim Reagan's election was merely a function of "post-Afghanistan alarms." (10)

The realists are at their best when critiquing Reagan's "Second Cold War." From ramping up defense spending to his much ballyhooed "Evil Empire Speech," even the president's staunchest defenders admit Reagan's initial policies needlessly alarmed an increasingly defensive Kremlin. Indeed, Reagan's saber-rattling had so alarmed the Politburo that a 1983 NATO exercise nearly brought the world to the nuclear precipice. By most accounts, including *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev*, this "war scare" helped fundamentally change Reagan's "Second Cold War." (53)

Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev concisely covers nearly two decades of Cold War history in a mere 146 pages. Fortunately, the book usually strikes the right balance in its treatment and coverage of events. For example, the authors devote considerable attention to the most important event of the 1980s, the "Reagan-Gorbachev Détente." In the most significant and telling portion of the book, the realists offer penetrating insights into Gorbachev's side of the Cold War equation. Unfortunately, because they see a confirmed Leninist as "far less politically and ideologically constrained" than Reagan, the authors misconstrue the president's role in ending the Cold War. (89)

For the realists, it seems that Reagan's anticommunism was the only ideology that mattered, while Gorbachev's "new approach" almost wholly accounts for US-Soviet détente. While the Kremlin's leadership undoubtedly matters, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev* ignores the roots of Reagan's strange and accidental brilliance—his visionary idealism. As Paul Lettow argues, the architect of America's largest peacetime military buildup was also a starry-eyed nuclear abolitionist.¹ Even if the realists reject Lettow's thesis, Frances Fitzgerald and Lou Cannon reveal Reagan's support for the Strategic Defense Initiative was rooted in a profound dread of a nuclear conflict and his concomitant desire to rid the world of atomic weapons.²

Because the realists overlook Reagan's complex, and at times contradictory, views on atomic weapons and nuclear war, they fail to differentiate between the president and administration hardliners. Thus, to them, the president walked in lockstep with the Committee on the Present Danger, making that organization's worldview identical to Reagan's. In doing so, they fundamentally misunderstand that Reagan's alliance with conservatives over a military buildup was a consensus over means not ends. In contrast to conventional hardliners, Reagan always opposed Massive Retaliation. Indeed, hardliners

¹ Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005).

² Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000).

eventually came to believe Reagan was “naïve,” because he intended to use American military superiority to pursue “a world without nuclear weapons... [and] disarmament.”³

Thus, Reagan embarked on a massive military spending spree, thrilling conservatives, only to shock hardliners when he repudiated the policy upon which it was based, Massive Retaliation. While the realists contend Reagan’s move toward détente resulted from a “slow, pragmatic evolution,” his move from confrontation to conciliation actually reflected a relatively consistent worldview. (65) Defying the warmonger stereotype of the left and refusing to walk in lockstep with his hardliner allies, Reagan remained what he always had been—a visionary, who sought to eradicate the threat of nuclear weapons and end the Cold War.

Realists are at their best when describing the rational and the logically explicable. For example, they excoriate Reagan for his inattention to detail and reduce his faith in SDI to an unachievable policy cul-de-sac. While the authors rightly lambaste the president for his “allergy to detail,” in the case of SDI, they ignore his visionary nature. (63) While defense experts always intended the missile defense system as a negotiating table bargaining chip, the president believed in SDI. Most likely spawned by his starring role in *Murder in the Air*, featuring an SDI-like weapons system, and grounded in his seemingly boundless belief in American ingenuity, Reagan’s starry-eyed commitment to the program simply eludes a realist’s hyper-rational interpretive framework.

When Reagan and Gorbachev met at the Reykjavik Summit in October 1986, the authors claim the president “confused his priorities” which prevented him from accepting the Soviets proposal to eliminate all nuclear weapons. (94) Because of this, the realists conclude that Gorbachev entered the Summit far less ideologically constrained than Reagan. They are correct on this count but not in the way the authors assume. It was Reagan’s commitment to end the nuclear threat and his belief in SDI, rather than his anticommunism, that torpedoed the arms agreement.

Though Reagan’s position at Reykjavik pleased hardliners, Gorbachev realized he had found a fellow traveler whose stubbornness and desire to end the Cold War matched his own. According to Kremlin insiders, it was Reagan’s very idealism that made him such a suitable partner for Gorbachev. Indeed, if a hard-line advocate of Massive Retaliation had been president, the Cold War might have continued. It was Reagan’s utter disregard for detail and romantic pursuit of nuclear abolition that made his friendship and then diplomatic partnership with Gorbachev possible.

