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Introduction by Paul Thomas Chamberlin

**Craig Daigle. *The Limits of Détente: the United States, the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-73*.** New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. ISBN: 9780300167139 (cloth, \$55.00).

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Introduction by Paul Thomas Chamberlin, University of Kentucky

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In *The Limits of Détente*, Craig Daigle sets out to explain the relationship between superpower détente and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The book is principally an examination of the Richard Nixon administration's policies toward Egypt and Israel in the run-up to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War based on extensive research in U.S. archives. Daigle's study confirms and documents many of the interpretations of earlier scholars such as William Quandt, Raymond Garthoff, Galia Golan, Avi Shlaim, and Benny Morris, but his focus on the impact of the larger Cold War on the regional story adds a new and controversial twist.<sup>1</sup> The reviewers find much to praise in the book, although they each take issue with certain aspects of Daigle's analysis. On the whole, however, they agree that *The Limits of Détente* represents a valuable contribution to the growing literature on U.S.-Middle East relations.

Nigel Ashton considers Daigle's book to be, on the whole, persuasive. While conventional interpretations treat the 1973 war as "the prime example of a local conflict which threatened the broader framework of superpower détente," Ashton explains that Daigle turns "this thesis on its head." He questions the author's argument that the war "came as a complete surprise," however, noting a series of warnings that came from Jordan's King Hussein in the prelude to the conflict. Ashton appreciates the book's efforts to rehabilitate Secretary of State William Rogers and its detailed examination of superpower diplomacy under the Nixon administration. His judgement is that "Daigle offers a convincing narrative of developments in U.S. strategy and superpower relations over the Middle East during these key years."

Galia Golan is also complimentary, praising the book as "brilliant, well-written, and extraordinarily well documented." She commends the author for making use of U.S., British, and Israeli sources but expresses some disappointment at the lack of documents from the Soviet archives. Thus, Golan points out that while the book engages with Moscow's role, "the book is heavily weighted to an analysis of American policy." She takes issue with Daigle's interpretation of détente, however:

"The purpose of the war, in my opinion, was to 'shake up' the superpowers into an understanding that the status quo could not be sustained and that 'no war, no peace' was intolerable. I do not believe that Sadat wanted to disrupt superpower cooperation; he wanted to spur the two to action for a settlement."

She also wishes that Daigle had done more to examine the meaning of détente for the two superpowers and, in particular, the differing interpretations of détente in both Washington and Moscow. While the Soviets linked détente to a relaxation of tensions in the Arab-Israeli

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<sup>1</sup> William Quandt, *Peace Process* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2005 ); Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1994); Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (New York: Vintage, 2001).

dispute, she explains, National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger held a very different understanding: “For Kissinger, détente did not include a joint settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict; basically he wanted the Arabs, particularly Egypt, to reach a point of despairing that Moscow could get their territories back for them and, therefore, reject the Soviets altogether.” While she notes a number of areas where she wishes Daigle had provided more detail and analysis, she is happy that “Daigle’s extraordinary archival work has vindicated” the earlier work of many Kremlinologists such as herself.

Mary Ann Heiss lauds *The Limits of Détente* as a “stimulating and valuable book for scholars” and a fine example of the ways in which newly-declassified documents can reshape our understanding of U.S. foreign policy. “By recasting the story of the Yom Kippur War against the backdrop of the Cold War,” she writes, “Daigle offers a useful corrective to narrow regionally-bound conceptualizations of the conflict.” She finds Daigle’s efforts to cast détente as a cause of the war “interesting—and largely supported,” though she also praises the book for showing the ways in which local actors exercised their own agency. In particular, she explains, “it is not inaccurate to see the U.S.-Israeli relationship in this context as a case of the tail wagging the dog.” Moscow, for that matter, had little control over Sadat’s actions. Heiss also believes that the book highlights the importance of key individuals – such as Kissinger, Rogers, and Sadat – in shaping history. Finally, she notes Daigle’s contribution in showing the ways in which the pursuit of détente blinded policymakers in Washington to its negative impact in places such as the Middle East.

Thomas Schwartz praises *The Limits of Détente* as “an exceptionally well-written book, with a fast-paced and literate style that absorbs the reader quickly and fully.” He notes that Daigle has used the “traditional tools of diplomatic history” along with available published materials to produce something “close to an international history of the Middle Eastern issue from 1969-1973, still one that is based essentially on American material, but with a perspective that seeks to get beyond Washington’s outlook and present the motivations and actions of all the major players.” Schwartz is more skeptical, however, of Daigle’s argument that Détente was a key cause of the 1973 War. “Although I understand the sequence of events that Daigle sees,” Schwartz writes, “I also wonder about a counterfactual question: would the October War have occurred if the United States and the Soviet Union were not engaged in détente? The answer is not immediately obvious.” In my own view, Daigle’s book is significant for three key reasons.<sup>2</sup> First, it is a well-written and thoroughly documented account of U.S. policy towards Israel and Egypt between 1969 and 1963. Second, it combats what I see as the pernicious tendency in some circles to view the Middle East in exceptionalist terms – the notion, not unlike American exceptionalism, that the history of the region and the peoples who live in it are fundamentally different from other parts of the world. This particular tendency has long plagued U.S. relations with the Middle East. Rather, Daigle’s book seeks to contextualize the Arab-Israeli conflict in the wider landscape of the Cold War. Third, by identifying superpower détente as a principal cause of the October War, Daigle offers a provocative argument in defense of the centrality of the superpowers during the Cold War era. While not all readers will agree with this last

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<sup>2</sup> My own review of the book is forthcoming in *Diplomatic History*.

argument, it nevertheless represents a contribution to the ongoing debate about the balance of influence between small powers and superpowers during the Cold War.

**Participants:**

**Craig Daigle** is an Associate Professor of History at the City College of New York and author of *The Limits of Detente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* (Yale University Press, 2012).

**Paul Thomas Chamberlin** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Kentucky. His first book, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* was published with Oxford University Press in 2012. He is now working on a history of the Cold War in the Third World tentatively titled, *The Cold War's Killing Fields*.

**Nigel J. Ashton** is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He read for his undergraduate degree and his PhD at Christ's College, Cambridge. He is the author of *King Hussein of Jordan: A Political Life*, (2008), *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: The Irony of Interdependence* (2002), and *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59* (1996). He has also edited *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and the Superpowers, 1967-73* (2007) and *The Iran-Iraq War: New International Perspectives* (2013). Currently he is working on a study of the transition from British to American hegemony in the Middle East.

**Galia Golan** is Darwin Professor of Soviet and East European Studies (emerita) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where she was head of the Mayrock Center for Eurasian and East European Studies and of the Department of Political Science. She is presently Professor of Government at the Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya. Dr. Golan has been a scholar at the Rand Corporation, the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC, the Stanford-Berkeley Program on Soviet International Behavior, Cornell University, UCLA, and others. She is the author of nine books including *Yom Kippur and After* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979, 2009; *Moscow and the Middle East: New Thinking on Regional Conflict*, Pinter Press, London, 1992; *Soviet Policies in the Middle East From World War II to Gorbachev*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, 2010; *The Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Movement*, Praeger, 1980, as well as numerous monographs and articles dealing with the Soviet Union and the Middle East, including recently "The Soviet Union and the 1973 War," in Asaf Siniver (ed.), *The October 1973 War: Politics, Legacy, Diplomacy*, Hurst & Oxford University Press, March 2013; "The Soviet Union and the Cold War in the Middle East," Nigel Ashton (ed.), in *The Cold War in the Middle East, 1967-73*, Routledge, 2007. At present, she publishes on peace efforts in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**Mary Ann Heiss**, Associate Professor of History at Kent State University, holds a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Her publications include *Empire and Nationhood: The United States, Great Britain, and Iranian Oil, 1950-1954* (Columbia University Press, 1997); co-edited volumes on the recent history/future of NATO, U.S. relations with the Third World, and

intrabloc conflict within NATO and the Warsaw Pact; and numerous essays in edited collections and professional journals, including the *International History Review* and *Diplomatic History*. Her current research explores the issue of colonialism as a factor in Anglo-American relations, particularly against the backdrop of the United Nations, in the period 1945-1963.

