Review: Cold-War Revisionism: A Critique
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Politics.
The writings of the so-called Cold-War revisionists have had a powerful impact in recent years. In the case of the new generation coming to political awareness, analogies drawn or suggested between Vietnam and the period of the origins of the Cold War carry immediate conviction: many others have had their image of contemporary history challenged or even shattered, and those not persuaded by the revisionist case would acknowledge that important questions have been raised. Undoubtedly circumstances have favored the revisionist critique.

The revisionists, however, have been fortunate that their works have not been subjected to the same critical scrutiny which they have directed at the decisions, statements, and even the casual utterances of the early Cold-War leaders. This article will attempt such a critical analysis, focusing on the early period of the Cold War in Europe: it was in relation to Europe that the Western image of the Cold War as the containment of Communist expansionism was formed, and it is here that the revisionist challenge is most striking. Except perhaps for the Korean war, there has never been so clearly defined a Western image of the Cold War in Asia: countering the orthodoxy (which one might term the Dean Rusk view) there had always been a vigorous dissenting school which held that Asia was being misperceived in Eu-
ropean terms. The radicalism of the revisionist critique consists in the rejection of this sort of distinction between the European and Asian arenas of the Cold War, and the insistence that it is the original Western image of the Cold War in Europe which is at fault.

There is inevitably a problem of demarcation in seeking to define the revisionist school. Most recent studies of the Cold War depart in some degree from earlier conceptions which were strongly influenced by participant accounts, as authors come to perceive "the Cold War as History," to borrow the title of a recent work. It is in accordance with the prevailing usage, however, to define the revisionists as those who would replace the traditional Western image of the Cold War, not with a different kind of explanatory model, but with another image of the same general type: that is to say, one which ascribes primary responsibility to one of the two parties to the conflict.

This may be distinguished from two other types of interpretation: (a) those that see the Cold War as an inevitable clash between the two emerging superpowers, whose historical experience, economic and social systems, and ideologies rendered their aims, expectations, assumptions, and policies incompatible; and (b) those that, sceptical of the feasibility of unravelling longer-range causal connections and ultimate responsibilities, would see the Cold War as the unintended consequence of the interaction of the two powers, a conflict spiral beyond their control, involving internal politics deeply in their relationships, but nonetheless a product of avoidable decisions and over-reactions.

Needless to say, most works combine the three types of interpretation: only the most extreme protagonists of historical inevitability or inadvertence will rule out some element of contingency on the one hand, or wider determinants on the other; and questions of responsibility always arise—most fruitfully when they are posed within a relevant long-range and short-range context, least fruitfully when they amount to no more than the search for "guilty men."

The works under discussion may be seen as the hard core of the re-

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1 Louis J. Halle, The Cold War as History (London 1967) emphasizes historical determinants. The second approach has not been worked out systematically but pervades much of the literature. There are traces in Alperovitz, Cold War Essays; it is suggested by an excellent short history which reflects both revisionist and traditional insights, Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1966 (New York 1967). American domestic determinants, economic and ideological, are examined in the writings of Lloyd C. Gardner: Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy (Madison 1964), and Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941–1949 (Chicago 1970).
visionist school. They lay heavy stress on the responsibility of the leaders of one side, the American; there is a striking disregard for context. They may also, hopefully, be seen as "first-generation" revisionists. That is to say, if earlier historical controversies offer an analogy, the first, polemical generation gives way to more discriminating successors who discard the excesses but retain what is of value in the revisionist critique. Despite first impressions, this process has scarcely begun in the case of the works in question: the impressive scholarship of Kolko and Alperovitz does not lead them to avoid excesses that are less surprising in an overtly polemical work of synthesis, such as that of Horowitz.

It is not possible to examine all the issues raised, and much of Kolko's detailed research, in particular, will remain a valuable stimulus. This article will examine revisionist treatments of six issues, central to the early Cold War, which exemplify very general, pervasive weaknesses in the handling of evidence and the testing of hypotheses.