To the authors, the “Reagan-Gorbachev Détente” resulted from the Soviets’ reconsideration of the Cold War and arms race. In giving so much focus and credit to Gorbachev, the realists are on to something. Unfortunately, in treating the Soviets and Gorbachev like a normal country, the authors reveal realism’s explanatory limits. Realism is a valuable interpretive tool when it comes to most situations but the Soviet Union was not a standard nation guided by customary geopolitical considerations.

³ Cannon, 259.

Gorbachev was not simply reformulating the calculus of Soviet security; he transformed what his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, rightly called a “rotten system.”⁴ Simply put, unlike Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev, Gorbachev was no totalitarian. What the realists see as “an empire in the process of decolonization,” was really the result of Gorbachev’s rejection of totalitarianism’s nihilism. (126) Thus, unlike his totalitarian predecessors, Gorbachev believed “shooting ordinary people” to buttress the Soviet system violated his moral principles.⁵ As a result, the communist world collapsed.

Because the realists misunderstand the Soviets does not mean the neoconservative Reagan “victory school” is vindicated. Reagan’s stated goal of spending the Soviets into bankruptcy most likely had little to do with Gorbachev’s reforms. After their initial fears of SDI, Andrei Sakharov convinced the Politburo of SDI’s profound technological obstacles. Nonetheless, Gorbachev still pursued peace and détente. In this light, the realists’ critique of the administration’s reckless \$2 trillion defense program places Reagan’s fiscal legacy in a different light. (109) Moreover, the realists rightly debunk the Reagan “victory school’s” self-congratulatory nature. While the neoconservatives used the 1990s for ideological navel-gazing, historians discovered the real roots of Reagan’s genius and the proper “lessons” of the Cold War: individuals matter, ideology is dangerous, and a little luck never hurts.

⁴ Cannon, 762.

⁵ Cannon, 761.

Review by Beth Fischer, University of Toronto

As an undergraduate I remember rolling my eyes in exasperation as yet another professor passionately debated the events surrounding the Vietnam War. “Come on,” I would think to myself. “That war is over. Who cares anymore? Move on!” In fact, the war had only ended 10 years prior, but that was more than half my lifetime, and therefore, it was ancient history. I was intrigued by current events and was unable to grasp—or uninterested in grasping—the extent to which even recent history had shaped contemporary US foreign policy.

Now that I am a political science professor I find it useful to remind myself of my early thoughts about the Vietnam War. My current students have little memory of September 11th 2001, much less the events that preceded it. Part of my challenge is to convey to them why we can’t begin to understand September 11th if we don’t understand the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Soviet war in Afghanistan, and the history of American-Pakistani-Saudi relations. The past matters; we cannot understand contemporary challenges—or form reasoned responses to them—if we do not grasp what has come before.

In their book *Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War*, Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa begin with exactly this point. “[W]e have an obligation to remember and learn...as to why events played out as they did,” they write, “particularly as they are likely to shape current public discourse as well as serve as future foreign policy axioms in Washington and Moscow.”¹ This point is a crucial one: the manner in which the Cold War ended has been the object of large-scale “misremembering,” particularly in the United States. And contemporary policies and debates have been based, at least in part, on these inaccurate understandings of history.

In the US it has become commonplace to assume that the Cold War ended because President Reagan’s assertive policies destroyed the Soviet Union. In this “triumphalist” view, the Reagan administration intended to defeat the USSR through a combination of tough rhetoric, diplomatic isolation, and a renewed arms race. From this perspective, Reagan’s greatest success actually came after he left office—on December 25, 1991, when the Soviet Union lowered its flag for the last time.

Triumphalism has become a dominant narrative in the US for a variety of reasons. However, it is historically inaccurate. The Reagan administration did not aim to destroy the Soviet Union; document after document shows that it intended to improve relations with the USSR. President Reagan did not refuse to sit down with Soviet leaders; he repeatedly wrote letters to each of his Soviet counterparts seeking a meeting. The Strategic Defense Initiative was not a ploy to drag Moscow into an arms race that it could not afford; the president ardently believed it held the promise of protecting Americans from the scourge of nuclear annihilation. And finally, the Cold War did not end when the Soviet

¹ Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, vii.