**Thomas Alan Schwartz** is a Professor of History and Political Science at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of the books *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (1991) and *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (2003), and with Matthias Schulz, the edited volume, *The Strained Alliance: US-European Relations in the 1970s*, (2009).

The outbreak of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War has long been seen as the prime example of a local conflict which threatened the broader framework of superpower détente in the early 1970s. In *The Limits of Détente*, Craig Daigle seeks to turn this thesis on its head. His central argument is that the October 1973 war was in fact a consequence of détente: that the mitigation of U.S.-Soviet tensions paradoxically emboldened Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to launch the war and drag the reluctant superpowers into seeking a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to salvage their new relationship. This thesis is persuasive to a large extent. President Sadat's motives in launching the war have typically been framed within the context of his frustration at the deadlock in the regional peace process and the unwillingness of the Nixon Administration to press Israel to make concessions. Framed in this way, Sadat's resort to war, which took many, but not all, informed observers at the time by surprise, was a gamble worth taking. Daigle's distinctive contribution to this narrative lies in underlining the paradox that the improvement in superpower relations in the years leading up to the 1973 war, in fact made the outbreak of hostilities more likely. The apparent unwillingness of the Moscow and Washington to rupture their relations over Middle East strategy closed off the one remaining diplomatic option open to Sadat. As Daigle puts it: "although détente relaxed tensions and improved relations between the United States and the Soviet Union at the global strategic level during the early 1970s, at the regional level, détente undermined progress toward an Arab-Israeli peace settlement and in so doing helped trigger the October War" (9).

In terms of the specifics of the argument advanced by Daigle, I find his opening contention that "the war came as a complete surprise" debatable. (1) In fact there were indications through several channels that the Egyptians and Syrians might be preparing for war, not least from King Hussein of Jordan whose Chief of Military Intelligence, Abboud Salem, had cultivated a high-ranking Syrian officer who supplied what turned out to be accurate information about Syrian intentions. King Hussein spent much of the six-month period leading up to the outbreak of the war telling anyone who would listen that he expected a war to break out soon. For instance, during a meeting with British Prime Minister Edward Heath on 12 July 1973, Hussein warned that "he had heard dates mentioned (sometimes for this month and also for a more distant date) at which hostilities could commence... Action might occur quite soon and would be very dangerous... Something spectacular was being planned."<sup>1</sup> The King also warned about the imminent outbreak of war during a covert meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir on 25 September 1973. Indeed, the Israelis were also receiving information that war was imminent from other intelligence sources, most notably from Ashraf Marwan, Nasser's son-in-law, whom they had recruited as an agent. The Jordanian information at least made its way back to Washington, so Secretary of State Henry Kissinger could not have been quite as surprised as he subsequently claimed by the outbreak of war, even if its precise timing remained unpredictable until very late in the day. In sum, then, I think the opening statement in Daigle's book needs to be qualified.

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<sup>1</sup> Nigel Ashton, *King Hussein of Jordan: A Political Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 171.

Thereafter, one of the principal contributions Daigle's book makes, particularly in its discussion of the initial phase of the Richard Nixon presidency, is to rehabilitate the role of Nixon's first Secretary of State William Rogers, who has for the most part lived in the shadow of his successor Henry Kissinger. Here, as with so many aspects of the Nixon Administration's foreign policy, Kissinger's own account delivered in his memoirs has been highly influential up until now in shaping the historiography. But Daigle shows that Rogers was not only the key player regarding Middle East policy during Nixon's first term, the eponymous Rogers Plan of December 1969, while apparently unsuccessful in the short term, in fact "defined the direction of American policy in the Middle East for the following decade" (71). The formulations used by Kissinger in his post-war 'Shuttle Diplomacy' and in the Camp David negotiations brokered by President Jimmy Carter in 1978 were all largely based on the principles outlined in the plan.

Daigle's discussion of the failed superpower diplomacy over the Middle East during the Nixon Presidency is detailed and persuasive. He also charts effectively the decline of Soviet influence in Egypt after Sadat's accession to power. He gives detailed attention to Sadat's various attempts to open closer relations with Washington via backchannels, particularly in the wake of the Egyptian President's decision to expel 15,000 Soviet advisers from Egypt in July 1972 (238-60). Kissinger took these moves seriously and paid special attention to reports sent back from Cairo by Eugene Trone, the CIA Station Chief who had worked out of the American interests section at the Spanish Embassy in Cairo since the 1967 war.<sup>2</sup> Trone's main contact was with Hafez Ismail, who became Sadat's National Security Adviser in 1971. After his return to Washington in early 1972, Kissinger asked Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms to assign Trone to his staff temporarily. Using Trone's existing channel to Hafez Ismail, a U.S.-Egyptian dialogue was opened and a series of covert meetings ensued. Unfortunately the dialogue came to nothing, with Kissinger more pre-occupied with the barrier presented by likely Israeli intransigence than the signals Ismail gave that Egypt would not settle for the status quo. The failure of these covert contacts reinforced Sadat's conviction that the only way to make the situation move was through military action.

Daigle's discussion of the countdown to war in 1973 is persuasive and draws on a wide range of sources including declassified documents, public statements and memoirs to present a very full picture of developments. For the war itself, he points out the irony of much of the contemporary commentary which portrayed it as a success for détente, with the United States and the Soviet Union managing a conflict which might easily have escalated into full-scale confrontation. Daigle offers two qualifications to this view. Firstly, the war demonstrated the limits of détente: "both superpowers could have brought the war to an end by calling for an immediate ceasefire in the UN Security Council. Instead, they chose to begin a massive airlift of weapons to their respective clients, prolonging the war and exacerbating tensions in Soviet-American relations" (330). Secondly, and more importantly, Daigle argues that the war was "in large part a product of Soviet-American relations and decision-making during the previous four and a half years and was a

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<sup>2</sup> Jack O'Connell, *King's Counsel: A Memoir of War, Espionage and Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: W.W Norton, 2011), 116-17.

consequence of détente.... Sadat felt compelled to launch an attack against Israel to move the superpowers off their frozen positions” (330-31).

In sum, then, Daigle offers a convincing narrative of developments in U.S. strategy and superpower relations over the Middle East during these key years. His use of extensive primary source material, particularly on the U.S. side, provides a level of detail illuminating the diplomacy of this period in an original and thoughtful way.



Review by Galia Golan, Hebrew University of Jerusalem (emerita); Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya

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The book is brilliant, well-written, and extraordinarily well documented. Indeed one of the most striking qualities of the work is the vast amount of archival sources accessed, mainly in the U.S. but also in Britain and Israel. While the author did not use available resources from the former Soviet Union he did consult a few books in English by former Soviet officials. In addition, the U.S. sources carry quite a few documents that include the Soviet interlocutors or messages and thus provide a good picture of Soviet positions. That said, the book is heavily weighted to an analysis of American policy; the Soviet side of the détente equation is well analyzed on the whole but nonetheless far less thoroughly than the American side. Israeli and Egyptian considerations are also analyzed, intelligently and for the most part accurately. While the book provides a detailed account of the superpowers' policies toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in the period before and during the 1973 war, its main contribution is the highlighting of the overriding importance of détente in this period.