(1) The role of Eastern Europe in the Cold War: (Was American opposition to a Soviet sphere of influence the decisive first phase of the Cold War? Was Soviet policy reactive, i.e., was the tightening of Communist control a response to Western hostility rather than an original Soviet intention?);

(2) The breakdown of East-West cooperation (1945-46), with special reference to Soviet-American economic relations and policy towards Germany;

(3) The American decision to drop the atomic bomb, and the subsequent deadlock over nuclear control (the Baruch Plan);

(4) Soviet objectives beyond Eastern Europe, especially in Germany and France;

(5) The final division of Europe in 1947: (Was this due to American policy, in particular the choice of ideological war as against East-West collaboration? Was this the great lost opportunity of the postwar period?);

(6) The founding of NATO, and Western rearmament: (Was this the product of exaggerated fears of an unreal threat of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe, or a sensible precautionary policy?).
The article will then take up some of the wider issues raised by the revisionist studies.²

The following discussion is not dependent on a specific definition of the nature or the starting point of the Cold War. Lacking the discipline provided by the outbreak and termination of "hot" wars, writers on the Cold War have felt free to set its starting point at dates as diverse as 1917–19, 1938–39, 1945, or 1947–48, in accordance with their general view of the contest. Much of the confusion, however, arises from failure to distinguish between the state of hostility and conflict which has characterized the relations between the Soviet Union and the Western powers since 1917, and the phase of this relationship that is termed the Cold War. It would promote clearer discussion if this phase were specified, for example, as the period during which international politics was dominated by the bipolar conflict between two blocs led by the superpowers, a conflict so intense as to rule out most forms of collaboration, and characterized by the breakdown of communication between the two sides, a climate of fear, suspicion, and repression within each superpower, and a fear of war hanging over the world, especially Europe. So defined, the conflict had its origins in the period of the Bolshevik Revolution and Western intervention, the appeasement policy of the late 1930's, and the breakdown of wartime collaboration in 1945–46; but it did not reach the intensity of Cold War until 1947–48, then began to ease fitfully in the mid-1950's, and by the mid-1960's had been replaced by what has been termed a détente or "limited adversary" relationship not unlike many great-power relationships in the past.³

² Earlier discussions of the revisionist literature include: Paul Seabury and Brian Thomas, "Cold War Origins" (two articles), Journal of Contemporary History, iii (January 1968), 169-98; Henry Pachter, "Revisionist Historians and the Cold War," Dissent, xv (November-December 1968), 505-18; Charles S. Maier, "Revisionism and the Interpretation of Cold War Origins," Perspectives in American History, iv (1970), 313-47. Revisionist authors discussed in one or more of these, in addition to Alperovitz, Horowitz and Kolko, include D. F. Fleming, W. A. Williams, Isaac Deutscher, P.M.S. Blackett, and Konni Zilliacus. Charles Maier's article discusses some of the themes of the present article, with less emphasis on Europe but greater attention to the general assumptions and perspectives of the revisionist school. Some of my conclusions are very close to his: but as they are approached by different routes, and as this paper was first drafted before his article appeared, I have left them to stand as originally formulated.

³ The question of dating the start of the Cold War, and its dependence on different definitions of the conflict, is discussed by Paul Seabury, The Rise and Decline of the Cold War (New York 1967), 4-10. The definition offered above raises problems for the revisionists insofar as it points to 1947-48 rather than 1945 as the start of the Cold War. But this is not an attempt to resolve the issues verbally: it is open to the revisionist to argue that the main causes of the lapse into Cold War by 1947-48 are to be found not in the events of those years, but in the events of 1945 or earlier.
**COLD-WAR REVISIONISM**

**Eastern Europe**

The transformation of the historic assumptions of United States policy into a strategy aimed specifically at preventing leftist control—spontaneous or Soviet imposed—in Eastern Europe is easily documented now that archives for 1945–46 are being opened. It is clear that the United States applied every kind of pressure in the diplomatic arsenal—short of a land invasion—to prevent the institution of left governments (Alperovitz, *Cold War Essays*, 97).

