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Review Essay
The Cold War: What Do “We Now Know”?

MELVYN P. LEFFLER

DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS, we have had a spate of important new books, articles, and essays reinterpreting the Cold War. Many of them have been based on new documents and memoirs from the former Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China as well as from European governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The books are provocative and insightful. They focus attention on the role of ideology and the importance of culture. They illuminate the complex interactions within the American and Soviet “empires.” They assess the influence of small powers as well as highlight the strength of the two superpowers. They add greatly to our understanding of such key events in the Cold War as the Marshall Plan, the Korean War, and the Cuban missile crisis. They demonstrate the importance of individual leaders like Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong, but they also highlight contingency and inadvertence. They suggest that we have to think more deeply about the connections between power, culture, and political economy as well as the linkages between beliefs, perceptions, and behavior. None of this can be done without appreciating the interaction between national decision-making and the evolution of the international system.

The object of this essay is to review some of the most important new scholarship, and to argue that the new evidence and the new writings do not leave us with a clear and unambiguous view of the Cold War. Although the most important and most influential of the new books is entitled *We Now Know*, my own view is much more modest.¹ Recent books provide us with new information, fresh insights, and provocative argumentation. Sometimes, they revive old controversies; at other times, they reconfigure these controversies in fascinating and unexpected ways. But what is striking is the extent to which the new scholarship leaves itself open to diverse conclusions.

It is striking, but not surprising. As students of international history weave more and more factors into their narratives—as they take ideas, values, language, and culture more seriously,² as they think about race and gender,³ as they probe

¹ John L. Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997).

² For some excellent examples of how scholarly interest in culture, language, and ideas is affecting the writing of international history, see Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945–1954* (Cambridge, 1998); David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis, 1992); Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second*

relations between “strong” and “weak” powers,⁴ as they link economics to geopolitics,⁵ as they assess the impact of ideology on perceptions of power, threat, and opportunity,⁶ as they evaluate the role of domestic political culture on strategy, diplomacy, war, and peace,⁷ as they explore correlations between military capabilities and diplomatic initiatives⁸—the story of the Cold War is likely to become more contentious as it becomes more interesting and complex. The Cold War will defy any single master narrative.

This point is worth stressing in light of John Lewis Gaddis’s new synthesis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*. This volume is likely to set the parameters for a whole new generation of scholarship. No historian is better known for his work on the Cold War. In 1972, Gaddis won the Bancroft Prize (Columbia University) for his monograph on the origins of the Cold War.⁹ Several years later, he published *Strategies of Containment*, one of the most influential books ever written on post–World War II international relations.¹⁰ Gaddis became known as the foremost

World War (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1994); Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, Md., 1997).

³ For race, see, for example, Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1996); Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York, 1993); the articles and comments by Carol Anderson, Michael L. Krenn, Gerald Horne, Penny M. Von Eschen, Brenda Gayle Plummer, and Helen Laville and Scott Lucas in “Symposium: African Americans and U.S. Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 20 (Fall 1996): 531–650; Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder, Colo., 1988); for gender, see, for example, Andrew J. Rotter, “Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947–1964,” *Journal of American History* 81 (September 1994): 518–42; Frank Costigliola, “‘Unceasing Pressure for Penetration’: Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan’s Formation of the Cold War,” *Journal of American History* 84 (March 1997): 1309–39; Robert D. Dean, “Masculinity as Ideology,” *Diplomatic History* 22 (Winter 1998): 29–62.

⁴ For excellent examples, see Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York, 1994); Nick Cullather, *Illusions of Influence: The Political Economy of United States–Philippines Relations, 1942–1960* (Stanford, Calif., 1994); Ilya Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago, 1996).

⁵ For different approaches to these linkages, see, for example, Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York, 1987); Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1981, 1990); Thomas J. McCormick, *America’s Half Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore, Md., 1989); Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif., 1992).

⁶ See, for example, William Curti Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993); Deborah Welch Larson, *Anatomy of Mistrust: U.S.–Soviet Relations during the Cold War* (Ithaca, 1997).

⁷ For illustrative studies, see Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J., 1995); Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, 1996); Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post–Cold War World* (Princeton, 1993).

⁸ These correlations are critical for understanding key events in the Cold War, such as the Cuban missile crisis. See, for example, Aleksandr Fursenko, *“One Hell of a Gamble”: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York, 1997); Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997); see also Richard Ned Lebow, “Windows of Opportunity: Do States Jump through Them?” *International Security* 9 (Summer 1984): 147–86; Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington, D.C., 1987); Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton, N.J., 1991).

⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York, 1972).

¹⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York, 1982).

proponent of a school of interpretation called post-revisionism.¹¹ In contrast to revisionists, who had focused considerable attention on U.S. economic motives and who assigned the United States a share of responsibility for the Cold War, Gaddis stressed the importance of geopolitics and power balances. American officials, he believed, were not seeking economic gain. Constrained by domestic politics, hamstrung by bureaucratic imperatives, and preoccupied with correlations of power in the international system, they sought to contain Soviet influence and Communist power. In so doing, Gaddis acknowledged, the United States established its own empire, but it was an empire of liberty, an empire of diversity, an empire that allowed for the exercise of autonomy by allies who were happy to be part of it. Overall, Gaddis spent rather little time talking about ideas or assigning blame. He held the Soviet Union primarily responsible for the Cold War, but he did not dwell on this matter. In Gaddis's view, however, Stalin, an authoritarian leader, had the flexibility to act more rationally and behave more discreetly within his own sphere of influence. U.S. officials, in contrast, could not be expected to act quite so rationally because of the pressures emanating from democratic politics in a pluralist system.¹²

What is so distinctive about Gaddis's new book is the extent to which he abandons post-revisionism and returns to a more traditional interpretation of the Cold War. In unequivocal terms, he blames the Cold War on Stalin's personality, on authoritarian government, and on Communist ideology. As long as Stalin was running the Soviet Union, "a cold war was unavoidable." He waged cold wars incessantly: within the international system, within his alliances, within his country, within his party, within his personal entourage, [and] even within his family." "It took men," says Gaddis, "responding unpredictably to circumstances, to forge the chain of causation [leading to the Cold War]; and it took one man in particular, responding predictably to his own authoritarian, paranoid, and narcissistic predisposition, to lock it into place."¹³

Stalin was what he was because he was an ideologue, a particular sort of ideologue, a Marxist-Leninist. We now know, writes Gaddis, that ideology "often determined" the behavior of such regimes. Ideology was not simply a rationale or a justification but a source of behavior and a point of reference for understanding the world. Most important, stresses Gaddis, Stalin was a revolutionary. "He never gave up on the idea of an eventual world revolution, but he expected this to result . . . from an expansion of influence emanating from the Soviet Union itself." More ominous still was the fact that Stalin fused Marxist internationalism with czarist imperialism. We now know, says Gaddis, that Stalin did not have limited ambitions, "only that he had no timetable for achieving them."¹⁴

Without closely examining Stalin's actions, Gaddis chooses to look at the structure of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe and finds it distinctively different from the American empire. Here, he borrows from his former writings and

¹¹ John Lewis Gaddis, "The Emerging Post-Revisionist Thesis on the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 7 (Summer 1983): 171-90.

¹² See especially the conclusion to his first book, *United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, 353-61.

¹³ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 292-93, 25.