Daigle's main thesis is that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat went to war in order to disrupt the détente policy of the superpowers that was perpetuating a do-nothing 'no war, no peace' situation in the region. Daigle is certainly correct in his contention that the Soviet-U.S. summit of 1972, which closed with a resolution calling for military relaxation in the Middle East, led to Sadat's expulsion of the Soviet 'advisors' (forces) from Egypt and his preparations for war. However, I would contest that this was actually the *reason* he decided to go to war and that the purpose of the war was to disrupt détente. The purpose of the war, in my opinion, was to "shake up" the superpowers into an understanding that the status quo could not be sustained and that 'no war, no peace' was intolerable. I do not believe that Sadat wanted to disrupt superpower cooperation; he wanted to spur the two to action for a settlement – not "relaxation in the Middle East." Indeed, Sadat's policy from the time he came to power in 1970 was to seek a return of Egypt's territory – whether by diplomatic means (such as his proposals of 1971 and early 1973 or his agreement to UN intermediary Gunnar Jarring's formula) or by war. Thus, even as he sought a peaceful settlement, he ordered his military to prepare for (limited) war and repeatedly sought newer offensive Soviet weapons and aircraft. Given the Soviets' continued stalling regarding the equipment, the 1972 summit resolution was the straw that broke the camel's back. Indeed that precipitated his decision to go through with the war option with or without the Soviets' assistance (contrary to the Israeli intelligence "conception"), though he did try again in 1973, as Daigle documents, to reach a settlement with Israel via both Washington and Moscow. Soviet-American détente was indeed threatened during the war, as Daigle analyzes accurately, but that was not the purpose behind Sadat's decision, which was, rather, to launch a limited attack across the Canal, in order to shock the superpowers into action for a settlement – something that would require pressure on Israel. As Daigle points out, Sadat was later to say that the purpose was to restore Egypt's honor, or, as the Soviets concluded, to destroy the myth of Israel's invincibility, both of which may have also been considerations though not, apparently, the primary ones.

Since the book is on détente, Daigle might have analyzed more deeply both the reasons for and meaning of détente for each of the superpowers. There were significant differences in interpretation just as there were quite different objectives regarding the achievement of a settlement in the Middle East. When it came to the Middle East, détente and a settlement were linked far more intimately in the eyes of the Soviets (and perhaps U.S. President Richard Nixon) than those of National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. For Kissinger, détente did not include a joint settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict; basically he wanted the Arabs, particularly Egypt, to reach a point of despairing that Moscow could get their territories back for them and, therefore, reject the Soviets altogether. This might explain his negative attitude toward the comprehensive peace plan presented by Secretary of State Rogers in 1968 and the differences between his (Kissinger's) recalcitrance, as distinct from Nixon's greater sense of urgency prior to 1973, discussed by Daigle. This was the even clearer distinction between Kissinger and the Soviets. The latter were pushing almost desperately for progress towards a settlement in the Middle East so as to avoid the outbreak of war and the disruption this could cause to détente – which for Soviet Secretary General Chairman Leonid Brezhnev was of supreme importance. While Daigle does assert this, he almost ignores – as did Kissinger – the Soviets' peace proposals and concessions in 1969, especially 1970 and after, notably the change in the basic Soviet position on a settlement. In 1970, even as they were allowing their military personnel and equipment to be used against Israel in the war of attrition,<sup>1</sup> the Soviets suggested for the first time that Israel's borders could be officially recognized as the 4 June 1967 line (not the 1947 partition plan lines) and, more relevantly at this time, they abandoned their position that Israeli withdrawal must precede a peace agreement, allowing, in the plan they gave the Americans 22 June 1970, that these two steps could be simultaneous.<sup>2</sup> Daigle does, however, discuss the urgency with which the Soviets pressed Kissinger regarding a settlement in the months before the outbreak of the war, and Kissinger's delaying tactics, that were prompted at least in part, one may assume, by his expectation that Golda Meir would continue to reject the Egyptian proposals relayed by the two superpowers as she had in 1971 and early 1973, as well as by his wish ultimately to exclude the Soviets.

With the outbreak of the war, Kissinger did share Moscow's concern that détente could be damaged and early efforts for a cease-fire were coordinated to some degree. The American documents, first brought to light by Daigle, clearly reveal the priority Moscow gave to

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<sup>1</sup> These forces were sent to Egypt in Operation Kavkaz not to help the Egyptians but for Soviet purposes vis a vis the Americans in the Mediterranean; the decision to provide previously refused air defense for Egypt and allow Soviet forces to be used in the war of attrition came only after the decision on Operation Kavkaz. See Dima P. Adamsky, "Zero-Hour for the Bears": Inquiring into the Soviet Decision to Intervene in the Egyptian-Israeli War of Attrition, 1969–1970," *Cold War History* 6, no. 1 (2006): 115.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Igor Beliaev in *Mezhdunarodnye zhizn*, March 1970 or Evgenii Primkov, *Pravda*, 15 October 1970.

détente. In my 1979 book on the Soviets and the Yom Kippur war,<sup>3</sup> I listed Moscow's objectives during the war as both to repair their relations with Egypt and Syria (following the deterioration they had suffered due to Moscow's opposition to the Arabs' plans to go to war) and to avoid direct confrontation with the US. I listed only secondarily an avoidance of harm to détente. The American documents point clearly to preservation of détente as the number one Soviet objective. For example, as a gesture of cooperation, and an express wish to avoid superpower polarization at the UN, the Soviets offered merely to abstain, not veto, an American cease-fire proposal should Washington decide to present such a proposal to the Security Council (this was at a time that Moscow was still unsuccessful in getting Sadat's agreement to a cease-fire).<sup>4</sup>

Actually Daigle does not note the angry exchanges between Sadat and Moscow's cease-fire seeking emissaries beginning on the first day of the war and throughout even Kosygin's unsuccessful visit 16-19 October. The angry exchanges over the Soviets' claim that Syria had agreed to a cease-fire (10 and 13 October) are missing, as is the Soviet-American dispatch of the British ambassador to press Sadat to agree to a cease-fire, agreed to by Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, early morning 13 October. Similarly missing is the importance of Moscow's decision finally to propose a cease-fire without Sadat's agreement, in view of Israeli successes in the fighting. Daigle also left out the Egyptian army's effort to move out of its positions on the eastern side of the Canal on 14 October and the successful Israeli counter attack that actually changed the tide of the war that day (and precipitated the dispatch of Kosygin to Cairo), followed on the night of 15-16 October by the Israeli beachhead on the western side of the Canal.

Daigle writes of Brezhnev's "split personality" (264), which may or may not be accurate. But there was a certain dualism or apparent contradictions in Soviet policy on the conflict: training and arming the Arabs while trying to restrain them, returning advisors and resuming supplies early in 1973 after the 6-month suspension caused by the expulsion but yet angering both Sadat and Asad by continuing to oppose the war option, and so forth. It would have been wise to have discussed these, possibly attributing them to differences of opinion within the Kremlin or to efforts to play both ends – in order to maintain Soviet interests (bases) in these countries. There were differences of opinion within the Kremlin, certainly on the issue of détente and this could be seen even during the war. On the very day (8 October) that both Kissinger and Brezhnev were praising the value of détente, Soviet Defense Minister Andrei Grechko was pointing to the war as an example of western aggressiveness and the need for vigilance.<sup>5</sup> His views could be seen in the military press

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<sup>3</sup> Galia Golan, *Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979 (reissued 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Message from Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev to President Nixon, National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 68, Country Files; Europe, USSR, Dobrynin/Kissinger, vol.19, [July 13, 1973-October 11, 1973] Top Secret. (FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol.XXV, *Arab-Israeli Crisis and War*, 1973; Document 149, 432.)