Much has been made of the remarkable meeting between Truman and Molotov on April 23, 1945, when Truman, eleven days in office as President, decided, in accordance with the advice of Harriman, Deane, and Forrestal, to take a hard line over the Polish issue, thereby risking a diplomatic break with the Soviet Union. Negotiations in Moscow between Molotov and the American and British Ambassadors had reached a deadlock over the implementation of the Yalta agreement to reorganize the Soviet-sponsored provisional Polish government. Whether the Soviet stand was in violation of the Yalta Agreement was disputed among the American leaders, but on this point Kolko argues convincingly that both sides had hardened their positions since the hard-won Yalta compromise, both tending to revert to their former positions (p. 390). Truman’s first exercise in personal diplomacy had been preaced by his remark to his advisers that “he intended to go on with the plans for San Francisco and if the Russians did not wish to join us they could go to hell.”

However, so far was this from foreshadowing the actual course of American policy that Harry Hopkins was sent to Moscow to attempt to resolve the deadlock which had developed in Soviet-American diplomacy, especially over Poland. In these talks the United States ceded the most substantial of the points at issue by agreeing that the reorganization of the Polish government should be limited to the addition of a small number of Western-oriented leaders to the Soviet-sponsored government, rather than recreating the government on a new basis. The outcome of the Hopkins mission casts serious doubt on the hypothesis of the “delayed showdown” in American diplomacy advanced by Alperovitz. In accepting a Communist-dominated government and in rapidly moving to recognize it (July 5), the U.S. was tacitly abandoning any attempt to press for Soviet disengagement from

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5 Alperovitz accepts the importance of the concessions on Poland, but argues that the Americans hoped to reverse the position after the dropping of the atomic bomb (*Atomic Diplomacy*, p. 89). This is difficult to reconcile with prompt recognition or the failure to attempt such a policy after Hiroshima, indicated below. At most it was a vague aspiration or a form of face-saving.
the most significant state in Eastern Europe—the state in which the West was best placed diplomatically to press its demands.

The somewhat more sustained Western diplomatic offensive in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must bear the main weight of sustaining the revisionist contention that the American effort to deny Russia a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe amounted to the initiation of the Cold War by the West. The case is a weak one. It is clear enough that the bomb affected the psychological climate: Truman spoke against spheres of influence in the Balkans, Byrnes and Bevin condemned the arrangements for elections in Bulgaria and Hungary (resulting in their being postponed), and the first meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in September reached a deadlock, ostensibly over procedural issues, but more plausibly through Soviet opposition to the Byrnes-Bevin insistence on free elections in Eastern Europe as a condition of the recognition of the remaining governments.

But there was no showdown. There was, indeed, an attempt to precipitate one. On August 21, King Michael of Roumania, after having received encouraging American hints, called for his government’s resignation and appealed to the United States, Britain, and Russia to assist in the formation of a new government under the Yalta Declaration. Despite pleas for prompt action by the American representative in Bucharest, Washington limited itself to expressing general support and placed a ban on contacts with Roumanian politicians. Byrnes informed the American representative that

Principal concern of US Govt at present juncture is, as you know, to keep the road open to a solution of Rumanian political crisis which will be acceptable to all three Allied Govts. We hope no action will be taken which might seem to give ground for Soviet suspicion that crisis was brought about by “Anglo-American intervention.” . . . We do not think that any advice or assurances should be given to the King regarding his present difficult position. . . .

The stage had been set for a diplomatic showdown, but the United States drew back, foreshadowing the Western response in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The weakness of Communist support in Eastern Europe in this period has been widely noted. Stalin had acknowledged privately at Potsdam that “any freely elected government would be anti-Soviet and that we cannot admit.” In the election in Hungary in November 1945 the Communists could win only 17 per cent of the vote, against 57

per cent for the Small Farmers' Party. Mikolajczyk's Peasant Party was thought to enjoy similar support in Poland.