¹⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 290, 29-31.

extrapolates themes first argued by the Norwegian scholar Geir Lundestad.¹⁵ The Soviet empire was imposed from without; it was brutal, totalitarian, and ideologically driven. The empire was circumscribed only by Stalin's own perception of risk. In contrast, the empire established by the United States in Western Europe was a matter of invitation. It came about belatedly, only as other nations felt threatened and as the United States felt increasingly endangered. The source of American action was its feeling of vulnerability, a vulnerability emanating from fear of another Pearl Harbor. Nonetheless, the United States struggled to overcome its sense of vulnerability and defined its safety in multilateral terms of common security. The Cold War developed "when it became clear that Stalin either could not or would not accept this framework." Therefore, we now know that "the American empire arose primarily, not from internal causes, as had the Soviet empire, but from a perceived external danger powerful enough to overcome American isolationism."¹⁶

Whereas in Gaddis's early work, democratic pluralism was a complicating factor hindering effective policymaking, it emerges in his new book as one of the great attributes of the American empire. The "habits of democracy" encouraged compromise with allies and conciliation toward defeated enemies. In implementing the Marshall Plan, forming NATO, and designing military strategy, U.S. officials were "flexible enough to accept and build upon ideas that came from allies; they also frequently let allies determine the timing of actions taken." The result was that the French, British, and other West Europeans "came to feel that they had a stake in what Washington was doing despite the fact that it amounted to their own incorporation within an American sphere of influence." In fact, we now know that all the key American initiatives in Germany were improvisations suggested by allies or responses to Stalin's threatening behavior. The United States had no grand design.¹⁷

But it had market capitalism, and this was a key factor in determining the outcome of the Cold War. We now know that Stalin postulated another crisis in world capitalism and anticipated an intracapitalist conflict. He could be prudent and cautious as well as risky and opportunistic because in the long run Stalin knew that there would be another crash and another war, most probably between the British and the Americans. But while Stalin rejected the Bretton Woods accords and sought to isolate his sphere from the European Recovery Program, the Americans brilliantly improvised, wove together the best features of Bretton Woods and the Marshall Plan, engineered the recovery of West Germany and Japan, and allowed independent centers of power to flourish within its empire. Americans wagered that their system of democratic capitalism would serve as a magnet, and they were right.¹⁸

According to Gaddis, one of the great lessons to be learned from Cold War history is that power is multidimensional. The Soviets thought in terms of missiles,

¹⁵ Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952," *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (September 1986): 263–77.

¹⁶ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 30–31, 36, 38.

¹⁷ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 44, 125.

¹⁸ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 189–207.

warheads, and tanks, and sometimes the Americans did as well. But Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower, and their advisers, were especially shrewd in grasping that nuclear weapons were unusable in war as well as in diplomacy. Although the United States foolishly multiplied its arsenal, the strategy of massive retaliation was really designed to deter all conflict. Chairman Nikita Khrushchev, however, took the balance of military power more seriously, became ensnared in the arms race, and sought to enhance the influence, prestige, and power of the Soviet Union by excelling in the military realm. The Americans were duped into thinking that military might really mattered and foolishly exaggerated Soviet strength, thereby prolonging the Cold War far beyond its necessary time. In truth, says Gaddis, the bipolar configuration of power was over long before anyone realized it. The Soviets had only military power, and this was of little use in competition with an ideological system and political economy as resilient and appealing as democratic capitalism.¹⁹

Contemporaries, however, did not realize this truth, and hence the Cold War was fought on the periphery for no good reason whatsoever. Here, the United States often erred, but its errors were understandable, as officials in Washington simply sought to contain the outward thrusts of Soviet power. Gaddis employs a “hydraulic” theory of geopolitics: dams built and dikes bolstered simply diverted one Soviet expansionist thrust after another to a different location. Thwarted in Europe by the Marshall Plan, Stalin turned his attention to Asia. “He had never abandoned his commitment to world revolution.” After initially equivocating in his support for the Chinese revolution, Stalin embraced Mao. “What is striking about Stalin’s conversations with his new Chinese allies,” writes Gaddis, “is the emotion—even the sentimentality—they reflect. It is almost as if the aging dictator saw, in Mao’s victory, a vicarious return to his own revolutionary youth.”²⁰

The new evidence, argues Gaddis, demonstrates much closer ties between Stalin, Mao, Kim Il Sung, and Ho Chi Minh than we previously imagined. There was no communist monolith controlled by Moscow, “but there was a common sense of ideological euphoria—a conviction that the forces of history were on their side—which very much influenced” their actions.²¹ Although Stalin previously had discouraged Kim’s desire to attack South Korea, he reversed himself in early 1950. Believing that the Truman administration would not interfere in Korea, Stalin unveiled his instinctive opportunism to spread revolution. Mao, says Gaddis, was a willing accomplice. Indeed, we now supposedly know that Mao was inclined to intervene from the outset of the Korean conflict and was waiting for a propitious opportunity. He was certainly eager to support his communist friends in Indochina against the French, so why not drive the American imperialists out of Korea as well?²²

Revolutionary romanticism, Gaddis tells us, was a common characteristic of the leaders in the Kremlin. Just as it inspired Stalin’s adventurism in Korea, it impelled Khrushchev twelve years later to deploy intermediate and tactical nuclear weapons

¹⁹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 284, 291–92, 221–80.

²⁰ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 167, 67.

²¹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 83.

²² Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 77–82, 158–63.

into Cuba. Gaddis says the new evidence makes it clear that Khrushchev acted to save Fidel Castro's revolution from a prospective intervention by the United States. "The Soviet leader gave first priority to defending Cuba; the strategic balance was, for him, an important but secondary consideration." Although this hierarchy of motives might seem surprising, it fits perfectly into Gaddis's overall interpretive framework: in Cuba, as elsewhere, "Marxism-Leninism produced more romanticism than realism."²³

We now know, according to Gaddis, that capitalist democracies are not only more peace-loving and more productive but also more realistic in the making of their foreign policy. The swirl of democratic politics, the checks and balances of parliamentary government and legislative-executive relations, and the exigencies imposed by free markets inject prudence and compromise into the making of foreign policy and the conduct of diplomacy. Authoritarian regimes, subject to the whims of single leaders, are more prone to arbitrary, adventurist, and self-defeating behavior.²⁴

Contemporaries understood the superiority of capitalist democracies. Gaddis says that historians in the past have been reluctant to label the Cold War as a struggle between good and evil, but people living at the time grasped this essential truth. In an arresting conclusion, Gaddis declares that "many people saw the Cold War as a contest of good versus evil." When they could, they fled from Soviet armies and from the Kremlin's puppet regimes. Raped by Russian soldiers, starved by wreckless agricultural and economic policies, and spiritually eviscerated by heartless regimes, peoples living under communist governments yearned for change. In contrast, democracies manifested generosity and wisdom, nurtured individuality and economic growth. The outcome of the Cold War, therefore, was largely preordained by the superiority of democratic capitalism in providing for people's material and spiritual needs. Gaddis concludes:

civility on one side and its absence on the other played an enormous role in shaping the course of events. The rapes in [Germany] dramatized differences between Soviet authoritarianism and American democracy in ways that could hardly have been more direct. Social history, even gender history, intersected with humanity to make diplomatic history. What this suggests, then, is that historians of the Cold War need to look quite carefully at what those who *saw* distinctions between good and evil *thought and did* about them. For when people vote with their feet, it generally means that they have ideas in their minds. But to understand these, we have to take seriously what *they at the time believed*.²⁵

I have taken time to summarize Gaddis's themes at length because he is the preeminent historian of the Cold War, and he is providing a new master narrative to serve as a framework for interpreting the new documents, digesting the new literature, and understanding the framework of international relations for much of the second half of the twentieth century. Gaddis writes with an encyclopedic knowledge of events. He has a probing intellect, an ability to identify core issues, a feel for the illuminating detail, a sense of irony, a penchant for memorable metaphors. Moreover, Gaddis's advice to take ideas seriously, look carefully at the

²³ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 265–66.

²⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 49–53, 110–12, 198–203, 218–20, 266–69, 288–89.

²⁵ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 286–87.

conditions and aspirations of common people, and examine the impact of culture provides avenues for linking the history of international relations to important historiographical trends in other subdisciplines. The critical questions, of course, relate to whether Gaddis's volume accurately sums up current trends in the literature and integrates them effectively with what we already had learned about the Cold War. To what extent has he followed his own advice and looked seriously at what people believed at the time? To what extent is his book telling us more about the outcome of the Cold War than about its causes and evolution?

THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT GADDIS'S EMPHASIS on Communist ideology resonates deeply through some of the current literature.²⁶ In their extraordinarily interesting book, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov argue that ideology was a key element that shaped Soviet behavior from V. I. Lenin to Mikhail Gorbachev. There was "a lodestar" that guided Stalin. "It was the promise of Communist revolutionary universalism combined with the necessities of survival for the Soviet Union."²⁷ Nobody reading Stalin's early letters to Politburo member and later chairman of the Council of People's Commissars V. M. Molotov can doubt the presence of a ruthless ideological fervor.²⁸ Nor do Molotov's published reminiscences leave any doubt that ideology was his lodestar.²⁹ No matter how cynical they became, "the transformation of the world under the aegis and with the assistance of the Soviet Union remained a powerful *raison d'être* for the corporate mentality of Soviet power elites."³⁰

Stalin's personality and its ideological underpinnings is also the major theme of Vojtech Mastny's prize-winning book, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (1996). Domestic considerations and Communist ideology dictated Soviet behavior. Beliefs and principles, Mastny emphasizes, must be taken seriously. Although Mastny does not quite clarify which beliefs and principles must be taken most seriously, he suggests that most fundamental was the Bolsheviks' belief that "the outside world remained implacably hostile." Lenin, Stalin, and their co-conspirators knew that their regime was not an expression of popular will. They grasped the vulnerability of their rule. Stalin's major preoccupation was preserving his autocratic power. Sounding much like George F. Kennan on containment policy in 1946, Mastny

²⁶ See, for example, "Symposium: Soviet Archives: Recent Revelations and Cold War Historiography," *Diplomatic History* 21 (Spring 1997): 217–305; Douglas J. Macdonald, "Communist Bloc Expansion in the Early Cold War: Challenging Realism, Refuting Revisionism," *International Security* 20 (Winter 1995–96): 152–88.

