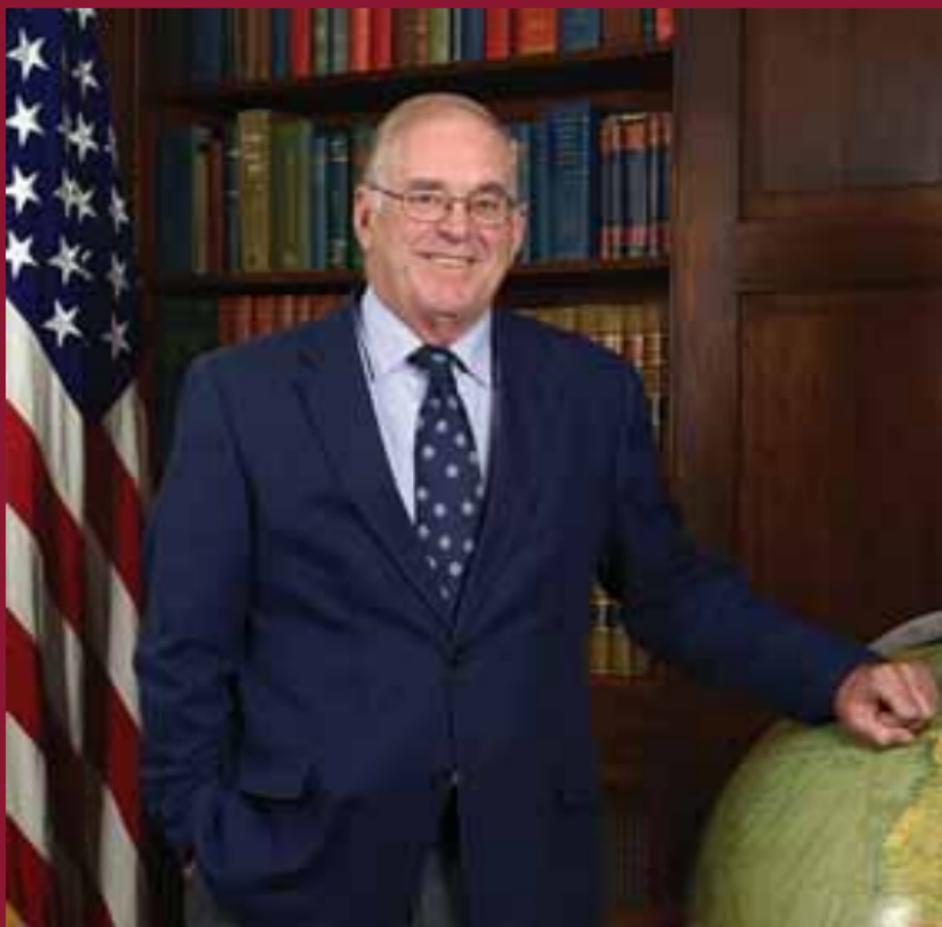


In this ninth volume of the Secretaries of Defense Historical Series, author Edward Keefer describes how Secretary of Defense Harold Brown worked to counter the Soviet Union's growing military strength during the administration of President Jimmy Carter. Flush with cash from the development of oil and natural gas resources in an era of high energy costs, the Soviet Union of the Carter years came closest to matching the United States in strategic power than at any other point in the Cold War. By most reckonings, the Kremlin also surpassed the West in conventional arms and forces in Central Europe. To offset this threat, Brown—a nuclear physicist who had served three presidents—advocated more technologically advanced weapon systems but faced Carter's efforts to reign in the defense budget.

As one of the leaders of a group of like-minded policy advisers that included National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and key members of Congress such as Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA), Brown persuaded a reluctant Carter to increase the defense budget for the last two years of his term and bring to an end a decade that had been marked by a decline in defense spending. Brown and Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering William Perry championed the development and production of new weapons, such as stealth aircraft, precision-guided bombs, and cruise missiles. They applied modern digital electronics, global positioning, and other advanced technologies to weapon systems. Brown helped persuade the president to approve the MX missile to augment the nation's vulnerable Minuteman missile force and lobbied North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members to accept cruise and Pershing II missiles on European soil to offset Soviet SS-20 missiles. Brown and his point man for NATO, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Robert Komer, spearheaded a campaign to upgrade NATO's conventional forces. Brown helped establish a new security framework for the Persian Gulf region, backstopped by the incipient Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, and supported Afghan resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These initiatives laid a solid foundation for the much-acclaimed Ronald Reagan defense revolution. Although presidential candidate Reagan and his surrogates in 1980 emphasized the differences in defense policy between Reagan and Carter, there was much more continuity than contrast between the two. In fact, the Reagan defense revolution began with Brown and Carter.



Edward C. Keefer received a B.A. from McGill University in 1967 and a Ph.D. in history from Michigan State University in 1974. For 34 years he was an editor of the U.S. Department of State's official documentary series, *Foreign Relations of the United States*. During that time he edited 25 *Foreign Relations* volumes, many of which documented U.S. policy during the Vietnam War. After 2002 he was the general editor of the series until his retirement in 2009, when he joined the Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense. He has written articles and contributed to books on U.S. policy in East and Southeast Asia and taught courses on 19th- and 20th-century British military and political figures for the Smithsonian Associates program. He and his wife, Carol, live in Washington, DC.