The Western governments did little to exploit this situation. Their protests led to the postponement of elections in Bulgaria and Hungary, which had the unintended effect of relaxing some of the pressure on Moscow. American attempts to influence the course of events in Poland in the second half of 1945 were ill-coordinated and ineffective. In particular, there was little pressure for elections. The State Department sought to attach economic conditions to projected loans to Poland, conditions which seemed unrealistic to Ambassador Lane, but it discouraged him from formulating political conditions. U.S. policy-makers could agree on discouraging Polish applications for credit, but this was a tacit acceptance of inability to influence an adverse situation.8

The Western governments drew back in alarm from the breakdown of the September meeting of Foreign Ministers, and from Washington and London there emerged a chorus of assurances that the two governments accepted Russia's need for friendly regimes on its borders.9 At the December Council of Foreign Ministers, progress was made towards draft peace treaties with the former Axis satellites, and the Polish pattern was repeated in the case of Roumania: that is to say, after face-saving additions to the government, Britain and the United States extended formal recognition.

The behavior of the Western powers, then, is not consistent with the hypothesis of a serious attempt to reverse the military verdict of the war. Rather, the United States and Britain were the victims of conflicting advice and pressures, hence their policy oscillations. The position was well summed up by W. H. McNeill in what remains the best work on the period:

It was surely a misfortune that the effort at world pacification in 1945-46 should have been entrusted to men so firmly rooted in their respective national backyards as Byrnes, Bevin and Molotov were. . . . It does not appear that the Americans and British ever fully and frankly faced the contradiction between the two parts of their programme for Eastern Europe. Friendliness for Russia and 'democratic' government were incompatible in most of the countries in question; but Byrnes and Bevin either did not know or professed not to admit the fact.10

8 Foreign Relations (fn. 6), 374-76, 388-93, 411-16, 419, 422.
9 Thomas (fn. 2), 185-86, cites speeches by Acheson, Byrnes, Eden, Macmillan, and Bevin in October-November 1945 and February 1946.
It is clear that certain policy-makers in both capitals were aware of the contradiction, and that much of the advice from the State Department as well as the Foreign Office was that Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe would have to be accepted. This theme, running through a number of the American papers prepared for the Yalta and Potsdam meetings, has been neglected by the revisionists.

Politically, while this Government probably would not oppose predominant Soviet influence in the area [Poland and the Balkans] neither would it wish American influence to be completely nullified.

In order to attain [a] position . . . where there are some elements not completely subservient to Moscow, it could be made clear to Stalin that we cannot accord diplomatic recognition to regimes such as those in Bulgaria and Roumania until they have been fundamentally changed. . . .

While the Government may not want to oppose a political configuration in Eastern Europe which gives the Soviet Union a predominant influence in Poland, neither would it desire to see Poland become in fact a Soviet satellite and have American influence there completely eliminated.

Mikolajczyk does not expect the full freedom which he would like for Poland and the Polish people. On the other hand he is hopeful that through the strength of the Peasant Party a reasonable degree of freedom and independence can be preserved now. . . . he freely accepts that Poland's security and foreign policy must follow the lead of Moscow.11

The defensiveness of tone and modesty of expectation suggest that it was not a question of challenging the Soviet position but of seeking a modicum of influence within its framework; to some, conceivably, the democratic fundamentalism in American policy was a conscious attempt to make the most of a weak hand. The policy is best understood as a negative one—to prevent total Soviet control—rather than a policy aimed at positive goals, the realization of political democracy or the achievement of a major export market. The economic objectives of U.S. policy in Eastern Europe, overemphasized by Kolko to an implausible degree, found their place as the main means by which the policy-makers hoped to establish some form of counterweight to Soviet power. The Open Door was not "the only inflexible objective of American policy" (pp. 402-3)—its implications were for geographical reasons

11 Briefing Book Paper for the Yalta Conference; Briefing Book Papers for Potsdam on the former Axis Satellites and on Poland; Telegram from Harriman to Secretary of State, June 28, 1945; in Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945 (Washington, D.C. 1955), 234; The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference) 1945, I (Washington, D.C. 1960), 360-61, 715, 728. (Emphasis added.)
quite different in Eastern Europe from elsewhere—but was the condition which policy-makers attempted, understandably enough, to attach to the extension of credit for reconstruction.

