



Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Roundtable Editor: David Painter

Roundtable Participants: Carolyn Eisenberg, Greg Grandin, T. Christopher Jespersen, David Painter

H-Diplo Roundtable Editor: George Fujii, UC Santa Barbara

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I would like to begin by thanking Carolyn Eisenberg, Greg Grandin, T. Christopher Jespersen, and David Painter for their close readings and thoughtful comments on my book. I am deeply grateful for their complements, suggestions, and critical evaluations. I have learned a lot from all of them, as well as countless other reviewers. I would also like to thank George Fujii, who organized this excellent roundtable.

I agree with many of the comments from the reviewers. In particular, they all point to additional issues (New Deal legacies, labor activism, economics, etc.) and additional areas (Tokyo, Newark, Detroit, etc.) that might be included in an international history of the 1960s. Certainly the breadth of my analysis encourages readers to consider additional applications and issues. A further expansion in coverage would both strengthen my analysis of global changes and point to complications. All of this makes sense to me. I do, however, believe that my book is already sufficiently broad in its coverage. *Power and Protest* never promises to offer a complete history of the period, only a history that highlights important changes that cut across societies and elements within societies. The book uses evidence from the United States, Western Europe, the former Soviet Bloc, and China to show the interrelation between social protest and foreign policy. There was, I argue, a diplomatic origin for social activism and a social origin for détente. In response to Chris Jespersen's and David Painter's excellent question about the methodology behind my selection of cases: my answer is that I simply chose cities and policy issues that were both important to developments during the period and offered an abundance of primary evidence (in one of the 4 languages that I could read or in translation). There is a huge universe of other cities and policy issues that one could analyze, but that is for other books. The same applies to Greg Grandin's passionate claims about the agency of protesters outside college campuses, wildcat strikes, worker councils, and other activist groupings. Again, these are important topics, but I do not see why they must be included in an international history of the period. Nothing that I have written denies their existence. I have shown that the social activists I write about mattered for policy-making, and vice-versa. It remains for someone else, in another book, to document how other social activists also mattered.

Power and Protest argues that the early 1960s were a period of Cold War stalemate. Carolyn Eisenberg is uncomfortable with this premise for very good reasons. She points to the continued (and in some ways escalated) nuclear arms race, heightened interventionism in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia, and the “reality of death and destruction” fostered by America’s search for victory in the Cold War. I do not disagree on any of these points. In fact, I try to address each of them in different parts of the book. My argument is that there was, after the crises around Berlin and Cuba (1958-1963), a stalemate in US-Soviet competition over Europe -- the traditional “center” of the Cold War. The recognition of this stalemate forced Cold War energies of all kinds (reformist, imperialist, developmental, etc.) into other areas of endeavor, including both the so-called “Third World” and the domestic arena. In this sense, the European stalemate triggered new social and policy trends that, in my analysis, motivated much of the activism that came to characterize the decade. Dissatisfaction with the European stalemate motivated Cold War critics within policy-making circles and without. Dissatisfaction with the European stalemate also motivated social critics on the “Left” and the “Right.” *Power and Protest* does not argue that “Left” and “Right” were equivalent, but it does show that at least in the United States, West Germany, and France protesters on the “Left” and “Right” similarly rejected the Cold War status quo. I do not understand what Greg Grandin means by the label “simplistic psychologizing.” My analysis has nothing to do with psychology. My analysis is all about reactions to the material and ideological realities of a Cold War world where leaders promised “progress” of various kinds in the early 1960s, but failed to deliver due to the constraints on their policy options in the most crucial areas of superpower conflict. (By the way, contrary to what Grandin claims, I am very critical of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson for failing to redress the shallowness of many Cold War policies and embarking on a destructive and self-defeating war in Vietnam.)