<sup>5</sup> *Pravda*, 9 October 1973 (Brezhnev); *Pravda*, 8 October 1973 and, for example, *Krasnaia zvezda*, 11 October 1973 (Grechko).

during the war, and it was Grechko's hawkish voice that was raised in the Politburo discussions as well. Anti-détente sentiments and hawkishness during the war were indeed related; Daigle might have discussed the role of such differences over détente not only in Moscow but also in Washington, a matter that affected the decisions of both Kissinger and Brezhnev.

One of the serious concerns of a veteran Soviet specialist like myself is that once archives were opened or participants/former officials could talk, all of our 'educated guesses' based on open sources and a good deal of what was called Kremlinology would be proved incorrect. Fortunately Daigle's extraordinary archival work has vindicated me on a number of points in my 1979 book and subsequent pieces on the war, such as the Soviets' opposition to the war and efforts not only for a cease-fire but also a settlement of the conflict (to which they would be co-guarantors).<sup>6</sup> He also accepts my contention that the Soviets' resupply effort during the war was not intended to prolong the war but mainly to shore up the Arabs before an expected Israeli recovery (and an Arab call for Soviet help) until a cease-fire were achieved – though Daigle credits later researchers for this analysis. Most importantly, he too concludes that the Soviets did not plan to intervene militarily on 24 October when Israeli forces continued their advance on the city of Suez on the west side of the Canal and surrounded the Egyptian third army on the east side. Confirming this with the first-hand account provided by former Soviet diplomat Victor Israelyan, Daigle might have added the important detail pointed out by Israeli and former Soviet leading officials: The Soviet Politburo thought they were sending a relatively mild message to Nixon that evening but after the meeting someone inserted the more threatening sentence beginning "I'll say it to you straight...."<sup>7</sup> (Daigle, 320). Thus they were surprised by what was seen as an overreaction by the Americans – strengthening the anti-détentists in the Politburo. Where I disagree with Daigle, and Kissinger, neither the Israeli nor other Soviet material suggests that the Soviets sought to exploit Nixon's weakened position due to Watergate. On the whole, the Soviets did not understand Watergate – on other occasions one can see that they thought the whole Watergate affair was somehow directed against them, by anti-détentists in America. What they did think, perhaps, was that the United States could, if it wanted, control Israel.

Unfortunately the concluding chapter is not up to the very high standard of the rest of Daigle's book. The effort to discuss Jordan, the Palestine Liberation Organization and subsequent developments in the Middle East is far too skimpy and it is unsuited for a conclusion. It

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the Yom Kippur War," in P.R. Kumaraswamy (ed), *Revisiting the Yom Kippur War* (London: Frank Cass, 2000) or my forthcoming, "The Soviet Union and the 1973 War" in Assaf Siniver (ed), *The October 1973 War: Politics, Legacy, Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press; London: Hurst, March 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Gromyko comment: Golan in Kumaraswamy, 148; Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, New York: Basic Books, 2009, 157; Anatoly Dobynin, *In Confidence*, New York: Times Books, 1995, 295. Both cite the same source: Gromyko's aide, Vasily Grubyakov; Victor Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War*, University Park: University of Pennsylvania, 1995, 168-169 said by Brezhnev himself. See also, E.D. Prylin, *Trudny i dolgii put' k miri*, Moscow: Rospen, 2002, 170-171.

might have been preferable to explain more fully the fate of détente: the Jackson-Vanik and Stevenson amendments; Soviet actions on Angola and the Horn of Africa; the success of the anti-détentists in both countries, not in small part fortified by each superpower's actions during the 1973 conflict.

Notwithstanding the minor issues or comments above, I believe that Daigle's book is an enormous contribution to an understanding of the superpowers' relations in the period of détente and the role of détente in the Arab-Israeli conflict at the time. No other book on the topic, to my knowledge, provides as much insight, comprehensive documentation, and breadth of information.

Craig Daigle's *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* draws on a multitude of newly declassified U.S. documents to place the 1973 Yom Kippur War within a larger international context. Rather than see the war as a simple outgrowth of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict with roots firmly grounded in the Middle East, Daigle instead takes a wider gaze and situates it within the framework of superpower relations, particularly the policy of détente and its attendant thawing of Soviet-American animosity. In an interesting—and largely supported—assertion, in fact, he lays both the war's origins and the subsequent scramble by both Washington and Moscow to end it as quickly as possible firmly at détente's feet. Yet no sooner had the war been concluded—in no small measure because of mutual superpower desires to preserve the hard-won amelioration of Cold War tensions—then the United States shook itself loose from the confines of détente and pursued the unilateral course in the search for an Arab-Israeli peace that has been the norm ever since, effectively freezing the Soviets out of the Middle East and revealing, quite clearly, that détente did indeed have its limits. By recasting the story of the Yom Kippur War against the backdrop of the Cold War, Daigle offers a useful corrective to narrow regionally-bound conceptualizations of the conflict as well as a lesson in how recently released materials are helping to alter historical understandings. For me, this last point is particularly important, as *The Limits of Détente* is definitely a case where access to and use of newly declassified documents has made a real difference in helping to advance knowledge. As a result, I believe that the book is a valuable asset for those who advocate for accelerating the declassification process so that enterprising and creative historians like Daigle can continue to expand that knowledge. Although there are many aspects of the book that strike me as noteworthy, I will confine myself here to two: what I see as the volume's internal structure (and accompanying interpretive contribution) and its thematic connections to the larger literature.

Daigle's narrative, which unfolds chronologically, might be seen as moving along three tracks—the Arab-Israeli conflict itself, superpower détente, and the intersection between the two. The defining feature of the regional Middle Eastern context, and the central issue in generating regional ill will, was Arab discontent with the continued Israeli occupation of territory seized after the 1967 Six Day War, most notably the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights. For Israel, occupation was a lever in possible negotiations with the Arab states regarding recognition and permanent peace. It was also an outgrowth of Israel's perceived lessons from the Suez war of 1956, when it had withdrawn without political gains, a mistake that Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir was determined not to repeat. As a result, Israel resolutely refused to surrender one inch of ground without first receiving political guarantees and in fact worked assiduously to bolster its presence in the occupied territories. At the same time, the Arab states, Egypt predominant among them, insisted that political or diplomatic concessions to Israel had to follow, rather than precede, territorial concessions. With both sides locked in what seemed to be a Gordian knot, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser concluded that an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai could only be effected through military means, and in March 1969 what had been sporadic Egyptian attacks on Israeli targets became an overt—but largely ineffectual—War of

Attrition. In an effort to counter Israel's military superiority, attained in large part through massive infusions of U.S. assistance, Nasser agreed in the spring of 1970 to Operation Kavkaz, which supplemented direct Soviet military assistance to Egypt with the dispatch of more than ten thousand pilots, troops, and other personnel to Egyptian soil, a move that threatened to fundamentally alter the region's strategic balance and that was therefore fraught with Cold War danger for the United States. Once ensconced in Egypt, Washington believed, the Soviets would be difficult to dislodge; their presence, moreover, would surely fuel Israeli calls for increased U.S. assistance and lead inevitably to a potentially catastrophic regional arms buildup. August 1970 brought a tenuous U.S.-brokered cease-fire to the War of Attrition but little prospect of a permanent peace because neither side changed its fundamental national assumptions. Nasser's death the following month and his succession by Anwar el-Sadat, however, at last opened the door to a negotiated settlement. Less overtly pro-Soviet than Nasser, Sadat replaced his predecessor's bellicose approach with a more moderate one that included affirmation of the cease-fire, diplomatic overtures to the United States, and finally termination of the Soviet military presence in Egypt in July 1972. Yet when a diplomatic resolution to the matter of the occupied territories still proved elusive, growing public frustration with his lack of success in securing even a modicum of Israeli withdrawal left Sadat ultimately with only a military option to secure such an outcome, Egypt's palpable weakness vis-à-vis Israel notwithstanding.