Union ceased to exist; Cold War animosities had largely receded *before* the Soviet Union collapsed.

Nonetheless, triumphalism has informed contemporary policy discussions. When the Bush administration first took office it refused to engage in talks with Iran and North Korea, claiming that such discussions would “reward” would-be proliferators. President Reagan had not won the Cold War by sitting down and talking with enemies, it was (erroneously) suggested. He stood firm and forced Soviet leaders to conform to his wishes before meeting with them. (Such a position overlooks the fact that President Reagan invited Mikhail Gorbachev to a summit meeting—without preconditions—on the very day that Gorbachev took office. Gorbachev had yet to initiate any reforms.)

Likewise, contending visions of how the Cold War ended have underpinned some of the debates in the current presidential election. Senator John McCain has argued that presidential meetings reward adversaries and should be engaged in sparingly. Like many Republicans, he asserts that Reagan vanquished the Soviet Union through demonstrations of resolve, diplomatic isolation, and a military build up. Senator Barack Obama, on the other hand, believes otherwise. “The notion that not talking to countries is punishment to them, which has been the guiding diplomatic principle of this administration, is ridiculous,” Obama has explained. “Ronald Reagan and Democratic presidents like JFK constantly spoke to the Soviet Union at a time when Ronald Reagan called them an evil empire. And the reason is because they understood that we may not trust them and they may pose an extraordinary danger to this country, but we had the obligation to find areas where we can potentially move forward.”²

Reagan, Bush, and Gorbachev seeks to preserve the historical record by summarizing the events leading up to the ending of the Cold War. It does not promote one view over another, but rather, lays out the chronology of events. It raises useful questions about the relative role of Reagan and Gorbachev in ending the conflict, when the Cold War ended, and the costs of Reagan’s anti-Sovietism, but largely leaves the reader to make up her own mind. Generally speaking, it eschews analysis in favor of recording the flow of events. Consequently, the book would be a useful starting point for classroom discussions pertaining to the Cold War.

As with any book, there are a number of curiosities. In the preface the authors state that they are presenting a “contemporary, realist appraisal of the events leading up to the end of the Cold War, an analysis that employs contemporary observers with their penetrating assessments of the superpowers’ policies and rhetoric.”³ The manner in which the authors use “realist” is confusing, perhaps owing to my political science roots. But I am also unclear as to how this constitutes a “contemporary” account of history. It would appear that the

² John McCormick, “Madeleine Albright Says Clinton Gave Best Answer,” The Swamp- Tribune’s Washington Bureau, July 24, 2007. http://www.swamppolitics.com/news/politics/blog/2007/07/madeleine_albright_says_clinto.html, accessed 16 November 2008.

³ Graebner, Burns, and Siracusa, vii.

authors sought to avoid drawing upon sources in which policy makers and scholars reflect back on the period. Thus, the book does not make extensive use of oral history conferences, memoirs, post-Cold War interviews, and the like. But, curiously, it also does not make extensive use of official documents and memos. Such material would have given an indication of how policy makers perceived their situation at the time. To a large extent, the authors have restricted themselves to drawing upon newspaper accounts and books from the 1980s and early 1990s.

In addition, the authors' desire to cover much territory in a short space means that some important topics have been given short shrift. The Reagan-Gorbachev summits are summarized in six and a half pages, and a mere page is devoted to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Moreover, provocative points are sometimes glossed over. For example, on page 51 the book states that in the early 1980s "Soviet weakness [was] widely recognized in Washington." The conventional wisdom is that President Reagan was one of the few people in Washington who sincerely believed the USSR might collapse, so more detail on this point would be a welcome addition to the literature. Likewise, page 52 states that "Impatient Americans favored a massive showdown with the USSR..." Again, the common understanding is that Americans were growing increasingly uneasy with Reagan's tough rhetoric during the early 1980s.

At the end of the day, however, this book is a useful summary of the events leading up to the ending of the Cold War. Hopefully, it will encourage the current generation of students to consider the manner in which the Cold War shapes the issues and debates in American foreign policy today.