²⁷ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 12; Vladislav Zubok, "Stalin's Plans and Russian Archives," *Diplomatic History* 21 (Spring 1997): 295–306.

²⁸ Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov, and Oleg V. Khlevniuk, eds., *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925–1936* (New Haven, Conn., 1995).

²⁹ Albert Resis, ed., *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics; Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago, 1993); see also Steven M. Minor's essay, "His Master's Voice: Viacheslav M. Molotov as Stalin's Foreign Commissar," in Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Lowenheim, eds., *The Diplomats: 1939–1979* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), 65–100.

³⁰ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 77.

argues that Stalin purposely conjured foreign threats in order to cement his rule at home.³¹

Yet Mastny's focus on the insecurity of Soviet leaders leads to a different characterization of Soviet foreign policy than that found in Gaddis's volume. "Despite Stalin's ideological dedication," Mastny stresses, "revolution was for him a means to power rather than a goal in itself." Stalin and his comrades were interested primarily in preserving their regime and their power inside the Soviet Union. Rather than being adventurous or romantic, they were innately cautious. "Only in response to the rising German threat [in the 1930s] did Stalin develop the concept of an empire as an operational goal related to security," writes Mastny. Much as he looked for evidence of Stalin's design to impose communist governments on his neighbors at the end of the war, Mastny could not find any. "Nowhere beyond what Moscow considered the Soviet borders did its policies foresee the establishment of communist regimes."³²

For Mastny, ideology did not dictate an offensive, expansionist, revolutionary foreign policy. Nor in Zubok and Pleshakov's view did ideology mean the promotion of revolution. At the end of World War II, they stress, Stalin had no master plan, no design to foment insurrection or to establish a communist empire. He was a paranoid schemer, a cautious expansionist, a risk-averse opportunist, a brutal dictator, but, in the view of Zubok and Pleshakov, he was not a "revolutionary romanticist." "Stalin was the first statesman to grasp the notion that promoting world revolution was not a goal in and of itself, but rather that it provided the rationale for building a strong Soviet Union." "Stalin," they write, "knew all too well that once a revolutionary leader becomes a state potentate, he acts according to geopolitical realities, national conditions, the logic of power itself."³³

In fact, the theme of *realpolitik* runs through a great number of the recent books and articles on the Cold War, a point that the reader of Gaddis's volume alone would not know. This is apparent in the analyses of one of the most intriguing subjects of recent Cold War scholarship: the relationship between Mao and Stalin. We now do know, as Gaddis argues, that the relationship between the two men was much closer than previously assumed. We now do know that, during the late 1930s and 1940s, there was ongoing, almost continuous communication between the Chinese Communists and the Kremlin. We now do know that Mao looked to Stalin for advice, support, and a model for communist development.³⁴ But it is far from clear that revolutionary romanticism or ideological fervor dictated either man's foreign policy. In a fascinating study of Mao's and Stalin's foreign policy actions up to and including the Korean War, Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, and Xue Litai conclude:

³¹ Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York, 1996), esp. 3–5, 11, 24, 191; see Kennan's "Long Telegram," George F. Kennan, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1: 1925–1950 (New York, 1967), 583–98.

³² Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 12, 15, 21.

³³ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 69, 13, 62.

³⁴ Michael M. Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (Princeton, N.J., 1997); Sheng, "The Triumph of Internationalism: CCP-Moscow Relations before 1949," *Diplomatic History* 21 (Winter 1997): 95–104; Yang Kuisong, "The Soviet Factor and the CCP's Policy toward the United States in the 1940s," *Chinese Historians* 5 (Spring 1992): 17–34; Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York, 1994), 66–69.

Ideology, we find, played a secondary role, despite the apparent similarities between their socioeconomic systems, bureaucratic doctrines, Kafkaesque institutions, and avowed adherence to Marxism-Leninism. On the surface, ideology served as an important link during the creation of the alliance and on some later occasions, but again the documents deflate ideology's significance. This is not to discount the significance of ideology on the foreign policies of the two nations altogether but simply to suggest that it carried far less weight than other facets of the essential dynamics shaping their foreign policy decisions.³⁵

Since Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue published their study in 1993, much more information has come to light, especially with respect to the causes of the Korean War. Chen Jian, Shu Guang Zhang, Alexandre Y. Mansourov, and Kathryn Weathersby have examined with great care the complicated motives and actions prompting the behavior of Stalin and Mao.³⁶ In his introduction to *Mao's Military Romanticism*, Zhang says that it is necessary to use a cultural approach to grasp Chinese actions during the Korean War. The Chinese, he says, were not merely responding to perceptions of their security. We need to see how "aspirations, attitudes, beliefs, desires, idealism, sentimentality, and other 'manifestations of human consciousness' shaped the actions of Chinese revolutionary leaders."³⁷

Yet, in the analysis leading up to the actual Chinese intervention, Zhang stresses that, "Given their abiding fear that the US might take provocative action either from the Korean peninsula, the Taiwan Strait, or Indochina, the Chinese communists viewed the American armed intervention in Korea as strong evidence of US hostility toward China." In a typical comment on August 4, 1950, prior to the successful American invasion of Inchon, Mao told his comrades, "If the US imperialists win [the war in Korea], they may get so dizzy with success that they may threaten us. We therefore must come to [North] Korea's aid and intervene in the name of a volunteer army, although we will select the best timing [to do so]." And although it is not Zhang's intention to illustrate the defensive orientation of Mao's actions in Indochina, his evidence does not lend support to Gaddis's extrapolation of military romanticism on behalf of international communist revolution. Zhang shows that many factors shaped Mao's thinking—tradition and suspicion as well as revolutionary fervor—and not least his desire to safeguard his revolution and thwart his enemies at home and abroad. His support of Ho, for example, stemmed, at least in part, from his perception that Vietnamese communist control of a buffer zone along the border would enhance the PRC's security.³⁸

³⁵ Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, Calif., 1993), 219.

³⁶ Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*; Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949–1958* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992); Alexandre Y. Mansourov, "Stalin, Mao, Kim, and China's Decision to Enter the Korean War, September 16–October 15, 1950: New Evidence from the Russian Archives," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 6–7 (Winter 1995–96): 94–107; Kathryn Weathersby, "The Soviet Role in the Early Phase of the Korean War: New Documentary Evidence," *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 2 (Winter 1993): 425–59; Weathersby, "New Russian Archival Materials, Old American Debates, and the Korean War," *Problems of Post-Communism* (September–October 1995): 25–32.

³⁷ Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950–1953* (Lawrence, Kans., 1995), 9.