Ongoing Israeli-Egyptian tensions over the occupied territories occurred against the backdrop of the Soviet-American effort to ease superpower tensions known as *détente*, which constitutes the second track of Daigle's story. After decades of tension, name calling, and more than a little sabre rattling, by the late 1960s both the United States and the Soviet Union saw a normalization of relations as in their respective national interests; the inauguration of Richard M. Nixon in January 1969 provided the impetus for wholesale change. For Nixon, such a development could help to alleviate the risk of nuclear confrontation, might serve to improve the U.S. image abroad, and was likely the only way to arrange a negotiated end to the costly and increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam. For Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev, *détente* could neutralize the consequences of an imminent rapprochement between Beijing and Washington, rehabilitate a Soviet world image badly damaged by the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia, and reduce the considerable cost to the Soviet economy of the Cold War nuclear standoff. *Détente* proceeded apace through the early 1970s and resulted in agreements to limit nuclear weapons, facilitate bilateral cultural contacts, and reduce the chance of conflict in Europe. Nixon and Brezhnev exchanged much ballyhooed diplomatic visits, and Soviet-American relations in the original Cold War confrontation zones improved considerably. This was not the case in other parts of the world, however, and particularly not in the Middle East, to which "*détente* rarely, if ever, extended" (5). Despite the potential that regional discord would damage the superpower relationship, the United States continued to arm Israel and the Soviet Union remained the primary supplier of military assistance to the Arab states, including Egypt. Neither seemed willing to push its respective client toward meaningful diplomatic negotiations, which of course would have entailed Arab recognition of Israeli statehood and promises to live with it in peace and Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. The framework of such a settlement, often dubbed 'land for peace,' had been laid out in Security Council Resolution 242 following the conclusion of the 1967 Six Day

War, but a variety of factors had prevented the resolution's implementation. As a result, the Middle East remained locked in a stalemated status quo of 'no war, no peace' that both Washington and Moscow seemed willing to endure for the sake of their overall improving general relationship. Egypt, however, found the stalemated situation increasingly intolerable. It was its territory, after all, that the Israelis occupied, and by the summer of 1972 Sadat ruefully concluded that his only option was a military strike—not to retake the Sinai by force but to compel Soviet and particularly U.S. assistance in jumpstarting diplomatic negotiations.

The intersection of these two developments—the Arab-Israeli conflict and superpower détente—marks the third track of Daigle's volume and constitutes the book's central interpretive thrust. Sadat's failure to convince the United States and the Soviet Union to make the Arab-Israeli issue a priority, symbolized most dramatically by the lack of discussion of Middle Eastern issues during Nixon's historic visit to Moscow in May 1972, ultimately pushed him to act unilaterally, first by expelling the Soviets from Egypt the following month and then by authorizing an Egyptian military strike across the Suez Canal into the occupied Sinai Peninsula on 6 October 1973, a move that was coordinated with a Syrian strike across the occupied Golan Heights. As Daigle makes clear, Sadat knew that Israeli military superiority ruled out the prospect of a battlefield victory. In resorting to military force, however, the Egyptian president was demonstrating the classic Clausewitzian dictum that 'war is the continuation of politics by other means.' By sparking a military confrontation that left the superpowers no choice but to assist their respective regional clients—and jeopardize their hard-won détente by coming dangerously close to direct confrontation in the process, he sought the political gain that would come from superpower involvement in brokering a settlement with Israel. Because none of the major players in the region believed that Sadat would prosecute a war he could not win, which was clearly the case with the Sinai incursion, the Egyptian and Syrian assaults were surprising indeed. Yet unlike previous Arab-Israeli confrontations, the Egyptian operation in the Sinai was limited, with troops under orders merely to cross the Suez Canal and then stop; the goal was decidedly not a military advance on or even toward Israel. (That Egypt's ally Syria was not apprised of Sadat's limited objectives reveals his desperation, as full disclosure of his limited aims would assuredly have prevented Syrian participation, without which Israel would have been able to devote its full attentions to the Egyptian attack in the Sinai. Sadat, for his part, justified his deception by maintaining that the peace talks that would inevitably result from the war would include gains for Syria.) For Sadat, in other words, the military operation was designed to serve notice on Israel and the superpowers that 'no war, no peace' had finally become untenable, with the end result being support from all corners for meaningful discussions at last toward a permanent peace arrangement. Early Egyptian military successes—even if they could not and were not sustained—revealed to Israel for the very first time that the occupied countries weakened rather than enhanced national security by encouraging Arab military action while U.S. and Soviet resupply efforts to their respective clients drove home the dangers of a superpower proxy war in the region that could erupt into a full-scale military conflagration. Taken together, these factors combined to force Washington—and to a lesser extent Moscow—toward direct involvement in the search for a peace, one that would eventually include Israeli agreement to some measure of territorial withdrawal. Henry



Kissinger, who had just added the position of U.S. secretary of state to his portfolio, shouldered the lion's share of the responsibility for successfully arranging a cease-fire agreement on behalf of both the United States and the Soviet Union. By the time serious negotiations toward a real settlement got under way, however, the United States was operating unilaterally. As a result, the Sinai I agreement in January 1974, which effected the first ever Israeli withdrawal from territory acquired by war, was engineered not by the sort of joint Soviet-American cooperation that had ended the Yom Kippur War but through unilateral U.S. efforts spearheaded by Kissinger. The détente-motivated cooperation that had led to a cease-fire to the Yom Kippur War did not extend to the protracted peace negotiations that followed. Instead, the United States worked on its own to win Egyptian and particularly Israeli concessions, thereby achieving Nixon's goal of reducing Soviet influence in the Middle East, but at a cost that Daigle rightly views as frightfully high.

Daigle's tightly woven albeit at times complicated story highlights a number of what I see as key themes in the literature. One, most assuredly, concerns the question of agency or influence, particularly when it came to the patron-client relationships between the Soviet Union and Egypt and the United States and Israel, as Daigle reveals the difficulties that both patrons had in controlling or at times even influencing their clients. To Moscow's chagrin, Soviet military assistance to Egypt did not result in long-term political gain or control, as Sadat purged pro-Soviet elements from his government in the spring of 1971 and otherwise resisted its reach. The United States faced the same, or even greater, problems in trying to influence Israeli policy. Despite its position as the largest provider of military and other assistance to Tel Aviv, Washington was relatively powerless when it came to budging Israeli intransigence regarding Security Council Resolution 242. Prime Minister Meir steadfastly refused any appearance of withdrawal from the occupied territories through the Yom Kippur War and even briefly thereafter. She also brought the United States to its knees by refusing to abide by the initial late October 1973 cease-fire agreement and advancing troops and equipment beyond the agreed upon armistice line to recover territory Israel had lost during the early days of the conflict, a move at least partly sanctioned by Kissinger himself yet one that ultimately forced the Nixon administration to get tough with Meir lest the Soviets increase their military support for Egypt and the entire situation spiral out of control. When it comes to client success in influencing patrons, Sadat's reluctance to be as tightly bound to Moscow as Nasser had been proved frustrating for his Soviet patrons, who could not just walk away from their considerable investment in Egypt or abandon it while the United States continued to support Israel. In the same way, Tel Aviv repeatedly succeeded in shaping U.S. policy in pro-Israeli directions, most notably because, unlike other aspects of détente, the United States could not 'speak' for Israel during negotiations with the Soviets, a reality that greatly diminished U.S. ability to shape events and outcomes. In other words, it is not inaccurate to see the U.S.-Israeli relationship in this context as a case of the tail wagging the dog. By meticulously tracing U.S. and Soviet dealings with their respective Middle East clients during the era of détente, Daigle adds another layer to our understanding of the Yom Kippur War, revealing in the process that while superpower relations may have been decisive for the coming of the war—not to mention its resolution—regional players still exerted a great deal of influence on events and significantly shaped the war's eventual resolution and the burgeoning peace process that followed.