Review by Ralph B. Levering, Davidson College

Like golfers on the minor-league tours trying to qualify for the PGA Tour, this book faces formidable competition in trying to earn a spot on reading lists on U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1980s. If I were to prepare such a list for undergraduates in my courses, the authors would include, among others, John Lewis Gaddis, Raymond Garthoff, Melvyn D. Leffler, Jack F. Matlack Jr., Don Oberdorfer, Peter W. Rodman, and Vladimir M. Zubok.

If I were to include this book, I would do so for two main reasons. First, it offers a concise yet fairly comprehensive overview of U.S.-Soviet relations, broadly conceived, from the late 1970s through 1990. And second, it includes the best analysis to date of the reactions of journalists and other writers—mainly liberal, anti-Reagan Americans and West Europeans—to the changes in international relations in the 1980s. For serious students of this subject, the footnote references to articles in *Worldview*, *World Press Review*, *Atlantic Community Quarterly*, and other relatively obscure publications may well justify the price of the book.

What is perhaps most remarkable about this book is its very existence. The author who appears to have been most responsible for writing it, Norman Graebner, was 92 when the book was published. The other two authors were 79 and 64, respectively, for an average age of the three authors of more than 78 years. Is this a record for an original work in diplomatic history published by two or more authors? Whether it is or not, this book should inspire those of us who are considerably younger than Professor Graebner to remain active professionally for many years to come.

The book's main strength is its sound argumentation relating to the main trends in U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1980s. The authors are certainly right that Ronald Reagan's early policies toward the Soviet Union were incoherent and unnecessarily belligerent, frightening many Americans and West Europeans and raising the specter of an American nuclear attack in the minds of some Soviet leaders. They also are correct that Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz began to shift toward a more conciliatory approach in 1983 and 1984, and that the Soviet leader who came to power in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, demonstrated a much greater degree of interest in improving East-West relations and ending the Cold War than any previous Soviet leader. Rightly giving the Soviet leader most of the credit for ending the Cold War, they conclude that "Gorbachev broke the Cold War's ideological straitjacket that had paralyzed Moscow and Washington's ability to resolve their differences. . . . without Gorbachev, the end of the Cold War could have played out very differently and very dangerously." (146)

Having finished reading Leffler's *For the Soul of Mankind* shortly before starting this book, I doubt that the argument presented here—even when fleshed out in the book—offers much that is original, though I do think that the authors rightly see Reagan's role in ending the Cold War as less significant than Leffler does. Despite the overall lack of originality, however, the authors offer well-chosen information on U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1980s

and interpret it convincingly, achievements in any work of history.

In contrast, the authors are surprisingly weak in discussing U.S. and Soviet policies in regard to less developed nations, especially in Central America. They argue that revolutions in the Third World were “invariably indigenous and historic” (139); and, in sections devoted to U.S. policy in Central America, basically argue that the U.S. policy of opposing the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the Marxist-led rebels in El Salvador had no justification whatsoever.

It is true, of course, that there were “indigenous and historic” roots of the late-twentieth-century conflicts in nations like Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. But it is also true that many of the Marxist leaders in the left-wing movements in these three countries drew inspiration from the success of Fidel Castro’s communist movement in Cuba, and that many of these leaders were trained and equipped by Cuba, aided by the Soviet Union and other eastern bloc nations.

The authors never mention the Soviet/Cuban military aid to the Sandinistas, nor the fact that the Sandinistas used some of that aid to supply left-wing guerrillas in El Salvador. In fact, the conflicts in Central America in the 1980s—like earlier conflicts in Southeast Asia and elsewhere—were both indigenous and international, with the U.S.-led side and the Communist side seeking to advance their objectives, to borrow Malcolm X’s famous phrase, “by any means necessary.”¹

More broadly, the authors come close to denying that the perceived antagonism between the U.S.-led side and the Communist side was real. “Unlike major international conflicts in the past,” they conclude, “[the one] between the United States and the U.S.S.R. revealed no areas where the two powers were mutually and unmistakably in open conflict, rendering war predictable.” (138) In retrospect, that is perhaps a plausible generalization. But didn’t the Korean War risk World War III, with U.S. forces fighting Chinese infantry and Soviet airmen? And isn’t the peaceful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis much more predictable in hindsight than it was on 22 October 1962?