³⁸ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 56 and 63 (for the quotations); see also 67–85. In his book, Chen Jian writes, "The CCP's attitude toward Vietnam was first and foremost the logical result of the Chinese Communist perception of an Asian revolution following the Chinese model." But he goes on

Chinese Communist assumptions about the intractable hostility of capitalist powers were inextricably interwoven with their perception of national interest and their desire to safeguard the revolution that they had pulled off against unlikely odds. In a multinational history of the Korean War, William Stueck writes that "Mao's revolutionary ideology joined with his commitment to his nation's traditional conception of itself as the 'Middle Kingdom.'" In the spring of 1950, prior to the outbreak of war in Korea, Mao had mixed goals: he wanted to seize Taiwan, eradicate Chinese Nationalist strongholds on his periphery, and project his influence into Korea and Indochina. Whether he would intervene in a prospective war in Korea appears entirely contingent. In a point elided by Gaddis, Stueck emphasizes that it was American action in October and November 1950 that precipitated the wider conflict. "Rather than deterring the Chinese, U.S. aggressiveness provoked them." U.S. officials did not intend to intervene in China, but the "course they pursued," argues Stueck, "gave Mao reason to suspect otherwise."³⁹

Michael Hunt goes somewhat further in highlighting contingency and denying the saliency of Communist ideology in Mao's actions. In his thoughtful and finely textured account of Chinese Communist foreign policy, Hunt contends that, although Mao "took Marxist-Leninist theory seriously and paid tuition as a dutiful student of the lessons that the Soviet ideological system had to teach," he "refused to bind his policy to a fixed doctrine."⁴⁰ Most of Mao's comrades did not want to intervene in the Korean conflict, and Mao himself wavered. When General Douglas MacArthur ordered UN troops to the Yalu River, Hunt stresses, U.S. actions forced Mao to stop equivocating.⁴¹ Mao's thinking, according to Hunt, "consisted of multiple strands twisted uneasily together, and his explicitly experimental style gave considerable play to combining ideas in different patterns as he faced changing circumstances." Chinese Communist foreign policy, in other words, was a potpourri of many traditions and clashing sentiments. "Though a socialist nation was to arise where a Confucian empire once stood, the old dreams of cultural glory and political dominance in Asia and the traditional hostility toward equal state relations and broad international contacts seemed to live on." Beijing may have seemed like an inflexible and dangerous ideologue, but Hunt's reading of the recent documents leads him to the conclusion that Marxist-Leninist ideology "has been one source for policy and that, as a source, it can sustain not one policy but a wide variety of them."⁴²

Beliefs must be taken seriously, as Gaddis instructs us, but the beliefs are more

to say as well, "CCP leaders also believed that standing by their Vietnamese comrades would serve their goal of safeguarding China's security interests." The safety of the "Central Kingdom" "could not be properly maintained if its neighboring areas fell into the hands of 'hostile' barbarian forces." See Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 104. Looking at similar documents, Qiang Zhai ranks the factors somewhat differently. A combination "of geopolitical, historical, and ideological factors," he writes, "determined Beijing's decision to intervene in the Korean fighting. Concern with China's security constituted the primary motive." Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent, Ohio, 1994), 75, 135-36; see also He Di, "The Most Respected Enemy: Mao Zedong's Perception of the United States," *China Quarterly* 137 (March 1994): 148-50.

³⁹ William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, N.J., 1995), 39, 125.

⁴⁰ Michael H. Hunt, *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* (New York, 1996), 208-09.

⁴¹ Hunt, *Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 187-89.

⁴² Hunt, *Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 210, 4-5.

comprehensive and ambiguous than those encapsulated by Marxism-Leninism. After studying many new Chinese and Russian documents, Odd Arne Westad has decided that ideology is far more important than he thought it was when he first started his research on foreign intervention in the Chinese civil war. But, he admonishes, "it is necessary to establish a wider and more useful definition of ideology, encompassing not only a written tradition of authoritative texts and their exegesis but also credenda formed by personal and historical experience. In the case of the Soviet foreign policy elite, such a definition would cover Marxism (primarily in its Stalinist form) as well as the Soviet experience in international affairs and Russian traditional perceptions of themselves and others."⁴³

In their study of the Kremlin's foreign policies from Stalin through Khrushchev, Zubok and Pleshakov employ this insight. Russia, they insist, "represented not only a nation but also a distinctive imperial civilization . . . Russian communists simply could not break with the imperial mode of thinking." Indeed, their faith in redemption through revolution blended with traditional Russian messianism and the Orthodox Church's stress on justice. Hence Zubok and Pleshakov use the revolutionary/imperial paradigm as a framework for encapsulating the different impulses that they see motivating Soviet foreign policy.⁴⁴ This paradigm undergirds some of Gaddis's analysis, but it is used more adroitly by Zubok and Pleshakov because they are less intent on finding revolutionary fervor behind all of the Kremlin's actions.

Yet even the imperial/revolutionary paradigm founders on complexity. Zubok and Pleshakov acknowledge this in their concluding postmortem. Throughout their book, they have stressed the twin pillars of empire and revolution to explain the course of Soviet foreign policy. But the logic of the evidence, they seem to admit, now forces them to focus on a third factor: "the policies of the West, primarily the United States." At the end of the war, they contend, Stalin grasped the Soviet Union's relative weakness. He understood that there was much to gain from a continuation of the wartime alliance, not the least important of which were American loans and reparations from the western zones of Germany. "Notwithstanding his reputation as a ruthless tyrant," Stalin "was not prepared to take a course of unbridled unilateral expansionism after World War II. He wanted to avoid confrontation with the West. He was even ready to see cooperation with the Western powers as a preferable way of building his influence and solving contentious international issues. Thus, the Cold War was not his choice or his brain-child."⁴⁵

This conclusion seems to depart dramatically from Gaddis's views. In fact, Zubok and Pleshakov stridently assert that "Stalin's postwar foreign policy was more defensive, reactive, and prudent than it was the fulfillment of a master plan."⁴⁶ Stalin was reacting to the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the ostensibly

⁴³ Odd Arne Westad, "Russian Archives and Cold War History," *Diplomatic History* 21 (Spring 1997): 264–66; for his earlier views, see Westad, *Cold War and Revolution: Soviet-American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War, 1944–1946* (New York, 1993).

⁴⁴ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 2–3; see also Westad, "Russian Archives and Cold War History," 266.

⁴⁵ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 275–76.

⁴⁶ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 277.

more bellicose diplomacy of Truman, the apparent American employment of atomic diplomacy to extract concessions from Moscow, and the announcement of the Marshall Plan. In contrast to Gaddis, they do not think that American diplomacy was quite so passive.⁴⁷

Mastny agrees with Zubok and Pleshakov that Stalin did not want a Cold War. Yet Mastny stresses that Stalin could not avoid a Cold War because of his paranoia and insecurity.⁴⁸ There is an irony here, because Mastny believes that Stalin's foreign policy should be understood in terms of Soviet insecurity; yet Mastny evades the question of whether Western actions did endanger Soviet security or encroach on Soviet sovereignty. At the very outset of his book, Mastny stresses the Kremlin perception of implacable Western hostility. "Whether this was true or not, their constant perception of a threat prevented Soviet leaders from ever feeling sufficiently secure."⁴⁹ Mastny does not carefully address whether there was or was not a threat, whether the Soviets had reason or not to fear Western actions. Later on in the volume, he provides a marvellous account of the Kremlin's purges in Eastern Europe and notes that they were in part the result of growing confrontational initiatives by the United States, including a host of covert operations in Albania and elsewhere. The looming threat, Mastny writes, "though genuinely perceived, was also deliberately exaggerated."⁵⁰

And so it was, with devastating repercussions for the peoples of Eastern Europe. Postulating the West's hostility and psychologically unable to assess real from imagined threats, Stalin demanded, says Mastny, a sense of security that could not help but endanger the security of everybody else.⁵¹ Here, Mastny does sound much like Gaddis, and they are joined by Zubok and Pleshakov. The latter two Russian historians write that, notwithstanding Stalin's desire to avoid confrontation, "he managed to draw closer to it with every step." For the explanation, they return to the revolutionary/imperial paradigm.⁵²

WHAT UNITES THE WORKS OF Gaddis, Mastny, and Zubok and Pleshakov is their shared view that Stalin's actions made no sense in traditional diplomatic or geopolitical terms. The Kremlin's policies, they stress, reduced Soviet security and invited confrontation. These outcomes, they explain, underscore Stalin's paranoia, his lust for absolute power, and his embrace of the revolutionary/imperial paradigm.

Yet there are other ways to explain the outcome of Soviet policies. Nations frequently take actions that are designed to enhance their security but that have the opposite effect. Their initiatives endanger the security of others, thereby precipitating reactions that further intensify their own sense of vulnerability. This concept is known as the security dilemma, and is a phenomenon frequently noted by

⁴⁷ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 36–53.

⁴⁸ Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 23.

⁴⁹ Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 11.

⁵⁰ Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 83.

⁵¹ Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 27.

⁵² Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 277–78.

political scientists who study international relations.⁵³ In other words, Soviet actions in eastern Germany and Eastern Europe, though ruthless and counterproductive, might not have been a consequence of Stalin's revolutionary fervor, or an imperial/revolutionary paradigm, or an inbred, irrational paranoia. They might have been a result of his quest for security.

To explore this alternative explanation, it is necessary to consider how Stalin and his comrades conceived of Soviet security at the end of World War II. How did they perceive threats and interpret dangers? How did ideology shape their understanding of the lessons of the past, and how did Soviet culture affect the implementation of their strategic requirements?