The second Eastern European issue raised by revisionist studies is whether the communization of that region, far from being the unfolding of Stalin's design, was not indeed a reaction to hostile Western policies. "In fact we now know," Kolko writes, "that the Russians . . . had no intention of Bolshevizing Eastern Europe if—but only if—they could find alternatives" (p. 619). Horowitz develops Deutscher's contention that the totalitarian single-party system was established only after the Truman Doctrine in 1947 (pp. 86-90). In evaluating this thesis it is necessary to make a distinction (blurred in most revisionist analyses) between effective control by the various Communist Parties and the full-fledged Stalinist system of the monolithic bloc. The Stalinist extreme, which did not long outlast his rule, can plausibly be presented as his characteristic reaction to the climate of international tension which had developed by 1947—plausibly, not certainly, since so little is known of Soviet decision-making, and it is possible that his compulsion to eliminate independent centers of power within the Soviet system might have led Stalin to the Cominform, the break with Tito, and the Eastern European purges even in a less tense international context. 12 Much of the tension, after all, was a consequence of the way Stalin chose to react to Western moves not in themselves hostile to the Soviet sphere, such as the Marshall Plan: the recovery of Western Europe could not be considered anti-Soviet unless it was assumed that the Soviet Union had a legitimate interest in its economic collapse.

There is much more evidence bearing on the question of Communist control before the final Stalinist phase. Horowitz, following Deutscher, offers the curious argument that the Soviet seizure of massive war booty and reparations from the former allies of Germany shows that Stalin expected these countries to remain capitalist, so unpopular did Soviet policy render the Communist Parties. The opposite is far more plausible: given this unpopularity, only the Communists could be relied on to cooperate with the Soviet Union, hence their political dominance became an imperative of Soviet policy. How else could friendly governments be ensured?

But it is not necessary to rely on a priori reasoning. It was widely recognized at the time that the Communist parties were able to secure a dominant political position through controlling key ministries, above

12 Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc, rev. ed. (New York 1961), 51-64, points to stresses in Soviet relations with Eastern Europe (the problems of "domesticism") as a reason for the formation of the Cominform.
all the Ministries of the Interior (the police), and through gaining effective control of the coalitions which governed each country from 1944–45 to 1947–48. Hugh Seton-Watson draws a distinction between the genuine coalition which governed for an initial period in four of the countries: Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and the "bogus coalition" which succeeded it, in which "the governments still contain non-communist parties, but these are represented by men chosen no longer by the party membership but by the communists."11 The genuine coalition gave way to the bogus coalition in Bulgaria as early as January 1945, in Roumania in March 1945, in Hungary in February 1947, and in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. In Poland there were elements of the genuine coalition when Mikolajczyk was in the government (1945–46), though Communist control of the government was a primary objective of Soviet policy from the time of the liberation, and it was secure from the outset.

Even during the period of the genuine coalition the presence of the Soviet occupation forces enabled the Communists to prevail over their partners; for example, despite their lack of support in the December 1945 election in Hungary, they were able to insist that a Communist be appointed Minister of the Interior.14 During this phase, moreover, parties which had retained their independence and support were undermined and eventually broken up through systematic campaigns involving the intimidation and arrest of leaders and the disqualification of candidates. Such campaigns took place above all against Mikolajczyk's Polish People's Party and against the Small Farmers' Party in Hungary throughout 1946. Thus the surviving independent political forces were broken during the year before the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.

Brzezinski shows that Soviet and East European theorists, presupposing Communist domination but not a monopoly of power in the new governments, devised a doctrine of the People's Democracy as a transitional type of state. "Those are not capitalist states in the ordinary meaning of the word. But neither are they socialist states. Their development in the direction of Socialism is based on the nationalization of the chief means of production and on the very character of those states."15

The only exception to the pattern was Czechoslovakia, where popular support for the Communists was greatest, and where the genuine coali-