Stylistically, the writing is often pithy and engaging, qualities much to be praised in academic discourse these days. Unfortunately, too many minor stylistic and factual errors remain, especially in the first one-third of the book. An example of the former: “It seem[ed] to indicate a new, more belligerent Soviet approach to the Third World.” (2) An example of the latter: “Reagan defined the Soviet danger at a White House news conference in late January 1980[1]. . .” (13) And, given the current debate over whether Iran should be permitted to develop nuclear weapons, I was surprised to read that “the Shah was allowed unlimited access to American arms.” (7)

¹For a brilliant analysis by a political scientist of U.S. relations with revolutionary governments in the Third World, especially in Cuba, Iran, and Nicaragua, see Robert S. Snyder, “The U.S. and Third World Revolutionary States: Understanding the Breakdown in Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1999): 265-290.

Overall, however, this is a solid book that, on most topics, would provide a good introduction to U.S.-Soviet relations during the 1980s for undergraduates or beginning graduate students, as well as for the general public.

Let me begin with a couple of caveats. Firstly, my own expertise—such as it is—lies more with the origins of the Cold War rather than its end. This may be more evident to knowledgeable readers the further they proceed in this review, should they choose to proceed at all. Secondly, I know one of the authors of this book well and I admire the scholarly contributions of the other two. Joseph Siracusa first introduced me to the field of U.S. diplomatic history well over thirty years ago at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, and we have been friends ever since. It was under Joe Siracusa's tutelage that I first read the work of Norman Graebner, a giant in the field and a leading member of the 'realist school' in interpreting U.S. foreign relations that emerged in the 1950s. Professors Graebner and Burns have served the profession in many important ways over the years and continue to do so through their collaboration on the book under review. Let me note simply that I have tried in the comments that follow not to be overly influenced by either my friendship with Joe Siracusa or my admiration for him and his co-authors. Those who make it through to the end of the review can judge whether I have succeeded.

The spirit of Norman Graebner's long-held realist assumptions, such as the dangers of American moralism and excessive idealism and the necessity for firm limits on the use of American power, are evident on most pages of this book. It claims to be "a contemporary realist appraisal of the events leading up to the end of the Cold War." (vii) The authors make clear at the outset that they are writing out of an authentic realist perspective. They take as their target the false claimants to the "realist" banner—namely the neoconservative "standard bearers of so-called Cold War triumphalism."(viii)

The book begins with a brief summary of the few triumphs and many trials and tribulations of the Carter Administration, but its real heart is the exploration of Ronald Reagan's foreign policy. The initial stage of Reagan's foreign policy is not portrayed favorably. The authors critically record "the fear of Soviet power and expansionism [which] dominated the outlook of the new administration" (13), and which led to enhanced American involvements in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. They also provide a healthy sampling of the views of Reagan's critics, both in the United States and beyond including Alexander Cockburn, George Kennan, and the European skeptics who opposed Reagan's defense build-up and his approach to the Soviet Union. Here is just one of the real strengths of the book. It provides a clear sense of the contemporary public debate over foreign policy. It isn't narrowly focused on the deliberations within the Reagan administration but gives voice to the criticism of those outside it who expressed deep concern about American unilateralism and over-extension. Similarly, the authors make good use of contemporary reporting on Reagan's foreign policy and one is re-introduced to such sources as James Reston, Hedrick Smith, Flora Lewis, and Meg Greenfield, who would have been read in the original by those of us who have passed the half-century mark (as they say in cricket.)

The authors' rather negative views of the early Reagan are well-revealed in their observation that his "success in exaggerating and dramatizing the Soviet threat backfired in sending over two million Europeans into antinuclear, and largely anti-American,

demonstrations.” (3) The strong critique of the Reagan foreign policy is maintained when the authors review some of the major U.S. actions during the remainder of the president’s first term—a flawed Central American strategy, a disastrous intervention in Lebanon, and an over-hyped invasion of Grenada. In classic realist fashion there is no sympathy for Reagan’s lofty goals and rhetorical claims such as the president’s assurance to the British Parliament in 1982 that the march of freedom and democracy would “leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history.”(52)

None of the three authors is a specialist in Soviet history but they include in their study brief but helpful accounts of what was took place in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. They don’t paint a pretty picture. The Soviet Union was mired in “turmoil and decline” (46) facing a failing economy, a genuine food crisis and much evidence of “moral decay—absenteeism, drug addiction, and alcoholism.” (8) Added to this toxic mix were the difficult challenges brought on by the rise and then suppression of the Solidarity Trade Union movement in Poland and by the literal bleeding of Soviet military power in Afghanistan. For them “the evidence of economic and social decline within the U.S.S.R were [sic] universal,” (46) although surely this evidence has seemed much more obvious in retrospect.