We now do know that, during the war, Nazi armies destroyed over 1,700 cities and towns and more than 70,000 villages and hamlets. They ransacked the countryside, destroying tens of thousands of collective farms and machine and tractor stations. The Germans demolished over 31,000 industrial enterprises, 1,100 coal pits, and 3,000 oil wells. They stole or slaughtered 17 million head of cattle, 20 million hogs, 27 million sheep and goats, and 7 million horses. The suffering was horrendous. Twenty-seven million people inside the Soviet Union perished during the conflict, many as a result of Stalin's foolish actions and barbarities but even more from Nazi atrocities and battlefield casualties.⁵⁴ The legacy of the Great Patriotic War has been an enduring part of the nation's memory.⁵⁵ Did it affect Soviet foreign policy? Did it shape the Kremlin's perception of its postwar security requirements?

In Gaddis's volume, Soviet losses during World War II are mentioned in a sentence and then passed over. Interestingly, he argues that Pearl Harbor had a lasting impact on U.S. national security policy. At Pearl Harbor, 2,400 Americans died. During the entirety of World War II, 425,000 American servicemen were killed. It is interesting that, for Gaddis, the Japanese attack left an indelible imprint on postwar American conceptions of national security, but the war apparently had little impact on the Kremlin.⁵⁶

Other historians have come to different conclusions after looking carefully at the social history of World War II, the Soviet conception of national security, and the Kremlin's perception of threat. The war years, writes Elena Zubkova, "shaped all of postwar life. Without an understanding of the phenomenon of the war as it entered the flesh and blood of that generation, postwar history and social behavior are incomprehensible."⁵⁷ In his superb book *Stalin and the Bomb*, David Holloway agrees with Gaddis that Stalin pursued his interests unilaterally. But Holloway

⁵³ For classic allusions to the security dilemma, see, for example, Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J., 1976), 66–76; John Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2 (January 1950): 157–80; Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* 50 (1997): 171–201.

⁵⁴ "War Damage in USSR," *USSR Information Bulletin* 7 (May 14, 1947): 5–6; United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe, *Economic Survey of Europe* (1947) (Geneva, 1948), 145–48; Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (New York, 1963), 585. Gaddis acknowledges the figure of 27 million deaths. See Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 13.

⁵⁵ Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments*, Hugh Ragsdale, trans. (New York, 1998). Zubkova cites the figure of 26.6 million dead; p. 26.

⁵⁶ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, chaps. 1–2 but esp. pp. 13 and 35–36.

⁵⁷ Zubkova, *Russia after the War*, 12.

stresses that Stalin rejected a revolutionary agenda: he “put the interests of the Soviet state above those of international revolution.” Envisioning a turbulent postwar era in which capitalism might be wracked by crisis and war, Stalin wanted to enhance “Soviet power and security.” He sought “to consolidate Soviet territorial gains, establish a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, and have a voice in the political fate of Germany and—if possible—of Japan.”⁵⁸

Numerous other scholars have examined the new evidence, seeking to explore whether Stalin sought security or revolution. Of course, it is possible to argue that these were intertwined, as Gaddis sometimes does. But others seem less certain, and claim that the new documents support an interpretation that highlights traditional geopolitical conceptions of security. This orientation is hardly surprising given the fact that almost all Russians viewed World War II as a defensive war, a struggle they never anticipated fighting on their own soil.⁵⁹ Vladimir Pechatnov and Aleksei Filitov, for example, analyze Soviet planning for the postwar years that took place during the war itself and conclude that the overriding stress was on state interests and security.⁶⁰ The documents examined by Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue suggest that from the closing days of World War II Stalin’s main concern was for “an alliance with China to curb Japan.”⁶¹ Norman Naimark writes that, notwithstanding all the contradictory impulses in Soviet policy in eastern Germany, the evidence reveals the Kremlin’s primary goals prior to mid-1947 to have been “geostrategic and economic.” The Soviets wanted reparations and “a German government that would not threaten Soviet security. To these ends, the Soviets were willing to sacrifice the interests of the German Communists and promote those of the ‘bourgeois’ parties.”⁶²

In their excellent collection of essays on Soviet policy toward Europe during the early Cold War, editors Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons conclude that, overall, the “new evidence emerges with regard to the importance of the geostrategic perspective—giving prominence to power politics and to unilateral considerations of security.”⁶³ Looking at relations with nations on the Soviet periphery, Sven Holtmark shows that the fundamental aim of the Soviet Union in Scandinavia was to keep Norway and Denmark out of an Anglo-American sphere. “The pursuit of Soviet offensive strategic objectives in Denmark and Norway gradually gave way to the traditional and basically defensive policy of confining the Western great powers’ influence in, and control over, these countries.”⁶⁴ With regard to Finland, Jussi Hanhimaki contends that the Kremlin’s overriding concern was not to spread

⁵⁸ David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–1954* (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 168.

⁵⁹ Zubkova, *Russia after the War*, 12–14.

⁶⁰ Vladimir O. Pechatnov, “The Big Three after World War II: Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post War Relations with the United States and Great Britain,” Working Papers, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cold War International History Project, no. 13 (Washington, D.C., 1995); Aleksei Filitov, “Problems of Post-War Construction in Soviet Policy Conceptions during World War II,” in Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons, eds., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–1953* (London, 1996), 3–23.

⁶¹ Goncharov, Lewis, and Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 3.

⁶² Norman Naimark, “The Soviets and the Christian Democrats: The Challenge of a ‘Bourgeois’ Party in Eastern Germany, 1945–1949,” *East European Politics and Society* 9 (Fall 1995): 3.

⁶³ Gori and Pons, *Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, xxii.

⁶⁴ Sven G. Holtmark, “The Limits to Soviet Influence: Soviet Diplomats and the Pursuit of

communism but “to avoid the possibility that Finland might be used as a springboard for an attack against the Soviet Union.”⁶⁵ Looking at Iran, Natalia Yegorova sees no evidence that Stalin had plans for the overthrow of the central Iranian government. It appears, she asserts, that American and British attempts to develop Iranian oil resources near the Soviet border really were taken as a threat to Soviet national security interests.⁶⁶ Studying Stalin’s approach to Korea, Kathryn Weathersby writes that his “main concern regarding Korea was to ensure that the peninsula would not become a staging ground for future aggression against the USSR.”⁶⁷ “Stalin continued for the rest of his life to base his policy toward Northeast Asia on the assumption that Japan would rearm and again threaten the security of the USSR.”⁶⁸

But there can be little doubt that, in terms of security, the control of German power was the overriding preoccupation of Soviet officials. As Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze told a group of visitors in 1990, the Soviet Union might have been waging a cold war with the United States for almost forty years, but when his grandchildren played war games, Germany remained the enemy.⁶⁹ Not surprisingly, in one of the first efforts to examine systematically the Soviet response to the formation of NATO, Yegorova finds that the Kremlin’s defensive posture was overridingly focused on the prospective revival of German militarism.⁷⁰ This comports with Mastny’s tentative conclusion based on circumstantial evidence that initial Soviet contingency plans mostly focused on a “Western attack rather than the initiation of a Soviet attack.”⁷¹ The revival of German power lingered as an overriding element of Soviet foreign policy. Khrushchev and millions of Soviets, comment Zubok and Pleshakov, believed the German threat must never rise again. The support of the GDR “was first and foremost a strategic imperative.”⁷²

In view of this evidence, it is interesting to ponder the significance of a new, prize-winning book by Carolyn Eisenberg. Focusing on U.S. policy toward Germany

Strategic Interests in Norway and Denmark, 1944–7,” in Gori and Pons, *Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, 121.

⁶⁵ Jussi M. Hanhimaki, *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the “Finnish Solution,” 1945–1956* (Kent, Ohio, 1997), 38.

⁶⁶ Natalia I. Yegorova, “The ‘Iran Crisis’ of 1945–1946: A View from the Russian Archives,” Working Papers, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cold War International History Project, no. 15 (Washington, D.C., 1996), esp. 18 and 21.

⁶⁷ Weathersby, “New Russian Archival Materials, Old American Debates, and the Korean War,” 26.

⁶⁸ Kathryn Weathersby, “Making Foreign Policy under Stalin: The Case of Korea” (Oslo, Paper Delivered at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, 1998), 7.

⁶⁹ Comments made by Shevardnadze at a meeting in Moscow with American and Russian scholars and diplomats, which I attended in June 1990. “Germany and Berlin,” writes Anatoly Dobrynin, “overshadowed everything; Germany was, of course, the historic balance at the center of Europe, as well as our historic enemy, the cause of two world wars, and now the main battleground of the cold war, with Berlin, literally, as the front line.” Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents (1962–1986)* (New York, 1995), 63.