To my reading, thematically the volume also advances prevailing appraisals of the role of key individuals in the making and execution of foreign policy. On the U.S. side, Daigle reinforces the importance that Richard Nixon placed on securing a Middle East peace as well as his determination to move away from Israel and pursue a more even-handed approach to the Middle East, a stance that was vitally important in making it possible for Sadat to begin moving Egypt away from the Soviet Union. He also meticulously dissects the animosity and attendant turf war that raged between Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. The failure of Rogers's early foray into Middle East peacemaking cost him credibility with all three major regional players, and the Soviets, Egyptians, and Israelis, each for their own reasons, seemed to prefer that Kissinger take the lead in representing the United States in regional negotiations instead, even if all three seemed to overestimate their chances of besting the others during such negotiations. On the Egyptian side, Daigle does a masterful job of presenting Sadat's big picture view, his appreciation for the value of non-military action (despite his own military background), and his skill in seeing how a direct challenge to détente was the best way to jumpstart the stalled superpower interest in resolving Middle East problems. And although he does not say so explicitly, Daigle at least suggests that Sadat sought to practice Nixon-Kissinger style linkage by threatening détente in order to force the United States and the Soviet Union to make the Middle East a priority.

A third theme at work here, at least to my way of thinking, relates to the extremely long and deleterious reach of the Cold War, which as Daigle makes abundantly clear had a devastating effect on the Middle East. Spellbound by the promise of détente, itself a product of the Cold War, policymakers in Washington and Moscow were unable to see how desperate the Middle Eastern situation had become by the summer of 1973. As a result, Sadat was forced to take matters into his own hands, as it were, by initiating a military conflict that dragged the superpowers out of their détente-induced stupor and toward a more active role in the search for a Middle East peace. Yet even as both the United States and the Soviet Union appreciated the larger danger the Yom Kippur War presented, at the height of the battle each resupplied its respective client, prolonging the death and destruction rather than working cooperatively to negotiate a cease-fire—and imperiling the détente they so wanted to protect in the process. Daigle rightly judges the superpowers' single-minded pursuit of détente quite harshly, particularly when weighed against its tremendous cost for the Middle East.

*The Limits of Détente* is instructive on a variety of levels. It expands our existing understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict by moving the Yom Kippur War from a strictly regional setting into its proper global one. It goes some distance toward explaining why the issue of the occupied territories remained so intractable, as well as why both sides placed such importance on resolving it. And it adds nuance to détente by revealing that it was not, in fact, a one-size-fits-all, universally applicable approach to superpower relations. Daigle's admirable use of newly declassified documents has certainly complicated, in the best sense of the word, the international origins of the Yom Kippur War, and for that he is to be commended. As I see it, he also makes a very strong case for the rich potential of newly released materials—implicitly arguing for a more progressive declassification policy

in the process. Both combine to make this a stimulating and valuable book for scholars of the modern Middle East and the Cold War era more broadly.

Like many historians of American foreign policy in the post 9/11 and Iraq War years, I have tried to respond to student interest by developing courses on the United States and the Middle East. At the risk of stepping on some overly sensitive toes, it is clear to me that this is a highly politicized field in which it is difficult to find reasonably detached – dare I say objective – treatments of the many conflicts that have defined the region and made it such an important arena for American involvement. Craig Daigle's *The Limits of Détente* is a refreshing change, a book which strives to present as complete and complex a picture as is possible of the background to one of the most important events in the region, the Yom Kippur/Ramadan War of October 1973. It argues, in what surely is one of its most provocative statements, that while détente relaxed global tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, "at the regional level, détente undermined progress toward an Arab-Israeli peace settlement and in so doing helped trigger the October war" (9).

Although this conclusion raises many questions – and I will address those later - the Daigle book is a rich resource for understanding these crucial years. Daigle uses the traditional tools of diplomatic history, in particular a very careful attention to both government documents and the chronological unfolding of the crisis. His experience as a former member of the State Department's Historical Office and compiler of the Foreign Relations series is reflected in his expert use of the diplomatic record, including the Nixon tapes, which provide the President's candid thoughts about the Middle East and his relations with Secretary of State William Rogers during this period. Daigle exploits available Soviet materials, including the Russian records of National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger and Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin's backchannel conversations, as well as some important British sources. He is also determined to bring Egyptian and Israeli perspectives to the table, and has done an excellent job with the available published sources from both countries. The result is close to an international history of the Middle Eastern issue from 1969-1973, still one that is based essentially on American material, but with a perspective that seeks to get beyond Washington's outlook and present the motivations and actions of all the major players.

*The Limits of Détente* is an exceptionally well-written book, with a fast-paced and literate style that absorbs the reader quickly and fully. As I see it, there are a number of important contributions which the Daigle book makes to our understanding of this period. The first is the Cold War significance of the Middle East crisis of 1970. In this period, the Soviet Union, in Operation *Kavkaz*, sent thousands of military advisers to Egypt as well as sophisticated air defense systems and Soviet-piloted aircraft, and actively intervened in Egypt's War of Attrition against Israel. The Soviets were both responding to Israel's deep penetration raids into Egypt as well as making a bold move within a crucial strategic region. It was, as Daigle notes, "one of the most significant military operations outside the Warsaw Pact the Soviet Union had ever made" (99). To some extent American preoccupation with the war in Vietnam and the domestic unrest over Cambodia has led to an underestimation by historians of just how serious a confrontation this was in the history of the Cold War. But as Daigle notes, the Soviets themselves believed that Nixon's concerns with Vietnam made

it less likely that he would act to oppose their military intervention in the Middle East. Because of the turmoil resulting from the Cambodian incursion, by the time the Nixon Administration focused again on the Middle East, it was too late: “The Soviet Union had outmaneuvered the United States in the Middle East without any retribution and had left both Washington and Jerusalem searching for new strategies to combat the Soviet threat” (111).

The intensity of this mid-1970 crisis makes all the more important the role of Secretary of State William Rogers in achieving a ceasefire in August 1970, and Daigle’s book does underline the significance of this often-forgotten figure in the Nixon Administration’s diplomacy. In the introduction Daigle mentions that his initial project was conceived as an examination of the role of Rogers, who was a friend of Nixon and whom Nixon once described as a “superb negotiator” (35). He also makes it clear that the rivalry between Henry Kissinger and Rogers for control over foreign policy had real implications for the Middle East, with Rogers consistently urging a more conciliatory policy toward Egypt, while Kissinger was a skeptic about the possibilities for a peaceful settlement. That Kissinger’s own career after the October 1973 war would be shaped by his shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East only reinforces the irony of this earlier disposition.