By 1984 with his defense build-up well-launched and his commitment to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) firmly established, Reagan evinced a greater willingness to engage in arms control discussions with the Soviet Union. This move was facilitated, according to this account, by the administration’s moderates exemplified by Secretary of State George Shultz gaining the ascendancy over hardliners like Richard Perle. This “move to moderation” is presented as the result of a “slow, pragmatic evolution of policy.” (65) The more moderate approach was however in place by 1985 when new Soviet leadership arrived on the scene in the person of Mikhail Gorbachev. The new Secretary General of the Communist Party is presented as charming and intelligent and, notably, as possessing “a better grasp of the realities of international life than did his predecessors.” His program of *perestroika* and the new atmosphere of *glasnost* which he inspired are presented sympathetically as are his efforts to push for arms control and peaceful co-existence with the West as revealed at the Geneva Summit of 1985.

While Gorbachev is discussed favorably the authors maintain a critical stance towards the Reagan administration’s continued adventurism in the Third World, especially Central America, and the negative consequences of it. The Reagan Doctrine with its efforts to assist anti-communist insurgencies throughout the world is branded in classic realist fashion as overriding “the traditional limits of statecraft.” (78) The sordid saga of the Iran-Contra Affair is told with relish. The episode is judged a “near-disaster” for Reagan and one from which he was “rescued” by Gorbachev—who is undoubtedly the ‘hero’ of this story. Gorbachev offered a new approach on arms control and Reagan responded. Despite the setback at Reykjavik, where Reagan’s clinging to SDI is criticized, what eventually emerged was a “Reagan-Gorbachev Détente” notable for the INF Treaty signed at the Washington Summit in 1987, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988, and the effusively friendly Moscow Summit of 1988. The authors deem “the transformation of U.S.-Soviet relations to a non-confrontational approach . . . a remarkable achievement.” (110) One

might have thought that if the Cold War was simply a contest between traditional nation states it could have ended right in Red Square as Reagan and Gorbachev strolled together. But, of course, it was no such contest.

The authors appreciate this, at least to some degree, and go on to describe Gorbachev's halting and ultimately unsuccessful efforts to reform the sclerotic Soviet system. They also note "the burgeoning spirit of independence among the Warsaw Pact allies" and the problems this presented for the Soviet Union. But their analysis here is limited and part of the difficulty may lie in the very realist assumptions that undergird the book. There is a reluctance here to present the Cold War as a moral and ideological struggle as well as one involving political, economic, and military power. Seeing the Cold War through their 'realist' lens leads the authors to focus heavily on the American and Soviet leaders and the nations they led. They skip quickly over other significant factors and players. This is evident also in their chapter dealing with George Bush's efforts to end the Cold War where they devote some attention to the unraveling of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe but fail to explain why it unraveled. Lech Walesa and the Solidarity Movement are mentioned briefly but it is striking that Karol Wojtyla's (better known as Pope John Paul II) important contribution is ignored. Nor do the authors give much credit to Vaclav Havel and the human rights activists across Eastern Europe who took advantage of the Helsinki Accords to challenge Soviet rule. And little credit is extended to the ordinary men and women—those courageous Poles and Hungarians and East Germans—who served as "grains of sand" clogging the totalitarian machine and who set the context for Gorbachev to abandon any effort to uphold the Brezhnev Doctrine. His decision not to use force to maintain the Soviet empire and the degraded ideology that had justified it was indeed crucial. Events thereafter slipped quickly out of his control leading with surprising speed to the unification of Germany and even to the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself.

This study ends the Cold War contest rather abruptly with formal German reunification in 1990. One wonders, however, whether the authors should not have given more attention to the rise of Boris Yeltsin, his abolition of the Communist Party, the final ousting of Gorbachev and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This collapse brought to an end the Marxist-Leninist ideological pretensions of the Soviet system and revealed even to the most obtuse its bankruptcy. Only after the Soviet Union disintegrated could the Cold War rightly be deemed truly at an end.

Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev concludes with a discussion of how to apportion credit for ending the Cold War between Reagan and Gorbachev. Admitting that their assessment is but an "interim judgment" that may be revised by the historical jury the authors acknowledge Reagan's recognition of Gorbachev's sincerity and his engaging of the Soviet leader in genuine negotiations. But they dissent vigorously from the views of those like Richard Pipes who hold that the American arms build-up and policy of firmness in the early 1980s played a significant role in forcing changes in Soviet policies. This strikes me as a rather parsimonious assessment of Reagan's contribution and perhaps the authors might consider that only after the arms build-up did Reagan consider himself in a position to negotiate seriously and successfully. Predictably, Mikhail Gorbachev deserves the most credit in their view. They argue that he "broke the Cold War's ideological straitjacket that had

paralyzed Moscow and Washington's ability to resolve their differences." Without him "the end of the Cold War could have played out very differently and very dangerously." (146) In making this case the authors offer a variation of the arguments offered by scholars like the Oxford historian and political scientist Archie Brown who argue vigorously for Gorbachev's centrality in ending the Cold War. So they are in fine company.

And yet, this explanation seems rather simplistic and almost monocausal to me—i.e. Gorbachev as the "indispensable figure" etc. It understates the role of the United States over more than four decades and tends to ignore the larger forces that were at work in the 1980s. It also tends to confuse details of the *way* in which the Cold War ended with *why* it ended. My thinking here is influenced by a book I read back in the early nineties by the biographer of John Paul II, George Weigel. The book is entitled *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and it seeks to explain the Eastern European "Revolution of 1989" rather than the end of the Cold War per se, although the two are closely related. Weigel rightly notes that there is no "simple or unilinear explanation" and goes on to acknowledge the roles of Gorbachev, Reagan, the Helsinki Final Act and the CSCE, and factors like economics and the communications revolution which blunted Soviet propaganda etc. But he notes that standard realist accounts can't fully explain the events of 1989 and he argues persuasively that the "reversal of the Yalta imperial system" came through a "revolution that challenged Marxism-Leninism at the most basic level: as a doctrine and an ethic." In short a moral revolution in Eastern Europe *helped* shape the political revolution that toppled Soviet power there and that quickly provoked the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself. Admittedly this is terrain that realist historians usually avoid but it might contribute to a richer appreciation of the end of the Cold War were some to explore it further.

The literature on the end of the Cold War is already substantial. Nonetheless it is enriched by having this addition to it which is so influenced by the realist perspective of Norman Graebner. This great teacher of American foreign relations wrote and commented on U.S. foreign policy virtually throughout the whole period of the Cold War and one delights to see him writing forcefully of its ending. Whatever my differences in interpretation with him and his co-authors expressed here, I valued reading their thought-provoking work.

To begin at the beginning, we should very much like to thank the reviewers for taking the time from their busy schedules to read and comment on our little book, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev*, which foreshadows our major history of the entire era, *America's Cold War, 1941 – 1991*, that we have nearly completed. All four reviewers place the book in the realist tradition of foreign policy, a tradition generally accepted by most diplomatic historians as well as the successful statesmen in the country's history. Realism dictates that a nation distinguish clearly between its established interests, upon which rests its security and welfare, and demands of secondary importance that lend themselves to negotiation and compromise. For realists, success in external affairs requires a proper relationship among the ends, the means, and the circumstances of any action, including an accurate, honest, and forthright judgment of the costs, necessities, and possibilities for success. In short, realism requires solvency in the design and pursuit of external objectives, whether through diplomacy or war.

Overall, we found the reviewers' commentary to be incisive and thoughtful if not self-explanatory, with which readers may agree or disagree. Despite the general agreement among the four reviewers of the book's validity as a portrayal of the events leading to the ending of the Cold War, each has reservations regarding the treatment of some events or official expressions of policy. No two, however, offer identical critiques, suggesting that the book, because of its brevity, ignored or underplayed events that some reviewers regarded worthy of inclusion. Rightly a book can not be all things to all people, and we would be the first to share this view.