⁷⁰ Natalia I. Yegorova, “Soviet Perceptions of the Formation of NATO, 1948–1953” (Oslo, Paper Delivered at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, 1998), 15–16.

⁷¹ Vojtech Mastny, “New Evidence on the NATO–Warsaw Pact Relationship, 1949–1969 (Oslo, Paper Delivered at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, 1998), 5; see also Giberto Villahermosa, “Stalin’s Postwar Army Reappraised: Deja Vu All Over Again,” *Soviet Observer* 2 (September 1990): 2–5; Matthew Evangelista, “Intentions, Capabilities, and Context,” *Diplomatic History* 22 (Summer 1998): 443–46.

⁷² Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, 180, 197.

in the immediate aftermath of World War II, Eisenberg mobilizes considerable evidence demonstrating that the United States was far from passive. Writing in a mode that resuscitates the power and force of revisionist historiography of the 1960s and 1970s, Eisenberg shows that U.S. plans for the recovery of postwar capitalism depended on the revival of the German economy. The United States, she contends, took all the initiatives that wound up dividing Germany. The United States had to do what it did because it was of utmost importance to integrate the resources of the Ruhr and the Rhineland into their postwar plans for western European renewal. The Kremlin, she suggests, was willing to settle for a neutral, unified Germany, but U.S. officials would not risk the possibility of western Germany slipping out of an American sphere of influence.⁷³

This argument seemingly fits well with the spate of new evidence showing a decisive turning point in the Cold War in mid-1947 as a result of the United States announcing the Marshall Plan. Stalin clearly saw this as a threat because the offer to include his eastern European neighbors as well as the Soviet Union itself portended a Western economic penetration of his sphere of influence as well as a revival of German power. His perception is understandable when one recalls that the number one goal of George Kennan's newly formed Policy Planning Staff in 1947 was to revive coal production in the Ruhr and that the United States and Great Britain moved ahead during that summer to boost the permissible level of German industrial production. Although Stalin previously had talked about the possibility of coordinating the actions of European communists, the American initiatives of 1947 prompted Stalin to establish the Cominform, declare the establishment of two camps, encourage strikes and demonstrations in Western Europe, and clamp down mercilessly in Eastern Europe.⁷⁴

Stalin's moves during the first half of 1948 were reactive yet portentous, carefully calibrated yet ultimately counterproductive, just as the security dilemma would postulate. As Stalin maneuvered to support the efforts of his communist minions in Eastern Europe to grab power and as he negotiated a series of bilateral security treaties, his main goal was to consolidate his sphere. In fact, we now know that he stepped back from support of the Greek communists, told the Italian Communist Party not to try to take power, and, after equivocating, settled for a defensive pact with Finland rather than support a communist coup.⁷⁵ Throughout, Stalin's focus was on Germany. He sought to thwart Anglo-American efforts to merge the three

⁷³ Carolyn Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944–1949* (New York, 1996).

⁷⁴ Scott Parrish, "The Marshall Plan, Soviet-American Relations, and the Division of Europe," in Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944–1949* (Boulder, Colo., 1997), 267–90; Geoffrey Roberts, "Moscow and the Marshall Plan: Politics, Ideology, and the Onset of the Cold War, 1947," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46 (1994): 1371–86; Michail M. Narinskii, "The Soviet Response: The Turn to Confrontation," Working Papers, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cold War International History Project, no. 9 (Washington, D.C., 1994); Anna Di Biagio, "The Marshall Plan and the Founding of the Cominform, June–September 1947," in Gori and Pons, *Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, 208–21; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 50–51.

⁷⁵ Antiom A. Ulunian, "The Soviet Union and 'the Greek Question,' 1946–1953: Problems and Appraisals," in Gori and Pons, *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, 151; Elena Aga-Rossi and Victor Zaslavsky, "The Soviet Union and the Italian Communist Party, 1944–8," in Gori and Pons, 174; Kimmo Rentola, "The Spring of 1948: Which Way Finland?" Paper Delivered at a Conference in Reykjavik, Iceland, June 1998.

western zones, create the Federal Republic of Germany, and reform the currency. The Russian historian Michail Narinskii shows how Stalin thought he could intimidate the West to halt its offensive, but Stalin misjudged the determination of the Truman administration. In fact, the coup in Czechoslovakia and the blockade of Berlin prompted Congress to approve the Marshall Plan as well as a significant increase in military appropriations. More important, Stalin's ominous actions accelerated the negotiations leading to the North Atlantic Treaty. While the airlift of supplies won the loyalty of Berliners for the West, the blockade crippled any realistic prospect Stalin had for luring all of Germany into his orbit. In other words, the Kremlin's attempts to check Western moves and control the future of German power backfired. Feeling threatened and challenged in an area of vital importance, the Americans, British, and French moved directly to enhance their own security. Stalin wavered between options and the Soviet position worsened, but Stalin's goals were neither revolutionary nor his actions incoherent.⁷⁶

Yet to say that Stalin was acting defensively to enhance the security of his state and his power does *not* mean that one should negate the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology and Soviet culture. The Truman administration was not intending to threaten Soviet security, but ideological predilections ensured that the Kremlin would see a real threat. And insofar as the recrudescence of German power did constitute a possible long-term threat, Soviet fears were perfectly understandable. Ideological predilections and security concerns intermingled in critically important ways. If Soviet leaders postulated the inevitability of war, as they did, they certainly did not want to see a revived Germany coopted into a Western alliance. Hence Gori and Pons correctly emphasize that, although the new evidence highlights geopolitics, "it does not resolve the specific question of the interaction in Soviet thinking between a geopolitical approach and an ideological vision of the capitalist world—not least, the influence exercised by the doctrine that war was inevitable."⁷⁷

Nor does the stress on geopolitics, power, strategy, and security negate the importance of Soviet culture in the unfolding of Soviet foreign policy. Although evidence mounts that Stalin had no plans to Sovietize or communize postwar eastern Germany or even Eastern Europe, once the Kremlin decided to clamp down it knew no other way to consolidate its power than through repression, oppression, and totalitarian rule. In a superb book on the Soviet occupation of East Germany, Norman Naimark shows how the Soviets gradually established a police state and a command economy in their zone of occupation in Germany, notwithstanding their initial desire to coopt all of Germany through moderate economic policies, coalition building, and support for unification. The Soviets, Naimark writes, "were driven by concrete events in the zone, rather than by preconceived plans or ideological imperatives." They "bolshhevized the zone not because there was a plan to do so, but because that was the only way they knew how to organize society."

⁷⁶ Michail M. Narinskii, "The Soviet Union and the Berlin Crisis, 1948–9," in Gori and Pons, *Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, 57–75; Wilfried Loth, "Stalin's Plans for Post-War Germany," in Gori and Pons, 23–36; Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, 277–410.

⁷⁷ Gori and Pons, *Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, xxii–xxiii.

They acted similarly wherever their troops occupied foreign lands and wherever they chose to stay.⁷⁸

But where they would remain seems to have been very uncertain and contingent on their perception of threat and opportunity as well as on their assessment of prospects for cooperation with the West on terms they could accept. We now do know that most communists in Eastern Europe were uncertain about Soviet intentions. Looking at the new documents relating to Bulgarian-Russian relations, Vesselin Dimitrov emphasizes that Stalin did not want a revolution in Bulgaria. Examining the situation in Hungary, Eric Roman finds not a “shred of evidence” that the Kremlin planned to Sovietize Hungary. Indeed, in eastern Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland, and Czechoslovakia, local communists, intent on seizing power for themselves, chafed under the constraints imposed by Stalin. The Soviet leader wavered, assessing the chances for perpetuating the wartime alliance and gaining the advantages that would be derived therefrom. When he saw the correlation of forces turning against him as a result of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Anglo-American initiatives in Germany, his equivocation ended. And when it ended, the dictates of Soviet culture took over with the complicity of indigenous communists. Although they were a minority, they often invited a bargain with the devil, a willingness to betray their nation’s national interests in order to gain power and transform society.⁷⁹

Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii remind us that it is imperative “to ask why significant elements within these [Eastern European] societies were susceptible to Communist solutions and how the Communist parties were able to transform themselves from underground cadre parties into mass parties with such rapidity.” The answer is not one that jibes well with Gaddis’s stress on good and evil. The fact remains, continue Naimark and Gibianskii, “that a strikingly large number of voters freely went to the polls in 1945–1946, and elected Communists.”⁸⁰ Why?