14 Ibid., 194.
15 Brzezinski (fn. 12), 32, citing an article by E. Varga.
tion survived until early 1948, though under extreme stress; the polarization of the conflict in Czechoslovakia could indeed be traced to the international polarization of 1947, but in every other case Communist control was either established in early 1945 or consolidated in 1946. The conclusion is inescapable that, whatever Stalin’s ultimate motivation, his method of achieving Soviet security in Eastern Europe was to establish political structures in which Communist control was beyond challenge. Whether the destruction of all independent parties was intended from the outset or a response to their popularity in Poland and Hungary cannot be determined, but given Stalin’s attitude to independent political forces beyond his control, it is plausible to suppose that there was a general intention to neutralize and, if necessary, destroy such forces once the regimes had consolidated themselves. There is little to be said for Kolko’s hypothesis that the Russians had no intention of “Bolshevizing” Eastern Europe; they did not (except in Czechoslovakia) appear to entertain any alternative. The reality, rather, was that, due to the special character of the Soviet system, its demand for security could be satisfied only by far greater infringements on the independence of the countries of Eastern Europe than other great powers have chosen to impose on states in their security region, and this has been the basic reality in postwar Eastern Europe in 1945-46, just as in 1948, 1956, and 1968.

The Breakdown of Economic Cooperation

It is now clear that the failure to establish significant links between the Soviet and Western economic systems was a major factor in the onset of the Cold War. Two proposals for such links were under discussion in the early part of 1945 but had been abandoned by the time of the Potsdam conference: large-scale American loans to assist Soviet reconstruction, and reparations from Germany in the order of magnitude demanded by the Soviet leaders. In the absence of either kind of agreement, as Kolko points out, there was “nothing to trade to make actions and realities meaningful in terms of rewards as well as penalties” (p. 401).

This issue has received greater emphasis in revisionist than in earlier

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16 In his discussion of Hungary in 1944-45 Kolko cites Seton-Watson to the effect that the Communists did not have full control, but neglects Seton-Watson’s evidence that they were striving for it and that some of the non-Communists in key positions were dependent on the Communists. The situation was not unlike that described by Wolfgang Leonhard in the Soviet zone of Germany, where the Communists controlled what at first appeared “bourgeois” local governmental authorities. See Wolfgang Leonhard, *Child of the Revolution* (London 1957), 287-372.
accounts, and it is one which *prima facie* accords with the revisionist standpoint, since the United States could have assisted generously in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged Soviet economy and failed to do so. But the revisionist accounts convey a distorted impression of the decision-making and divert attention from the actual circumstances and the significance of the failure to establish a bridge between the two systems, suggesting as they do a policy of crude economic pressure based on Harriman’s advice, culminating in the abrupt cutoff of lend-lease on V-E Day (Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy*, p. 36; Kolko, p. 500).

There is still much that is unclear in the American decision-making on the projected loan, following Molotov’s request for a $6 billion credit at 2½ per cent interest in January 1945.17 Both Roosevelt, prior to Yalta, and Truman, prior to Potsdam, indicated that they would raise the issue with Stalin, but neither did so. Harriman’s viewpoint was more complex than the revisionists suggest, and his policy was not adopted. Although it is true that Harriman consistently argued (1944–45) that postwar credits should be used as a form of political pressure, he did not advocate the passive withholding of credits, but rather an active policy of using offers of credit as a lever to influence Soviet policy. “We should do everything we can to assist the Soviet Union through credits in developing a sound economy . . . the sooner the Soviet Union can develop a decent life for its people the more tolerant they will become.”18 He contested Washington suggestions that the loan would be of only marginal importance to the Soviet economy and urged Washington to hasten its reply to Molotov.19 However, as frictions increased, Harriman tended to fall in with the reluctance in Washington to proceed with the loan, argued for priority to Western Europe and proposed only small loans to Russia and Poland, despite his earlier realization that only a large credit offered any prospect of influencing the general direction of Soviet policy.

Harriman’s inconsistencies may have been a response to the changing climate of opinion in Washington, but they also throw some light on fundamental obstacles to the projected loan. It is difficult to conceive of a successful negotiation of economic or political conditions for a major loan (compare the arduous negotiations over the special loan to Britain in 1945–46). What little evidence there is suggests that the Soviet

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18 *Foreign Relations* (fn. 6), 946 (telegram to Secretary of State, January 6, 1945). See also recommendations by Harriman, 845, 996.

leaders would have been as sensitive to suggestions of conditions as in the later negotiations on the Marshall Plan. The alternative would have been an unconditional offer in the expectation that friendly relations would follow. Treasury Secretary Morgenthau’s proposed $10 billion credit was closer to this, but Roosevelt showed little interest. Official Washington was moving away from this approach to relations with Moscow, which had underlain Roosevelt’s policy on lend-lease but was meeting with mounting criticism.