I should say a little here about my sources. Surely a book that covers foreign policy and social change in more than five countries cannot offer the depth of detail found in a book on just one country, or just foreign policy, or just one issue. There is, I think, plenty of room in the historical profession for very focused books and broad thematic books. We need both. *Power and Protest* combines its breadth with a focus on specific cases that contribute to the larger argument. That explains why the book is more episodic than a monograph where one follows the same characters on each and every page. To write an international history of the 1960s, or any other period, one must travel from one locale to another with some speed otherwise the narrative bogs down. I chose cases, as I mentioned above, where I had the requisite language skills and access to primary materials. Greg Grandin and David Painter can legitimately question the depth of my research on a range of issues not included in this book, but I will stand by the plethora of pamphlets, letters, diplomatic memoranda, speeches, newspapers, memoirs, and other sources that I read on each and every major topic in *Power and Protest*. Let’s take just two topics as examples for this roundtable: The Franco-Chinese opening of 1964 and the student protests in Paris in May 1968. On the first issue, I read all of the available French diplomatic documents on the topic (as of 1999) at the French Foreign Ministry Archives (the Quai D’Orsay). Painter implies that there is not much new in my analysis here, but I

beg to differ. As far as I know, no one else -- in any language -- has chronicled the opening and its connection to French and Chinese attempts to forge a new ideological bond during this period. Not everyone will agree with my analysis on this issue, but my evidence here (as elsewhere) is detailed and fresh. The same is true for the student protests in Paris in May 1968. I spent weeks reading thousands of student pamphlets and tracts available at the French National Library, site Mitterand. The actions and rhetoric that I document come from these sources, hardly used by writers outside France. Grandin might wish that I had read pamphlets from the wildcat strikes outside Paris, but that does not diminish the originality, detail, and depth of my research.

The last point I would like to focus upon is my assessment of détente and Ostpolitik. *Power and Protest* argues that détente and Ostpolitik were reactions to domestic unrest that preserved a conservative political status quo. This is surely the most controversial part of the book. Many readers will disagree with this argument on legitimate grounds. Détente and Ostpolitik were complicated policies, with many diverse facets and many contradictory consequences. Détente, for example, empowered the Soviet leadership to crackdown on dissidents and it forced the Soviet bloc to acknowledge the human rights claims of the Helsinki Accords at the same time. My argument about the conservative, even counter-revolutionary, quality of détente does not have any “smoking guns.” Leaders never said: “hey, we are doing this to screw the protesters.” *Power and Protest* illustrates the connections between social protest and détente in 3 ways: First, I provide evidence to show that leaders, like Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong, spent a lot of time talking about their common difficulties with domestic order during their foreign policy meetings. Second, I provide evidence to show that leaders in all of the major states developed an obsession with secrecy, for fear that domestic “traitors” would undermine open policies. (This is the evidence I use to argue, quite controversially, that even Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr’s Ostpolitik was conservative. I compare Brandt and Bahr’s calls for an open and democratic set of overtures to the East in the early 1960s, with their obsessive secrecy and personalization of policy in the early 1970s. Due to the domestic unrest in West Germany, Brandt and Bahr came to distrust the officials in their own government and party! This is the evidence that Brandt and Bahr “changed their mind” which Painter is looking for.) Third, I analyze how détente as policy produced more surface stability than substantive international or domestic change. SALT, for example, never destroyed a single weapon. It only prohibited the construction of future weapons. Recognition of the communist bloc borders in Europe did not contribute to an increase of freedom for citizens stuck in those states during the period of détente. *Power and Protest* is not an attack on the concept of détente, which could have served much more progressive purposes. The book is a criticism of the ways in which fearful leaders used détente primarily to insure their own power and forestall changes in Cold War politics. The strange period of improved great power relations but continued Cold War in the early 1970s is a manifestation of détente’s conservative (status quo preserving) qualities.

I want to close by thanking Carolyn Eisenberg, Greg Grandin, T. Christopher Jespersen, and David Painter once again. I have learned a great deal from their thoughtful comments. I hope that my responses offer some clarification of particular issues, and also some recognition of how much we all have to learn about writing international history.

H-Diplo Roundtable- Suri responds

This is a very difficult genre to work in. I certainly understand the pitfalls. Nonetheless, I believe that broad analysis of historical change across and within societies has a lot to offer scholars and students.

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