It is easy for us now to forget, but for many contemporaries in 1945, democratic capitalism had not seemed to work. For the prior half-century, it had failed to keep the peace, provide for the material well-being of the masses, and establish the structures for a prosperous international economy. It had failed to reintegrate Germany after World War I and thwart the rise of fascism. It had failed to deal with

⁷⁸ Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 467; also see, for example, John Micgiel, “‘Bandits and Reactionaries’: The Suppression of the Opposition in Poland, 1944–46,” in Naimark and Gibianskii, *Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*, 93–110; Weathersby, “Making Foreign Policy under Stalin.” For the absence of intention to communize even Eastern Europe, see also Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*; Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*; Pechatnov, “Big Three after World War II”; Eric Roman, *Hungary and the Victor Powers, 1945–1950* (New York, 1996); Anita J. Prazmowska, “The Soviet Liberation of Poland and the Polish Left, 1943–45,” in Gori and Pons, *Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, 76–88; for contrasting views, see Vladimir Volkov, “The Soviet Leadership and Southeastern Europe,” in Naimark and Gibianskii, *Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*, 55–72; Laszlo Borhi, “Soviet Rule in Hungary, 1945–1953” (Oslo, Paper Delivered at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, 1998).

⁷⁹ Vesselin Dimitrov, “Revolution Released: Stalin, the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Establishment of the Cominform,” in Gori and Pons, *Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War*, 272–89; Roman, *Hungary and the Victor Powers*, 167; Naimark, *Russians in Germany*; Igor Lukes, “The Czech Road to Communism,” in Naimark and Gibianskii, *Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*, 243–65; Rentola, “Spring of 1948: Which Way Finland?”

⁸⁰ Naimark and Gibianskii, *Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe*, 9.

rumblings of revolutionary nationalism in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Although support for communism varied from country to country and was nowhere a majority, faith in democratic capitalism was precarious and shallow. Tellingly, Igor Lukes writes, “many in Czechoslovakia had come to believe that capitalism . . . had become obsolete. Influential intellectuals saw the world emerging from the ashes of the war in black and white terms: here was Auschwitz and there was Stalingrad. The former was a by-product of a crisis in capitalist Europe of the 1930s; the latter stood for the superiority of socialism.”⁸¹ Even if some writers are unaware of it today, Western statesmen in 1945 grasped this reality. Referring to the afflicted peoples of Europe and Asia, Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson told a Senate committee, “They have suffered so much, and they believe so deeply that governments can take some action which will alleviate their sufferings, that they will demand that the whole business of state control and state interference shall be pushed further and further.”⁸²

To grasp the origins of the Cold War in Europe, it is not sufficient to analyze the structures created, as Gaddis does so effectively, but is necessary to explain the complex motives, diverse intentions, and turbulent circumstances that allowed such structures to evolve as they did. Revisionist scholars writing in the 1960s and 1970s captured many of the ideas, aspirations, fears, and beliefs that prompted U.S. initiatives around the globe. They demonstrated how eager U.S. officials were to revive the structures of capitalism in Western Europe, how worried they were about communist support in France and Italy, how sensitive they were to the rumblings of revolutionary nationalism in the Third World, and how determined they were to coopt western Germany and Japan for an American-led orbit.⁸³ The new history, while emphasizing the importance of beliefs, seems to gloss over American ideas and the actions they inspired. Gaddis, for example, while advising that historians need to analyze more closely how governments responded to one another’s initiatives, usually portrays the United States reacting passively to the revolutionary fervor of communist ideologues or to the more discreet overtures of its own allies.⁸⁴ Zubok and Pleshakov, while vividly portraying the men in the Kremlin, pay scant attention to what was happening in Washington until they get to their conclusion, when they acknowledge that Western actions were a key variable in explaining the Cold War.⁸⁵ The new documents, in other words, can lead historians astray and

⁸¹ Lukes, “Czech Road to Communism,” 249.

⁸² Testimony by Dean G. Acheson, March 8, 1945, U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Banking and Currency, *Bretton Woods Agreements Act*, 79th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C., 1945), 1: 35.

⁸³ For some of the most influential revisionist works, see William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959; New York, 1962); Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1966* (New York, 1967); Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–1954* (New York, 1972); Lloyd C. Gardner, *Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941–1949* (Chicago, 1970); Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration* (Chicago, 1972); Thomas G. Paterson, *Soviet-American Confrontation: Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War* (Baltimore, Md., 1973); Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam* (New York, 1965).

⁸⁴ For Gaddis’s advice, see Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 282. While Gaddis stresses the importance of interaction, he almost always portrays U.S. actions as reactive and passive, especially during the formative stages of the Cold War. See esp. chaps. 1–3.

⁸⁵ Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, 275–78.

prevent a full and nuanced analysis of the Cold War if they are not adroitly linked to what we have already learned about the American side.

POST-REVISIONISTS like Geir Lundestad made an important contribution when they stressed that the “empire” created by the United States in Western Europe was made possible by the willingness of host governments to collaborate with the United States in pursuit of their own interests.⁸⁶ Charles Maier has brilliantly shown how “U.S. ascendancy allowed scope for European autonomy.”⁸⁷ But the new temptation to describe U.S. actions in Europe as mainly reactive seems to go beyond the evidence. In his perceptive new book on French foreign policy in the late 1940s, for example, William Hitchcock incisively examines how the French maneuvered to protect their interests despite their ostensible weakness. But does this mean that the French shaped the course of events as frequently as did the Americans, as Gaddis concludes? Or does it mean that the French acted imaginatively and intelligently within the framework set by Washington and London? Hitchcock shows quite conclusively that Washington’s and London’s determination to boost German industrial production and establish a west German state that would be aligned in an anti-Soviet coalition gave the French no choice but to focus on a viable European framework that would contain and harness German power for France’s benefit. France, writes Hitchcock, “was obliged to defer to the American insistence that Germany be resuscitated and mobilized as part of the campaign to promote security and stability in western Europe.” The French, in other words, altered their tactics and operated effectively within the confines of the options allowed to them, but the basic parameters were set elsewhere.⁸⁸

It is important to understand intra-alliance relations, and Gaddis makes a unique contribution by demonstrating how the habits of compromise spawned by democratic institutions enabled the United States to run its empire so differently from the way the Kremlin ran theirs.⁸⁹ But at the same time, it is equally important to understand that the United States was the hegemon, as Maier stresses, pursued its own interests, as Lundestad acknowledges, and set the agenda leading to the division of Germany and the restoration of West German sovereignty, as Eisenberg insists. Saki Dockrill addresses the issue of agency succinctly in her book on German rearmament: “However self-defeating were American efforts to force the French to end their procrastination over the issue [of German rearmament], the French and, indeed, the other European allies, were reluctant to antagonize the Americans

⁸⁶ Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation.”

⁸⁷ Charles Maier, “Alliance and Autonomy: European Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives in the Truman Years,” in Michael J. Lacey, ed., *The Truman Presidency* (Cambridge, 1989).

⁸⁸ William I. Hitchcock, *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998), quotation on p. 3. For other illustrations of U.S. influence, see 34, 43–44, 63, 97–98. For Gaddis’s extrapolation of the meaning of the book, see his foreword, ix–x. Such extrapolations bear significantly on the way he portrays U.S. relations with its European allies in *We Now Know*.