The second major contribution which Daigle makes is showing the determination which Anwar Sadat had, from almost the very beginning of his rule, to switch Egypt’s foreign policy orientation from the Soviet Union to the United States, and the extent to which the United States missed this opportunity until after the 1973 Yom Kippur war. The significance of Sadat’s personal decision making, which faced very real challenges from within Egypt’s ruling elite, should not be underestimated. In particular, Sadat’s candid discussions with Secretary of State Rogers in May 1971 are extremely revealing and demonstrate the degree to which he tried to make Americans aware of his preferences. Unfortunately Rogers found that Israel’s leaders were strongly opposed to making concessions during this period, unwilling to contemplate a compromise settlement with the Egyptian leader and overconfident about their military position. For their part the Soviets increased their courtship of Egypt, even signing in May 1971 a 15 year “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” with the country, including clauses that seemed to echo the ‘Brezhnev Doctrine,’ about protecting the “socialist transformation” of the society (183). This move strengthened those in Israel and the U.S. who were arguing against a rapprochement with Egypt. Nixon, who was impressed with Sadat and interested in testing the Egyptian’s leader’s interest in peace, soon found himself hampered by both his other foreign policy priorities – Vietnam, China, and détente – and by the approach of the 1972 presidential election. As he told Rogers, “Unless [he] was able to get some kind of a settlement now with the Israelis on the Suez or some other issue, there was not going to be any settlement until after the 1972 elections” (180).

The third major contribution of this study is its recognition of the limits of power which both superpowers faced in their ability to control their regional allies. Daigle makes it absolutely clear how difficult it was for the Soviet Union to manipulate Egyptian politics to its preferences, even with their ‘Friendship Treaty’ and its ‘protection of socialism’ clauses. Supplying arms and assistance did give the Soviets influence in Egypt and Syria, but it was

not as decisive as the Soviet leaders hoped for, and they could be defied and resisted as well as accommodated. Something of the same applied to the United States and its ability to deal with Israel. Even a President like Richard Nixon, who did not think himself ' beholden ' to the Jewish vote, found that there were limits to what he could convince the Israelis to do when they did not perceive such actions as in their national interest. To this extent the Daigle book is an extremely cautionary work that exposes not only the limits of détente, its primary purpose, but also the limits of power in international relations, a lesson great powers seem to have to relearn at regular intervals.

Finally, although it does seem clear that Sadat saw détente as possibly ' freezing ' the status quo and preventing Egypt from getting its land back, and that this contributed to his decision to attack Israel in October 1973, I am somewhat troubled by the idea of blaming détente for contributing to the outbreak of the war. Although I understand the sequence of events that Daigle sees, I also wonder about a counterfactual question: would the October War have occurred if the United States and the Soviet Union were not engaged in détente? The answer is not immediately obvious. The superpowers might have exercised more restraint on their clients to avoid a conflict. But that did not work in June 1967, when relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were considerably less warm, and it is just as possible that war would have broken out, as the causes – the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian issue – were still there. And a war in the absence of détente may have had much worse consequences. To this extent, Kissinger may have been right when he claimed that détente kept the 1973 war from being even worse, and undermining of international stability even further. He was engaged in some rationalization of course, but even Kissinger should be allowed to see the glass as half-full.

Author's Response by Craig Daigle, City College of New York

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I would like to thank Nigel Ashton, Galia Golan, Mary Ann Heiss, and Thomas Schwartz for their thoughtful and insightful comments on *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973*, and to Thomas Maddux and H-Diplo for hosting this roundtable. I am gratified by the generally positive reviews and for their appreciation of what I set out to accomplish in this book, which is to connect two narratives that have largely been treated separately—superpower détente and the Arab-Israeli conflict—into an international history that situates the outbreak of the October 1973 Yom Kippur/Ramadan War within the general context of the Cold War, and specifically the policy of détente and the thaw in Soviet-American relations.

In brief, I argue that the outbreak of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War was a direct *consequence* of détente. After years of failed U.S. and Soviet diplomacy and Israel's repeated rejections of Egyptian peace overtures, President Anwar Sadat concluded that his only hope of recovering the territories seized by Israel in June 1967 was to create a 'crisis of détente.' Thus, in starting the war, Sadat's primary objective was not to defeat Israel militarily, which he knew he could not do, but rather to reignite the stalled political process by drawing the superpowers into a regional conflict and forcing Soviet and American leaders to forego the 'no war, no peace' situation that had been produced in the Middle East as a result of their burgeoning détente. Only by threatening U.S.-Soviet relations through a Middle East crisis, Sadat reasoned, would leaders in Washington and Moscow move Arab-Israeli negotiations to the forefront of their foreign policy agendas.

Beyond examining the cause of the Yom Kippur/Ramadan War, I also argue that bringing stability to the Middle East, where competition between Arabs and Israelis often left the United States and the Soviet Union on opposing sides, was an important component in fostering the dramatic changes in U.S.-Soviet relations. It is certainly true that by itself, an Arab-Israeli peace agreement could not bring about U.S.-Soviet détente. Even if Washington and Moscow succeeded in producing a settlement, it would not necessarily improve U.S.-Soviet relations. But the outbreak of significant hostilities, and a superpower confrontation in the Middle East, which was extremely likely if another war erupted in the region, meant that progress on the issues central to détente's success—arms limitation, the prevention of nuclear warfare, scientific and cultural agreements, trade, and ending longstanding differences over Berlin and Vietnam—would come to an end. Détente, therefore, was held hostage to the politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

It is also true that the Soviet-American rapprochement, a centerpiece of American foreign policy during the Nixon and Ford presidencies, failed to reach its full potential due to the ongoing competition between Washington and Moscow for control of the Middle East. Despite efforts by both the United States and the Soviet Union to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute, neither country could forgo its desire to outbid each other for predominance in the region. "After all," said Henry Kissinger, "a principal purpose of our own Mideast policy was

to reduce the role and influence of the Soviet Union, just as the Soviets sought to reduce ours.”<sup>1</sup>

None of the reviews takes issue with my argument about the inherent connection between détente and the Arab-Israeli conflict, and most seem to appreciate how my use of multi-archival sources alters our historical understanding of these two narratives and offers, in Mary Ann Heiss’s words, “a useful corrective to narrow regionally bound conceptualizations of the [1973 War].” But several of the reviewers appear somewhat troubled by the fact that I blame détente for contributing to the outbreak of the October War. Because this is the central thesis of the book and caused the most doubts among the reviewers, I will spend the bulk of these pages addressing these concerns.

For Galia Golan and Thomas Schwartz, in particular, my conclusion that détente was the *reason* Sadat went to war raises several questions. Instead of seeing the war as Sadat’s method to disrupt détente, Golan argues that the Egyptian President merely wanted to break the stalemate in the political process and to “spur” the superpowers into an “understanding” that the status quo remained intolerable. Here, I agree with much of what Golan writes. I, too, do not believe Sadat had any interests in harming *long-term* U.S.-Soviet relations. But there was no way to “spur” leaders in Washington and Moscow into action for a political settlement unless the war demonstrated that it could have an immediate impact on their larger foreign policy objectives. The reason that National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger refused to launch his ‘shuttle diplomacy’ in the spring of 1973, when pushed by President Richard Nixon and Sadat, was because he had no incentive to do so; U.S.-Soviet relations were at their apex, with Nixon and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev on the verge of another historic summit, and the Israelis remained militarily superior to the Arabs. Only after being spurred into action by Sadat’s effort to disrupt détente did Kissinger alter his approach.

Schwartz accepts the fact that Sadat viewed détente as “freezing” the status quo and that it prevented Egypt from getting its land back, but he is “troubled” by my assertion that détente was the prime reason behind Sadat’s action. Blaming the war almost squarely on détente, Schwartz argues, may undervalue the role played by regional events, including the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian issue. He also raises an important counterfactual question that cuts at the heart of my argument: *would the October War have occurred if the United States and the Soviet Union were not engaged in détente?*(my emphasis) Given that previous and subsequent Arab-Israeli wars occurred in the absence of détente, this is a perfectly reasonable and important question. For Schwartz, the answer to this question is not “immediately obvious.” But I believe the answer is clear. Certainly a war could have occurred but I am trying to explain why it occurred at that particular moment—October 1973.