The reasons for the American failure to respond to Molotov’s request, then, appear to be as follows. The lessons drawn by the decision-makers from their relations with Moscow counselled against a “special relationship” with Russia that would dispense with conditions for assistance. At the same time, the decision-makers sensed the hopelessness of an attempt to negotiate conditions. The Administration was understandably reluctant to seek to persuade Congress to make unprecedented sums available under unprecedentedly favorable conditions. In terms of the new international system that was emerging, Russia and America could only be close partners or rivals, and a relationship of rivalry was already appearing, or reappearing; it is difficult to suppose that the circumstances were such that the offer of assistance could have transformed rivalry into partnership.

Washington’s failure to offer a loan brought the reparations issue into the forefront of East-West economic relations. There was a hardening of American reparations policy between Yalta, when Roosevelt had accepted the Soviet proposal of $20 billion in reparations as a basis for discussion, and Potsdam, when the Americans reverted to Britain’s Yalta position of rejecting any fixed sum for reparations and insisted that the cost of essential imports should be the first charge on German exports, ahead of reparations. The American policy at Potsdam was

20 See, for example, the Soviet reaction to the cutoff of lend-lease. Although there appears to have been no attempt to negotiate with the Soviet leaders on political conditions for credits, Ambassador Lane met with an angry response when he broached the issue with the Polish government. Ibid., 415.

21 See George C. Herring, Jr., “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944–1945,” Journal of American History, lvi (June 1969), 93-114. Herring shows that the cutoff of lend-lease in May 1945 followed a deliberate decision to terminate the exceptionally favorable conditions which applied to Russia, and was in general accordance with Harriman’s “quid pro quo” approach, but his account places emphasis on congressional pressures to terminate lend-lease and overzealous execution of the cutoff—factors neglected by the revisionists—and he shows that Harriman and the State Department were shocked by the manner in which the cutoff was executed.

that each occupying power should obtain its reparations deliveries from its own zone, but it was proposed that, since the greater part of the industry, especially heavy industry, was in the Western zones, part of the reparations from these zones (eventually agreed on as 25 per cent) should be supplied to the Soviet Union (10 per cent free of charge, 15 per cent in exchange for deliveries of foodstuffs). Whatever its intention, the effect of this policy was to increase the independence of the occupation zones at the expense of the theoretically supreme body in Germany, the Allied Control Council, and thus to move towards the division of Germany.

Kolko presents the policy as a deliberate choice of zonal autonomy in full awareness that it amounted to an abandonment of four-power control. "In fact the conference laid the structure and foundations for German partition and the United States created the basis for a truncated Germany's return to world power" (p. 575). The Americans were already looking toward the restoration of industrial Germany as a major economic power: they therefore deliberately avoided the four-power collaboration sought by the Russians, and opted for the partition of Germany.

This interpretation postulates a degree of consistency and clear-sightedness not characteristic of American policy at the time, and pre-dates the final partition of Germany. This was not crystallized until after the French prevented the establishment of a central German administration, and General Clay suspended reparations deliveries to Russia in April 1946 in retaliation for Russia's failure to deliver foodstuffs as agreed at Potsdam. This last, and decisive, step came shortly after the most notable four-power agreement in Germany: the agreement on the level of industry to be authorized. This was potentially the basis for implementing the reparations agreement, as the remaining industry would now be available for reparations.