⁸⁹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 43–53, 189–220, 188–89.

unduly and for too long, given their dependence on the US economically and militarily.”⁹⁰

Nor should the new evidence tempt us to understate the U.S. role in shaping the Cold War in Asia. The excellent new books on the Cold War by Gaddis, Mastny, and Zubok and Pleshakov, for example, pay almost no attention to the conscious U.S. initiatives to monopolize the occupation of Japan, divide Korea, deploy marines to China, and accept the return of French rule in Indochina—subjects dealt with extensively in an older literature.⁹¹ Citing new articles and monographs illustrating that there was no chance of reconciliation with the Chinese Communists in 1948–1949, Gaddis conveniently minimizes the considerable, but by no means incontrovertible, evidence suggesting that American actions in 1945–1946 had an important bearing on Mao’s thinking.⁹² Communist ideology predisposed Mao to assume that the U.S. government would thwart his revolutionary efforts; American support for Chiang Kai-shek in 1945–1946 confirmed the veracity of these beliefs. In a new volume of Chinese primary source materials, skillfully edited and conveniently translated by Chen Jian and Shu Guang Zhang, document after document illustrates the Chinese Communist frustration, disillusionment, and anger with U.S. assistance to the Nationalists.⁹³ “Considering how actively the U.S. was supporting the GMD [the Chinese Nationalists],” concedes Michael Sheng, “the CCP certainly had sufficient reasons to hate the Americans.”⁹⁴ Although the Truman administration subsequently curtailed its aid, it did not withdraw its recognition of the Nationalist government. U.S. actions left an indelible imprint, confirming ideological predilections. Michael Hunt writes, perhaps with some exaggeration, “Mao had grounded his postwar strategy on a set of badly flawed assumptions. He began by assuming that he could establish a collaborative link with American officials in China or, as an alternative, open direct contacts with Washington. Both proved wrong.”⁹⁵

A full account of the Cold War in Asia, especially its expansion to Indochina, must take cognizance of American actions and not dwell solely on Mao’s ideological fervor and Stalin’s revolutionary romanticism. In writing about the Vietnam War, Gaddis is unsparing in his criticism of U.S. entanglement. But he infuses almost no

⁹⁰ Saki Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy for West German Rearmament, 1950–1955* (Cambridge, 1991), 175.

⁹¹ See, for example, Marc S. Gallicchio, *The Cold War Begins in Asia: American East Asian Policy and the Fall of the Japanese Empire* (New York, 1988); Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1; Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York, 1985); Howard B. Schonberger, *Aftermath of War: Americans and the Remaking of Japan, 1945–1952* (Kent, Ohio, 1989); Walter LaFeber, “Roosevelt, Churchill, and Indochina, 1942–45,” *AHR* 80 (December 1975): 1277–95; Lloyd C. Gardner, *Approaching Vietnam: From World War II through Dienbienphu, 1941–1954* (New York, 1988).

⁹² For Gaddis’s view, see *We Now Know*, 62–65; for views that illustrate Mao’s flexibility, malleability, and uncertainty, see Qiang Zhai, “The Making of Chinese Communist Foreign Relations, 1935–49: A New Study from China,” *Journal of American–East Asian Relations* 1 (Winter 1992): 471–77; He Di, “Most Respected Enemy,” 146–48; Odd Arne Westad, “Losses, Chances, and Myths: The United States and the Creation of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945–1950,” *Diplomatic History* 21 (Winter 1997): 106–08.

⁹³ Shuguang Zhang and Jian Chen, *Chinese Communist Foreign Policy and the Cold War in Asia: New Documentary Evidence, 1944–1950* (Chicago, 1996), 22–24, 35, 37, 39, 40, 44–45, 47, 50–51, 52, 54, 57, 72, 73–75, 76, 79.

⁹⁴ Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism*, 115. Sheng’s acknowledgment is significant because he generally ascribes primacy to the role of ideology.

⁹⁵ Hunt, *Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy*, 199, 165–71.

agency whatsoever into the American side. At one point, he goes so far as to say that “the cold war in Asia developed largely out of inadvertence.”⁹⁶ He pays little attention to the reverse-course strategy adopted by the United States in Japan in 1947–1948, a policy reorientation that placed priority on the recovery of the Japanese economy rather than the reform of Japanese institutions. Many historians have shown how concern for resuscitating the Japanese economy convinced U.S. officials that Japan needed to retain markets and raw materials in Southeast Asia and Korea. These historians demonstrate that efforts to reconstruct, integrate, and coopt the latent power of Japan into an American-led orbit prompted the struggle against revolutionary nationalists in Indochina and elsewhere. But hardly any of this older scholarship, revisionist and post-revisionist, finds its way into recent writings.⁹⁷

The new historians of the Cold War tell us something important when they stress the significance of ideas and beliefs. They should follow the logic of their argument and look closely at the beliefs in Washington as well as in Moscow and Beijing. U.S. officials and the American people held powerful beliefs about the superiority of their institutions, culture, and race. They were proud of their wartime achievements yet fearful of the postwar world. The war bequeathed an ominous international system. Astride Eurasia stood the latent power of the Soviet Union. Stalin said he wanted to cooperate, but his actions in Eastern Europe seemed portentous. Recent history, moreover, had taught that totalitarian governments had a strong penchant for expansion. Should Stalin opt for expansion, the possibilities were innumerable. There were vacuums of power in Germany and Japan, civil war in China, revolutionary nationalist uprisings in Indochina and the Dutch East Indies. Britain was nearly bankrupt, and the international economy had been sundered by the autarchic practices spawned by depression and war. Communist parties competed for power in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere. American officials worried not only about the lessons of Pearl Harbor. They also worried that their own system of liberal capitalism might be endangered if a powerful adversary with a contrasting way of life gained control of the combined resources of Europe and Asia. They worried that Orientals might “embrace ideologies contrary to our own—or ultimately develop a pan-Asiatic movement against the Western world.” They knew they could not allow these things to happen. Such beliefs prompted actions; such actions, for good and for bad, figured prominently in the story of the Cold War.⁹⁸

We now do know a lot more about the making of foreign policy in the communist world. We now do know that ideas, beliefs, culture, and ideology count. But the question is how much they matter and how they relate to interests, strategy, power, and geopolitics. New documents alone will not answer such a question. We have seen, for example, that the focus on ideology does not necessarily translate into an

⁹⁶ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 82.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Schaller, *American Occupation of Japan*; Schonberger, *Aftermath of War*; Andrew J. Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987).

⁹⁸ Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*; for the quotation, see H. Freeman Matthews to James C. Dunn, April 20, 1945, National Archives, College Park, Md., Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, 856E.01/12–2045.

emphasis on a revolutionary foreign policy, nor does a stress on culture obviate the need to analyze security. Perceptions of threat and opportunity intermingle, as do ideological, material, and cultural considerations. Realists can be ideologues, and ideologues can be realists. Ideology alone does not dictate policy, nor does security. Historians, like political scientists, must abandon their customary binary categories, test new theoretical approaches, and integrate notions of culture and identity with an understanding of political process and political institutions as well as with an examination of material and strategic interests.⁹⁹

Likewise, it is not enough to examine the making of policy in any one nation. For a long time, scholars did this because they had access only to U.S. archives. But then the British and, gradually, the French opened their records. Now historians are gaining some access to documents in Moscow as well as in Prague, Berlin, Warsaw, and elsewhere. The Chinese, too, have printed and disseminated some records and published valuable memoirs. The Cold War International History Project, located at the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington, D.C., along with the National Security Archive have done a remarkable job prodding documents loose, translating some of them, and encouraging discussion of their significance and meaning. While we should rejoice at the new opportunities to examine the foreign policies of Moscow and Beijing, we should not isolate them from the web of interactions that were the product of a dynamic international system. That system spawned multiple threats and opportunities. The Cold War came about as leaders and peoples reacted to their perceptions of threat and opportunity. The United States was not slow to react, nor was the Kremlin. Nor were smaller governments, interest groups, and revolutionary movements.

Master narratives will soon be outdated if they are too influenced by contemporary fashions. Gaddis's *We Now Know* resonates with the triumphalism that runs through our contemporary culture, and in many ways it is the scholarly diplomatic counterpart of Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History*.¹⁰⁰ Some of this triumphalism is justified: after all, the United States and its allies did win the Cold War; the Soviet Union and its minions did murder tens of millions of people, crush the human spirit, thwart economic progress, and stifle the evolution of civil society. But if we are not careful, the recent collapse of Communism throughout much of the globe and the current popularity of market capitalism may distort historical vision as much as did the Vietnam War. Writing after the end of the Cold War is not such an advantage as Gaddis says it is, if historians forget what the world was like a half-century ago.¹⁰¹

Depression, war, and genocide engulfed peoples and nations and set the parameters for international relations in the second half of the twentieth century. What would be good and what would be evil seemed blurred to men and women enveloped by hunger and grief, expelled from their homelands, and yearning for peace, food, housing, and personal security. What would be good and what would be evil seemed uncertain to individuals who had seen colonialism persevere while

⁹⁹ For insights on how this might be accomplished, see the superb collection of essays edited by Peter Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York, 1996).

¹⁰⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992).

¹⁰¹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 281–82.

democracies faltered and capitalism tottered. What would be good and what would be evil seemed contingent on how governments would respond to people's clamor for opportunity, reform, ethnic equality, national autonomy, and respect for human dignity. In writing about the Cold War after the Cold War, we should not confuse its ending with its origins and evolution.

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