

government, “that ultimately led to its own destruction,” (62). This book emphasizes the fact that questions regarding slavery were intimately connected to wider debates and discourses in antebellum America concerning issues such as national character, economics and expansion. In incredibly lucid and articulate terms Davis weaves these strands together and impresses upon us the significance of slavery to the American past.

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*Journal of American Studies*, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S002187580526958X

John Dumbrell, *President Lyndon Johnson and Soviet Communism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, £45.00 cloth, £12.99 paper). Pp. ix + 192. ISBN 0 7190 6263 2, 0 7190 6264 0.

The jury is still out on President Lyndon B. Johnson’s foreign policy accomplishments and achievements, especially in areas other than Vietnam. His own outsize personality and historians’ preoccupation with his Vietnam policies have tended to preclude any balanced assessment. In the past decade H. W. Brands and Thomas A. Schwartz, among others, have challenged the conventional view that his interest and abilities in foreign affairs were alike deficient, suggesting that, however disastrous his Vietnam policies, in other areas of diplomacy Johnson was actively engaged and often demonstrated considerable skill and sophistication.

Whatever Johnson’s other foreign policy preoccupations, he never doubted that relations with the Soviet Union, above all the avoidance of nuclear war, must be his highest priority. Dumbrell’s model study, a welcome contribution to the continuing debate on Johnson’s foreign policies, concentrates upon the Johnson administration’s most significant international relationship. He shrewdly evaluates Johnson’s existing foreign policy views and experience in November 1963, belying those who would depict LBJ as merely the Southern hick or ignoramus of popular myth, but emphasizing his longstanding commitment to the orthodox Cold War outlook he shared with most other contemporary American leaders. Drawing on enormous research in both primary and secondary sources, including some of the latest scholarship based on Soviet archives, Dumbrell lucidly and expertly navigates the Johnson administration’s tortuous maze of disarmament negotiations and steps toward détente and the protracted efforts to begin peace talks on Vietnam. He also assesses the impact on Soviet–American relations of crises over Cuba, the Middle East, and Czechoslovakia.

Fundamentally, Dumbrell takes a skeptical approach to Johnson revisionism, agreeing with Henry Kissinger that “the very qualities of compromise and consultation on which his domestic political successes were based proved disastrous in foreign policy” (Kissinger, *White House Years*, 18) On disarmament, Dumbrell especially criticizes Johnson’s tendency to yield to domestic bureaucratic pressures and split the differences among his various advisers. He also demonstrates that, despite their recognition that the Sino-Soviet split was genuine, Johnson and his advisers seriously miscalculated on other intra-Communist relationships, believing the Soviets exercised far more influence over the North Vietnamese and North

Korea than they did, and even suspecting them of inspiring domestic American anti-war protests. His study is, moreover, enlightening on the degree to which over Cuba, the Middle East, and Czechoslovakia, despite genuine rivalries and suspicions Soviet and American officials developed a tacit partnership, one that, during the 1968 Czech crisis, undoubtedly trumped Johnson's vaunted "bridge-building" strategy toward Eastern Europe. Finally, Dumbrell breaks with Johnson revisionists by plausibly arguing that Vietnam had a highly detrimental impact upon Johnson's Soviet policies, in terms of delaying détente, limiting American military options elsewhere, and pre-empting the president's finite energies and political capital.

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*Journal of American Studies*, 39 (2005), 1. doi:10.1017/S0021875805279586

John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson. The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. £15.99). Pp. xx, 260. ISBN 0 19 5167716.

It is a national election year. The campaign had started 13 months before election day. The ruling party holds the White House and both houses of Congress. The government is in the grips of extremists. A repressive act is passed to protect the people from aliens in a potential wartime period. International relations have occupied the presidency for years and remain uncomfortable, especially with the French. The media reports on the election campaign in "sound" bites. And shortly before the election, a president revered by the people dies. The year is 1800.

Ferling has avoided the trap of writing in minutiae and has painted a canvas in broad strokes and vividly coloured personalities. Adams and Jefferson feature heavily in a story of post-revolutionary politics. In addition to the two main protagonists, Washington, Hamilton, Madison, both Pinckneys, Burr and Paine play their parts, as the fortunes of the Federalists and the Republicans ebb and flow.

The book is a page-turner. Using a wide range of primary and secondary material, Ferling analyses players' motives, for example Hamilton's defamatory *Letter from Alexander Hamilton, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams*. He ascribes the letter not to political ineptitude or to ensuring Jefferson's election but in support of a Pinckney triumph, thereby interpreting Hamilton as a king-maker. There are numerous such interpretative readings of the material, ascribing motives, for example Burr's attempted grab for the presidency, a volte-face following the Electoral College dead heat. Previously, Burr had assured Jefferson of his role as junior partner in their relationship.

The tale culminates with the election of 1800. The psephology in a pre-Twelfth Amendment America could have been more clearly explained. However, once the dead-heat in the Electoral College is reached, Ferling is back in his stride, detailing the machinations and intrigue within the House of Representatives, culminating in Jefferson's win on the 36th ballot.

The epilogue brings the story of the two protagonists full circle, their relationship restored. Both men died within five hours of each other on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in an America much changed, substantially as a result of their efforts.