leader. After Adenauer stepped down as chancellor, the CDU began to fall apart, pulled by its rival personalities and its different visions of the West. What is fascinating is the degree to which the West German political infighting was removed from trends in the broader international picture. Franz Josef Strauss and other Gaullists attacked Erhard and Foreign Minister Schröder for adopting a “movement” policy aimed at improving West Germany’s relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, an objective that de Gaulle was pursuing even more avidly. The United States was also pressuring Erhard to do more to ease tensions, causing Erhard to fear that the Gaullists would step up their attack against him. The West German internal fight became all-consuming until Erhard was eventually deposed and replaced with a grand coalition of the CDU and the Social Democrats. By this point it seemed that the Christian Democratic factions preferred to govern with their Socialist enemies rather than their erstwhile party comrades.

Granieri has produced an exceptionally readable political history of Germany’s largest party, underlining the crucial importance of its first leader, Konrad Adenauer, in guiding the party and maintaining its fragile unity. This book helps explain the ambiguities inherent to the Federal Republic’s policy of Westbindung, ambiguities that remain to the present day.

Pierre Asselin, A Bitter Peace: Washington, Hanoi, and the Making of the Paris Agreement. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. 272 pp. $45.00.

Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco, eds., A Companion to the Vietnam War. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. 514 pp. $99.95.

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These are fertile times for the study of the Vietnam War. The growing availability of Vietnamese sources permits unprecedented coverage of the war on the “other side.” Meanwhile, culturally oriented scholars are asking new questions of U.S. documentary material, highlighting the importance of race, gender, and other aspects of ideology in understanding America’s war in Vietnam. For their part, traditional diplomatic and political historians of U.S. foreign policy are using newly declassified American documents to explore the Nixon administration’s policy in Vietnam and to reevaluate earlier phases of the war.

Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco’s volume of essays, A Companion to the Vietnam War, offers a helpful overview of all these trends. The book’s twenty-four chapters, mostly extracts or overviews of book-length studies that have appeared in recent years, display some of the finest recent scholarship dealing with the development of Vietnamese nationalism and especially the course of U.S. policymaking regarding Vietnam from the 1930s through the end of the American war. As the editors promise at the outset, the volume includes well-established scholars as well as rising stars. It
also lives up to its promise to provide a solid overview of current thinking on traditional topics—policymaking under Lyndon Johnson or the antiwar movement, for example—while also offering “intelligent and creative new ways to look at the war” (p. xii).

Of the book’s more innovative essays, five provide a sample of recent scholarship drawing on Vietnamese sources. Most of them have a tentative, superficial quality, leaving little doubt that far too few Vietnamese sources have become available to make possible bold conclusions about the revolutionary side of the war. Yet the essays suggest that research undertaken by linguistically skilled historians is gradually making possible a multi-sided narrative of the war. For example, the anthropologist Shaun Malarney illuminates one of the areas of the war that have remained opaque for Western historians—the experience of the North Vietnamese population during the confrontation with the United States. Malarney’s study of a North Vietnamese village demonstrates the complicated blend of patriotism and regimentation that maintained Hanoi’s war effort in the face of enormous destruction.

Several other essays merit special attention for asking new questions about U.S. decision-making. Most strikingly, Robert Dean’s essay shows how notions of manly honor and pervasive fears of appearing weak propelled U.S. policymakers toward war despite the obvious problems of achieving victory.

A lifetime of immersion in masculine competition and a culture celebrating neo-stoic warrior-manhood gave many highly educated, privileged, and powerful men the conviction that “duty” and the protection of both their own power and that of the nation demanded a military defense of imperial boundaries in Vietnam,

asserts Dean in one of the book’s most energetically written chapters (p. 380). In another notable essay, Michael E. Latham demonstrates how American social scientists, with their overweening faith in modernization theory, pushed the United States deeper into Vietnam, only to realize the error of their ways in later years as they came to question the close partnership between universities and the government forged during the early years of the Cold War.

As with any edited collection, one can always quibble. Oddly, the book omits any sustained attention to Soviet and Chinese involvement in the war, surely one of the most intriguing fields of research opened up by innovative scholars in recent years. Nor does it include much analysis of the war’s legacies in either the United States or Vietnam, another fruitful area of inquiry. Additionally, the book suffers from its inclusion of a handful of essays that, while valuable to specialists, seem excessively narrow in a book intended to reflect major scholarly currents.

If Young and Buzzanco’s volume sets out to encapsulate a range of possible approaches, Pierre Asselin’s book, A Bitter Peace, makes no bones about the narrowness of its agenda—to tell the story of how the United States and North Vietnam negotiated the January 1973 agreement that ended the American military role in Vietnam. Other historians have trod this ground before, most recently Larry Berman in No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam (New York: Free Press,
2001) and Jeffrey Kimball in *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998). But Asselin’s superb book surpasses them in at least two ways. First, it focuses tightly on the nine months following the North Vietnamese offensive in the spring of 1972, the event that transformed the dilatory negotiations that had been taking place since 1968 into the serious bargaining that forged a deal. This modest chronological coverage enables Asselin to weigh every important shift and nuance during the period. Second, Asselin draws on Vietnamese sources and is the first scholar to attempt to analyze the negotiations from both sides.

To be sure, the results of this endeavor are mixed. Like the Vietnam-focused essays in Young’s and Buzzanco’s volume, Asselin’s narrative unmistakably depends on a thin smattering of source materials—in Asselin’s case, mainly published memoirs and official histories. Key government archives, as Asselin acknowledges, remain closed. As a result, the book is unable to delve much behind the day-to-day unfolding of the negotiations to explore strategic debates within the North Vietnamese government, the relationship between Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, and other matters crucial to a full understanding of the Vietnamese side. Given these limitations, it is not surprising that Asselin’s book offers no major departures from the familiar story of the negotiations. His overall argument echoes a position that has achieved nearly the status of conventional wisdom about the Paris agreement: Confronted with an increasingly violent stalemate and crumbling home fronts in 1972, both Hanoi and Washington, as Asselin puts it, “acted in collusion and agreed to vague and largely unworkable positions because finalizing an agreement was more important than peace itself.” Such a flimsy accord was bound to unravel, the book argues. “Since the agreement constituted a timely necessity,” Asselin writes, “the two sides ignored it once it had served certain immediate, cynical purposes” (p. xi).

The book’s most valuable contribution lies in its richly detailed narrative of the negotiations and its finely calibrated judgments. Above all, the book stands out for its measured evaluation of the Nixon administration. Asselin is mindful of Nixon’s penchant for deception and blames both the president and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for making hopelessly unrealistic promises to protect South Vietnam after the U.S. withdrawal. But Asselin criticizes Berman and Kimball for being “at times too vehement in their criticisms of Nixon” (p. 248) and suggests that the Christmas bombing, the intense U.S. campaign undertaken in late 1972 to force final North Vietnamese concessions, was a reasonable and effective response to the negotiating impasse blocking an agreement. In contrast to other historians who have seen the bombing as little more than a final American crime against Vietnam, Asselin argues that it spurred Hanoi to accept the necessity for a deal by demonstrating the horrific costs of intransigence. “The bombing was . . . the most significant reason for the completion of the agreement in January 1973,” Asselin argues (p. 165). Many scholars will object to the book’s gentle appraisal of this and other Nixon administration decisions, but Asselin deserves credit for putting this view on the table.