

Red Cloud at Dawn: Truman, Stalin, and the End of the Atomic Monopoly.

By Michael D. Gordin. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009. 402 pages. \$28.00. **Reviewed by George H. Quester**, Professor of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, and author of *Nuclear Monopoly*.

This is a very well-researched and well-written book, replete with interesting details, and it will be must reading for anyone interested in the years of the American nuclear monopoly. But a major criticism of the book would have to be the working premise of the author, which emerges as his conclusion but seems to have already persuaded him even as he began to sort the interesting evidence, that some great opportunity was missed for heading off the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The author repeatedly characterizes the American decisions on trying to maintain a nuclear monopoly, and on watching for signs of Soviet nuclear progress, as some kind of subjective and mistaken “reactions” and “interpretations,” giving very little attention to the possibility that the objective situation might have made distrust of Josef Stalin’s Soviet Union inevitable. When Americans overestimate the length of time that it will take the Soviets to make the atomic bomb, this gets characterized as “cocky,” while when the time is underestimated, this is portrayed as “suspicious.” Given what we now know about Stalin’s Soviet Union, and what we knew even then, might it not be that the objective situation dictated that the monopoly not be surrendered any earlier than it had to be?

Gordin seems to believe that an early sharing of information on how to produce nuclear weapons, as had been advocated by Manhattan Project physicist Niels Bohr, would have reassured and relaxed the Soviets, but (seemingly countering this) he presents fascinating accounts of the suspicions with which Stalin and Lavrenty Beria, director of secret police, distrusted even the data that their own espionage agents inside the Manhattan Project were conveying, fearing that it was disinformation. If the Soviets distrusted their own spies to this degree, how much would they have trusted a more open offer of data from the Truman Administration? Such distrust of others is characteristic of dictatorships, and it is matched by tendencies to treachery.

To be fair, the author does not ignore how odious a domestic system the Soviet Union was in these years, noting that Soviet nuclear scientists might indeed have faced imprisonment or execution if their nuclear efforts failed. The account of the pace of the Soviet nuclear program does not delve into a very different alternative history. What if America and Britain had accepted at face value the signals that Werner Heisenberg may have tried to transmit via Bohr, that there was not any real German nuclear weapons program that the Manhattan Project had to preempt? If Stalin’s spies had told him that the western Allies were abstaining from developing atomic weaponry because the Germans were abstaining, would he have done likewise, or would he have told his nuclear scientists to get moving even faster?

Gordin, while noting in passing that Stalin himself was fearful of an American preemptive attack, assigns very few pages to the possibility that anyone in the West during the years of the nuclear monopoly would have entertained thoughts of a preventive war to head off Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons. One finds references to General Leslie Groves, whose depiction in this book comes across as somewhat of a

caricature, but none to Major General Orvil Anderson, who as Commandant of the Air War College in these years had regularly been giving and sponsoring lectures on the option of a preventive war. One also finds no reference to Winston Churchill's several speeches suggesting such action while the monopoly was in place. On a not-so-trivial factual point, the author states that the Soviet nuclear detonation detected in 1949 used up the only Soviet atomic bomb, but this claim contradicts some other accounts of the process, which state that Stalin felt he needed to have at least one other bomb in reserve, in case he were confronted with an American ultimatum following the test.

To repeat, the historical and factual account of the Soviet nuclear program in this book is very rich in interesting detail and well presented, as is the American effort to assay this program, and the steps taken to detect any progress it was making. The book offers evidence for both sides of the debate on whether the surprisingly rapid Soviet acquisition of the bomb was due to Russian ingenuity or espionage. The Smyth Report, which many today would characterize as having told the world a bit too much about the way American nuclear weapons had been produced, is interestingly discussed, along with the debates at the time regarding the likely availability around the globe of uranium, the crucial ingredient for such weapons.

For anyone advocating a move to "global zero" in nuclear weapons today, the account of mutual suspicion and conflicting national ambitions presented in *Red Cloud at Dawn* would indeed be a very cautionary tale.

The Clausewitz Delusion: How the American Army Screwed up the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. By Stephen L. Melton. Minneapolis, Minn.: Zenith Press, 2009. 306 pages. \$30. **Reviewed by Dr. Janeen Klinger**, Professor of Political Science, US Army War College.

Stephen L. Melton in *The Clausewitz Delusion* offers a useful reminder that although knowledge of history is essential for military professionals, that knowledge must be broad and comprehensive rather than selective. Thus, Mr. Melton argues that the US Army failed in Iraq and Afghanistan because it drew from its Cold War experience a defensive mentality while forgetting its World War II experience concerning the character of offensive wars and the need for military governance in their aftermath. As a consequence of its narrowly historical focus, the Army did not have the doctrine, force structure, or training programs necessary to execute an offensive war with its associated mission of military governance. From this promising starting point the remainder of the book is disappointing for several reasons.

First, from the introduction the reader expects that because the author has identified critical shortcomings of the Army in terms of doctrine, force structure, and training, the rest of the book will provide an elaboration of what these elements should look like to prosecute an offensive war successfully. Yet nowhere in the book is such a blueprint provided. Rather, the author makes general criticisms suggesting, for instance, that the Army is too tradition bound and backward looking. Contradictorily, he also chastises the Army for abandoning the pragmatism and engineering approaches that characterized it during the Progressive Era and World War II. How can an institution simultaneously be backward looking and abandon earlier approaches? To be sure, Chapter 10, "Organizing for Military Governance," seems to be an appropriate place