We should be remiss, however, if we didn't respond to Ralph Levering's gentle charge that "the authors are surprisingly weak in discussing U.S. and Soviet policies in regard to less developed nations." Actually, we thought we had nailed down our position on the Cold War in the Third World. Neither Washington nor Moscow, we argue, could have hoped to establish any control over Third World affairs commensurate with their efforts. Washington's counterrevolutionary program, ostensibly aimed at the containment of Soviet expansion, never seriously engaged the U.S.S.R. because the success or failure of Third World revolutions never constituted any interest, Soviet or American, whose pursuit was worth the risk of war. The Kremlin's reluctance to expose its troops to death and destruction in regions beyond the Soviet periphery clearly measured its limited interests in the Third World. In point of fact, Soviet challenges to American will in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean had little relevance to Soviet strategic capabilities; the Kremlin, in practice, limited its ambitions to what its exports of weapons and advisers could achieve. For Gorbachev especially, even this Soviet investment had become excessive and counterproductive.

Levering also believes that the Korean War risked World War III, with the U.S. fighting Chinese infantry and Soviet airmen, and that the peaceful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis was more predictable in hindsight than on October 22, 1962. The response to such fears lies in the accuracy of the predictions, in every case, that these events would lead to either an expanded war or a nuclear exchange. For example, following President Kennedy's announcement of the Cuban missile crisis, Graebner that evening predicted repeatedly, in response for comment from several radio stations, that there would be no war and that Khrushchev would agree to withdraw the

Soviet missiles as soon as he could frame a rationale for doing so. That required three days and the crisis ended.

Bloodworth challenges the notion that the Kremlin bore no blame for third world turmoil or “threatened world peace and stability.” He asserts that the Kremlin endangered world peace when it backed the North Korean invasion of the South, aided the Palestinian Liberation Organization, sent its tanks into Budapest, and placed missiles in Cuba. Within the context of the Cold War, any Soviet move anywhere was regarded dangerous by much of Washington and the country. On the occasions listed above, the Soviets clearly had no interests that demanded a war, and they were rational enough to know it. It was not difficult to discount the dangers emanating from such episodes. In this sense, Jeff Bloodworth’s claim that “the Soviet Union was not a standard nation guided by customary geopolitical consideration” does not particularly ring true.

Fischer questions the use of material in the preparation of the book, noting that it lacks any accounts of the events from the viewpoint of the actors, any extensive use of oral histories, interviews, etc. She notes also that certain events would have gained additional analysis with greater detail and a broader examination of evidence. This criticism has great validity. But the material used, which was voluminous in itself, would not have been greatly changed by a broader examination of evidence from inside observers or participants. The basic outlines of policy revealed by journalists, public and private observers, covered with considerable accuracy what occurred and why. Moreover, the limitations on policy and the concomitant presumptions of success or failure are not that difficult to discover. That is why all the predictions in the book proved to be accurate.

More important, still, is Bill Miscamble’s observation that in our haste to draw Gorbachev as the “indispensable figure” in ending the Cold War, we “tend to confuse details of the *way* in which the Cold War ended with *why* it ended.” The implication here being that we underplayed the moral revolution in Eastern Europe that helped topple the Kremlin’s power. No doubt that this phase was a conduit for the rise of nationalism, the despair of failing economic systems and dismay with autocratic leadership, but this is a book primarily about U.S.-Soviet relations, from the late 1970s through 1990, and not Eastern Europe per se. And even then, it merely reinforces our view that an event as massive as the collapse of the Soviet empire may have had many other external and internal, conditioning factors, in addition to the unintended side effects of Gorbachev’s reforms, to which we attribute primary causation. Miscamble also suggests that the book should have ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the end of the Cold War in late 1990 did not require a collapse of the Soviet Union. President Bush defended Gorbachev and, with him, the continuation of the Soviet system, to its end in December 1991.

One point our reviewers did not comment on—perhaps because they agreed with us—was that the 1980s the remaining essential “political” issue confronting the superpowers was their vast nuclear arsenals. Never able to transform this enormous destructive power into traditional political leverage to resolve political, economic and territorial issues, this weaponry had gradually become the principal focus of superpower negotiations. When Gorbachev concluded that the Soviet Union did not need them because no foe was going to use the nuclear weapons, and therefore they could be dispensed with, the Cold War was essentially over.

All of this said, we find ourselves in excellent company with the reviewers in extending Gorbachev primary credit for ending the Cold War. Vladislav M. Zubok in his *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War From Stalin to Gorbachev* agrees: “Without Gorbachev (and Reagan and Bush as his partners), the end of the Cold War would not have come so quickly.... The peaceful and rapid end of the Cold War secured Gorbachev’s place in international history (pp. 334-35).

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