

**Bradley Lynn Coleman, Kyle Longley, eds.** *Reagan and the World: Leadership and National Security, 1981-1989*. Studies in Conflict Diplomacy Peace Series. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017. 336 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8131-6937-8.

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*Reagan and the World* is an edited volume that promises a fresh look at US national security policy and leadership during the Ronald Reagan administration, based on engagement with newly available archival sources. The book grew out of a project and conference at the Virginia Military Institute which examined the military history of the Reagan administration, and the collection features contributions from key Reagan scholars, such as Beth Fischer and James Graham Wilson.

The volume is organized into three parts. Part 1 focuses on key national security issues, including the US-Soviet relationship, Reagan's stand on nuclear weapons, and Pentagon reform. The other two parts are organized geographically: part 2 looks at the Reagan administration's diplomacy with the USSR and Western European allies, while the third part includes case studies of the administration's policies toward the Third World. Many key issues of the Reagan presidency—for example, relationships between Reagan and Soviet leaders, relations with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, nuclear policy, and Central America—are covered. However, the collection also addresses some less conventional topics that have not played a prominent part in Reagan scholarship, such as Caspar Weinberger's role in the administration, Reagan's policy toward China,

environmental issues on the US-Mexican border, and US policy in Lebanon.

The collection in general takes a middle position in a research area that has often been characterized by polarized interpretations of President Reagan's policies and his personal character. Thus, it seeks to weave a course between works that portray Reagan as an excessively militaristic leader—and one who functioned more as the puppet of his advisers than a strong chief executive—and those, such as books by Peter Schweizer (*Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* [1994]) and Paul Kengor (*The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* [2007]), that portray Reagan as a uniquely gifted president who strategized to end the Cold War on American terms, and then fulfilled this mission. Many of the essays give us a "reasonable" Reagan: a president who understood both the value of a strong defense and a tough posture toward the Soviet Empire, and the value of negotiations. This picture is in line with much of the post-2000 scholarship on Reagan, including Paul Lettow's work on Reagan's anti-nuclearism (*Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* [2005]) and Fischer's work (*The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* [2000]), which sees Rea-

gan as the key actor in forcing a policy change in the US government away from confrontation and toward negotiation with the Soviets after 1983.

The work is at its strongest and most persuasive when examining Reagan's relationships with other leaders. Thematically, Reagan's role in ending the Cold War is discussed in a nuanced fashion in chapters by Wilson, Fischer, and Archie Brown. The inclusion of Brown's chapter in the collection at first seems counterintuitive, as it focuses on the Soviet Union and Mikhail Gorbachev, not on the Reagan administration. However, taken together these chapters make a persuasive argument against the notion that, by building up US military strength and squeezing the Soviet economy, the Reagan administration somehow engineered the rise of a Soviet leadership faction willing to end the Cold War on US terms. Instead, Wilson argues that Reagan's main contribution was to take Gorbachev's wish to reduce tensions seriously when many others in the US government did not, while Brown locates Gorbachev's rise to power and reform policies in the domestic Soviet context. These essays provide a welcome antidote to the Reagan triumphalism purveyed by some scholars, and show Gorbachev, more than Reagan, to have been the key figure in bringing the Cold War to an end.

The chapters on the Reagan administration's relationships with Western European leaders are generally well laid-out and argued. Above all, they appear to show the interest-driven nature of these connections. This is expressed most clearly in James Cooper's chapter on the relationship between Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Cooper argues convincingly that domestic politics, divergent national security, and economic interests created strains in a relationship often depicted as closely founded on ideological convergence. This theme of interests taking priority over values is less overt in the chapter on France and Germany by William I. Hitchcock and David F. Patton, but the Franco-American (re)convergence over

François Mitterand's geopolitical fear of the Soviet Union and US-German disagreements over Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force point in the same direction.

The chapters on relations with the Third World arguably foreground contradictory points about Reagan's policymaking and present a less positive picture than the material on the United States and Western Europe. Michael Schaller's essay on policy toward China and Vietnam makes it clear that Reagan's often unscripted policy pronouncements on US support for Taiwan produced considerable strain in US-China relations during his first term, while Kyle Longley's chapter on Central America casts Reagan's policy as irrational. However, Charles Brower's essay on Lebanon sheds light on the Reagan administration's decision to commit peace-keeping troops to Lebanon in 1982 and 1983 by placing it in a Cold War strategic framework. Brower argues that internal peace within Lebanon, to be guaranteed by a multinational peace-keeping force with an important American contingent, was seen as the foundational precursor to the creation of a "strategic consensus" between Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia aimed at preventing the Soviet Union and its Arab proxies from expanding their influence in the region (p. 257). This to some extent demystifies an aspect of Reagan foreign policy that has always seemed to be an outlier.

The collection does have some weaknesses. There is a focus throughout most of the work on Reagan's personality, values, and ideological beliefs, as well as those of others, such as American legislators and foreign leaders. This might be expected in a book focusing on leadership, but this focus could have been integrated into an analysis of how it combined with larger structures and geostrategic imperatives under Reagan. In addition, the "leadership" element of the book could have been approached more coherently. Although the introduction discusses the challenges posed to

the historian by Reagan's leadership style—for example, what sometimes appear to be rapid switches between a narrowly ideological and a more moderate style in Reagan's leadership, and the administrative chaos that contemporaries such as Alexander Haig claimed reigned in the White House—it does not put forward any concept of leadership in general, or any criteria for judging Reagan's leadership. Moreover, there is no conclusion and no synthesis of the various concepts and evidence presented by the contributors, leaving readers to pick up the threads themselves as best they can.

In terms of methodology, the book does not consistently live up to its promise to deliver a fresh view of the national security policy of the Reagan administration based on new archival material. Many of the sources for individual chapters are secondary works of scholarship. Some contributors on occasion make use of primary sources—for example, the diaries written by Reagan daily during his presidency and edited for publication by Douglas Brinkley long afterward, or oral history interviews with such policymakers as Casper Weinberger carried out a decade, or longer, after the end of the Reagan presidency. These sources can often reveal details, nuances, and viewpoints that do not appear in official memos and policy documents. However, they also have their disadvantages. Participants in oral history interviews taking place long after the events they explore may not have perfect recall, they may exaggerate or burnish their own roles, and their retelling of events may be influenced by popular culture notions and historiographical debates that have become widespread and/or authoritative in the meantime. Similarly, and as noted by Evan R. Ward in the volume, Reagan's diaries do not represent an unimpeachable primary source, as they may have been written with an eye on his legacy and for wider public consumption. Supplementing these sources with a greater ratio of declassified documents, meeting minutes, and policy memos would have given the collec-

tion firmer footing. This points to a further weakness of the collection: the feeling that sometimes there is nothing particularly new being said. In some parts, the contributors' reliance on secondary sources to articulate new arguments gives way to the presentation of viewpoints and information that do not add significantly to a fresh understanding of the Reagan administration.

That said, this is a valuable collection that reflects the current state of Reagan scholarship. It is, for the most part, clearly expressed and eminently readable, and will be equally valuable for those seeking to gain a quick overview of the key national security issues bound up with Reagan's presidency and those searching for an overview of or a standpoint on a particular topic. The book represents a wide examination of a key period in US foreign relations, and one that, as the foreword reminds us, holds lessons for national security students and professionals today, especially those concerned with negotiations with antagonistic states, nuclear policy, and relationships between allies.

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