

uncovering it. In short, he takes Kierkegaard's commitment to "the religious" seriously.

One learns from this biography that Kierkegaard was aware of the work of David Friederick Strauss, and therefore of the impending wave of demythologizing biblical scholarship that was to shatter the faith of so many intellectuals in the second half of the 19th century. We might therefore see Kierkegaard's life work as a kind of preemptive strike against the Higher Criticism, based on his conviction that because scientific method and supernatural religious faith could never be logically reconciled, some other ground must be sought for faith in

individual consciousness. Hannay's scrupulous study would support such a view. The fact is, however, that because Kierkegaard used so many fictional devices in his most characteristic work, neither Hannay nor Kierkegaard himself can set limits on what readers may find in it.

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Military Unreadiness

WAR IN A TIME OF PEACE:

Bush, Clinton, and the Generals.

By David Halberstam. Scribner. 544 pp. \$28

Reviewed by Gary Hart

Almost three decades ago, David Halberstam led a movement that redefined journalism. His *The Best and the Brightest* (1972) opened the councils and processes of government by seeming to open up the minds of key participants. The book offered an authoritative voice and omniscient point of view with minimal reliance on immediate documentation.

A generation of journalists and writers, among them Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, owe Halberstam a debt of gratitude. Out of this movement came tidal waves of anonymous sources, self-serving leaks, treachery, internal dissent within administrations, and problematic policymaking. Not only was journalism revolutionized; the very process of government would never be the same. What was to follow—Watergate, assassination plots, foreign policy disasters, out-of-touch presidents, feuding staffs, and a scandal a minute—didn't merely serve the notion of the people's right to know; it also altered their perception of their government.

If everything was a scandal, was it possible that nothing was *really* a scandal?

The scandal exposed in Halberstam's new book is America's near-total failure to anticipate, understand, or prepare for the post-Cold War world—a scandal that contributed to a thousand deaths in Somalia (including 18 Americans), tens of thousands in the former Yugoslavia, and (at least indirectly) 800,000 to a million in Rwanda, and now some 7,000 on American soil. The decade following the collapse of the Soviet empire saw a shift in the nature of warfare, from confrontation between massed armies of nation-states to low-intensity urban conflict among tribes, clans, and gangs. The new strife seemed more in keeping with the 17th century than the 20th. Neither the first Bush administration nor the Clinton administration was ready.

Indeed, both Republicans and Democrats, governing under the heavy influence of public-opinion polls, decided rather by

default to downplay foreign policy because, in their minds, the American people didn't care about it. The thinking in Washington, to the degree there was any, seems to have been that the United States needn't play a leading role in the world because our constituents don't want to be bothered. Or, more bluntly, it's the economy, stupid. (The one exception to the noninvolvement norm, not much discussed here, was the Persian Gulf War. But that was less about democracy in Kuwait than about oil, and even in the information economy, oil is still king. So chalk the Gulf War up to the economy too.)

berstam's lengthy story are the 1992 and 2000 elections. After a cursory review of Bush the first's foreign policy success in liquidating the Cold War and his military success in the Persian Gulf, we get to the election of William Jefferson Clinton, the figure who dominates the rest of the book. In chapter after chapter, Halberstam describes him as one of the most talented, capable, charismatic, natural politicians of the second half of the 20th century—yet one who constantly seems surprised by events.

Halberstam's definition of political



Which way now?

As its title suggests, *War in a Time of Peace* judges the general failure of a coherent foreign policy, absent the central organizing principle of containment of communism, by only one of its main components: the use or the threat of use of military force. A further subtitle to the book might have been: the failure to understand how to use military power as an instrument of foreign policy in an age when the nature of warfare is changing.

The chronological bookends for Hal-

berstam's definition of political genius is exceedingly narrow. He sees it as a mix of empathy, ability to connect, manipulation, personal charm, and guile. The possession of these qualities seems more important than the ends to which they are put. Others might think of characteristics such as foresight and forethought, anticipation, forcefulness at framing issues, and the ability to reach consensus and form coalitions—in short, leadership. Seemingly persuaded by

Clinton's extraordinary gifts according to this restricted definition of political genius, Halberstam portrays a Jekyll-and-Hyde president, a brilliant politician repeatedly caught off guard by a changing world. This doesn't sound much like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or even Harry Truman. Clinton's domestic political stumbles suggest that his kind of brilliance doesn't guarantee powerful, sure-footed governance at home either. Perhaps the lesson is that we need to reassess the nature of true political leadership in an age concerned more with style than substance and more with appearance than reality.

To be sure, Clinton inherited a foreign policy of improvisation, perhaps more politely called pragmatism—a self-defeating, hopelessly incomplete approach put in play by the Europeans and the first Bush administration, and reinforced by Clinton's reluctance to use force. But what an opportunity for a new president to introduce structure and coherence where neither existed (or exists even today) and to raise the sail of principle over a ship of state wildly veering between Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights and Henry Kissinger's realpolitik. If Clinton raged at the narrowness of the choices presented to him, why didn't he create alternatives of his own? Apparently Halberstam does not see such inventiveness as an element of political genius.

The story of U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s is an unhappy muddle of the conflicts in bitter Bosnia, hapless Haiti, murderous Rwanda, gangland Somalia, and tragic Kosovo. None possessed the nobility of World War II, the certainty of the Cold War, or the focus of the Gulf War. When the nature of war shifted, deciding how, when, and where to use American military force became, to say the least, problematic. That's where the generals in Halberstam's title come in. Of the several profiled in this book, Colin Powell is larger than life; his successor as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, John Shalikashvili, is quietly effective; and Wesley Clark, North Atlantic Treaty Organization commander in Kosovo, is especially colorful. Powell and Clark are extremes: Powell wants to use force very selectively; Clark is eager to

mount up whenever the bugle sounds.

Both, of course, must wait for civilian command, which in Halberstam's depiction is ambivalent, ad hoc, and often confused. Here the principal players are a reserved Warren Christopher and then a bellicose Madeleine Albright at the State Department; a Hamletesque Anthony Lake as Clinton's first national security adviser; and, most interestingly, a highly talented but high-risk Richard Holbrooke in several diplomatic roles. Halberstam shows that America's Balkans strategy was adrift and hesitant until French prime minister Jacques Chirac provided spine by insisting on Western intervention to prevent ethnic cleansing. It then fell to Holbrooke the civilian and Clark the general to coordinate diverse and fractious allied forces and bring the hammer down on the gangsters, thugs, and criminals who passed for political leaders in the region.

For students of the presidency, nothing is more troubling than Halberstam's depiction of President Clinton's relations with the military. When he first entered the White House, Clinton deemed the military a hostile political constituency; that attitude stayed with him as late as 1998. For their part, senior military men did not trust the president or the people around him. So much for political genius in a job that includes the title "commander in chief."

One key player, Vice President Al Gore, pops up occasionally as a hawk on Bosnia, but otherwise is curiously absent. And the book seems to lack a final chapter. Bush the younger assumes power, and that's it. One wonders what Halberstam, a veteran observer of politics and foreign policy, makes of all he has discussed in this 800-page saga. Surely there are lessons to be drawn from America's decade-long effort to define its role in the post-Cold War world. Alas, the author, so qualified to provide them, denies us his interpretations of this curious interim era.

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