Indeed, if the war was not a direct consequence of détente, why did Sadat *choose* to initiate hostilities in October 1973 when he could have taken his country to war for purely political

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), 600.



objectives—not a military victory—in 1970, 1971 (his ‘Year of Decision’) or 1972? For three years, he had actively pursued a political settlement to the crisis and sought to avoid a military confrontation with Israel. During much of that time, he had an active U.S. participant in Secretary of State William Rogers, who was interested in not only bringing peace to the region, but also securing an agreement that would remove the Soviet military presence in Egypt and dampen the possibilities of a U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the Middle East. So long as the United States remained *actively* interested in working for a political settlement, there was little incentive for Egypt to launch an attack on Israel.

It was only after May 1972, when the superpowers agreed at the Moscow summit to place their differences in the Middle East on ice and accepted the status quo in the region for the benefit of *détente*, followed by Sadat’s failed diplomatic initiative in the spring of 1973, that the Egyptian president felt compelled to launch a war against Israel. As Sadat later confessed, his war objectives were to engage in a “limited action” to “break the deadlock in the crisis” that had been created by the fact that leaders in Washington and Moscow had agreed to a stalemate in the region that allowed Israel to retain possession of the Arab territories.<sup>2</sup> Even Kissinger later concluded that he had misread Sadat from the very beginning: “What literally no one understood beforehand was the mind of the man: Sadat aimed not for territorial gain but for a crisis that would alter the attitudes in which the parties were then frozen—and thereby open the way for negotiations. . . . His purpose, in short, was psychological and diplomatic, much more than military.”<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, if you remove *détente* from the equation, as Schwartz suggests, you are left with the conclusion that Sadat went to war not to spur the superpowers into action for a settlement but rather to budge the Israelis off their intransigent position. This contention is difficult to support. Sadat knew that launching an attack against Israel was unlikely to convince the Israeli leadership of Egypt’s peaceful intentions. Indeed, the Israelis would have rightly concluded (and did conclude) that the Arabs still maintained a hostile position against the Jewish state and therefore Israel needed to retain possession of the Sinai Peninsula as a needed buffer against Egypt. Since Sadat fully understood that going to war would not alter the mind of the Israelis, and because he knew that he could not achieve a military victory, it is far more likely that he felt compelled to launch an attack against Israel to move the superpowers—not the Israelis—from their frozen positions.

Part of the difficulty in ascertaining Sadat’s motivations, beyond the obvious explanation of the lack of available Egyptian archival documentation, is that he often made contradictory statements as to why he went to war. At the beginning of the conflict, he told one Western European ambassador that his objectives were primarily strategic; he would not agree to a ceasefire until Egypt secured Israel’s withdrawal from ‘all’ occupied Arab territory.<sup>4</sup> Yet

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<sup>2</sup> Vinogradov’s Version of October Events, Apr. 24, 1974, The National Archives (UK), FCO 93/56.

<sup>3</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 460.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 479.

when Kissinger arrived in Cairo a month later, the Egyptian leader claimed that he went to war in order “to restore Egypt’s self-respect,” a task no foreigner could accomplish. “It was impossible for Egypt to bargain from a posture of humiliation,” he claimed.<sup>5</sup> Later, in his autobiography, Sadat again asserted that his objectives were largely psychological. Egypt needed the war to shatter “the myth of Israel’s long arm, of her superior, even invincible, air force, armory, and soldiers.”<sup>6</sup> Of course, there is little reason to doubt that Sadat had multiple reasons for *needing* a war with Israel, but the most important factor was to demonstrate to the superpowers that their larger foreign policy objectives could be upset by events in the Middle East.

Yet, in taking his country to war and creating a crisis of détente, there can be no question that Sadat’s strategy proved successful. Although he had suffered a near catastrophic defeat and lost much of the Egyptian Third Army, he accomplished in three weeks what he had been unable to accomplish in three years: moving the Arab-Israeli crisis to the forefront of American foreign policy and beginning the process that would lead to the return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian hands.

A few other quibbles with the reviews. Professor Ashton takes issue with my assertion in the opening page of the book that the war came as a “complete surprise.” (1) As Ashton correctly points out, there were indications through several channels, most notably by Jordan’s King Hussein and the Israeli intelligence agent, Ashraf Marwan, that the Egyptians and Syrians were planning another war against Israel. U.S. and Israeli intelligence services had also detected Syrian troop movements near the Golan Heights and Egyptian troop concentrations near the Suez Canal. These issues, however, are thoroughly discussed in the book. I account for King Hussein’s two warnings to the Americans in the spring that Egyptian and Syrian troop movements should not be dismissed as routine military manoeuvres (281), and I discuss the intelligence assessments by State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research in May indicating the possibilities of war in the absence of progress on a political settlement (281). Nor do I leave out discussion of King Hussein’s secret meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir on September 25 (288-289), Defense Minister Moshe Dayan’s visit to the Golan Heights on September 26 (289), or the nearly half dozen intelligence assessments by Israeli and U.S. agencies in the week before the war. (289-293)

My claim that the war came as a “complete surprise,” rather, refers to the fact that the Israelis and Americans were caught off guard by the fact that the war began on October 6—the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. The archival evidence clearly supports this assertion. Indeed, as late October 5, both U.S. and Israeli intelligence agencies dismissed the chances of war as remote. The Central Intelligence Agency reported to Kissinger that “the military preparations that have occurred do not indicate that any party intends to initiate

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 637.

<sup>6</sup> Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 255.

hostilities.”<sup>7</sup> The Israelis, moreover, concluded that “the opening of military operations against Israel by the two armies as of low probability.” So convinced were the Israelis that the Egyptian and Syrian military moves were defensive that their leadership did not fully activate their reserves and most Israelis were in synagogue when the fighting began.

Finally, I would like to address Professor Golan’s assertion that the concluding chapter does not live up to the other chapters in the book. The effort to discuss Jordan, the Palestine Liberation Organization and subsequent developments in the Middle East, Golan says, is “far too skimpy and it is unsuited for a conclusion.” This is a fair criticism. One of the weaknesses of this book is that it offers only limited insight into the role of regional actors outside of Egypt and Israel. The Palestinians are largely ignored in this book, and other than the events of Black September in 1970, Syria and Jordan receive minimal attention. This is not because I believe that any of these regional actors cannot shed additional light on the origins of the 1973 War, U.S. and Soviet policy in the region, or the impact of the Cold War on the Middle East more broadly. Rather when it came to détente, and U.S.-Soviet relations in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Egypt was the central player. It was in Egypt that the Soviets decided to place more than 10,000 troops in 1970—one of the most significant military operations outside the Warsaw Pact the Soviet Union had ever made; it was in Egypt where U.S. and Soviet leaders fought aggressively to win Sadat’s backing after the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser; and it was in Egypt that the decision was made to initiate the war because of détente.

My hope, though, is that recent works by Paul Chamberlin,<sup>8</sup> and forthcoming studies by Salim Yaqub and Roham Alvandi, among others, will fill in the gaps that exist in *The Limits of Détente*, and that a more complete and complex picture can be presented about U.S. policy and the Cold War in the Middle East. The reality is that while *The Limits of Détente* offers a beginning to the study of international history in the Middle East based on archival documentation, it is that—only a beginning.

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<sup>7</sup> “The Performance of the Intelligence Community Before the Arab-Israeli War of October 6, 1973: A Preliminary Post-Mortem Report,” Dec. 20, 1973, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, vol. 25, doc. 412; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 465.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, The Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).