There were differences among American policy-makers in mid-1945, but there is no evidence of a deliberate political decision at this stage in favor of long-term partition. Much of the pressure for zonal autonomy came from the military, who were thinking in terms of short-term administrative considerations. American decisions on reparations appear to have been governed by immediate concerns: to avoid economic and social breakdown in the Western zones of Germany, with the accompanying specter of communication; to avoid financing massive reparations payments through subsidizing the necessary level of economic activity; and to find some basis for agreement consistent with those priorities after it had become clear that they ruled out a sum

23 Ibid., 418-20, 432-33, 435.
of the order of $20 billion, still demanded by the Russians. Byrnes's opting for zonal reparations offered the chance for a practical agreement in which the West could not lose, since it controlled the main potential reparations, but there is no evidence that he foresaw all the long-term implications, or that the American leaders had abandoned the views stated in the Briefing Book Paper on Germany prepared for Potsdam:

The U.S. zone of occupation is deficient in food and is almost completely lacking in coal and in other major industrial materials. Its operation as a closed economic entity would be utterly impracticable. . . . The economy of Eastern Germany can be readily assimilated into an Eastern economic sphere. In contrast, acceptance by the Western powers of the task of finding a place for a Western German economy would create extensive difficulties. . . .24

Bruce Kuklick also sees American reparations policy as a major factor in the partition of Germany, but traces it back from its immediate sources to that familiar villain of Cold War historiography, the Open Door policy. The "first charge" principle, he argues, was more than the commonsense maxim which it appeared to be: the exports which were to have precedence over reparations to offset the imports ruled "necessary," would, unlike reparations, be goods which Germany could sell competitively. This would promote German development with a view to participation in the multilateral trading world of American wartime planning; it was this which was to take precedence over Soviet reconstruction. "In clinging to their idea of a world economic system dominated by the United States, they prevented the possibility of any sort of cooperative regional arrangement with the U.S.S.R. and pursued a policy which contributed fundamentally to the division of Europe."25

This interpretation, like Kolko's, moves far ahead of the circumstances of 1945. It neglects the restrictiveness of early occupation policy towards the German economy, and the pressures of the economic emergency with which the Western Allies were confronted in Europe. The Americans were not thinking ahead to the period of competitive exports: what they were insisting on was a supply of goods or equipment that might otherwise be earmarked for reparations, sufficient to pay for the imports judged essential. The American policy may be criticized as ungenerous towards the Soviet ally, but cannot reasonably be taken as tantamount to the later policy, announced by Molotov in

24 Foreign Relations (fn. 11), 440-41.
25 B. Kuklick, "The Division of Germany and American Policy on Reparations," Western Political Quarterly, xxiii (June 1970), 293; see also 281.
July and by Byrnes in September of 1946, of promoting German recovery beyond the restricted levels agreed at Potsdam. In the history of the occupation, “Potsdam” stands for stringent restrictions, while the Molotov and Byrnes speeches initiated the competitive restoration of Germany.

In pressing such hindsight interpretations, the revisionists divert attention from a development of central importance to the Cold War, the failure to establish significant Soviet-American economic relations. The economic division of Germany foreshadowed at Potsdam resulted from the opposition between Soviet and Anglo-American priorities, the former seeking above all the maximum German contribution to Soviet reconstruction, the latter seeking to pay the minimum to avert economic and social breakdown in Western Germany. But the more fundamental economic issue was that of direct American credits to Russia (indirect financing by way of reparations was not a viable alternative). The division of the world into two economic systems was inevitable: the decision on the loan ensured that there would be very little economic cooperation between them.

**Atomic Weapons: Hiroshima and the Issue of International Control**

In any view the discovery of nuclear weapons and the subsequent nuclear arms race represent a major element in the Cold War, especially in its initial phase when, notions of deterrence still unformulated, the first reaction to atomic weapons (their effects typically exaggerated) was shocked awareness of the new vulnerability of human society; fears associated with nuclear weapons and the revelations of espionage were to contribute to the climate of hysteria in the early years of the Cold War.

Alperovitz sees the atomic bomb as a fundamental influence on American diplomacy in 1945, encouraging Truman’s anti-Soviet stance and providing the basis for his diplomatic strategy of the “delayed showdown.” Although he asserts that there is insufficient evidence to establish the presence of a reverse relationship—the influence of anti-Soviet diplomacy on the decision to use the bomb—the closing pages of *Atomic Diplomacy* put forward a powerful statement of the thesis that dropping the bomb was not necessary for ending the war, nor even for securing American objectives in the Far East, but was seen by key officials as relevant to the broader Soviet-American relationship and especially to the political outcome in Europe (pp. 14, 236-42). The
evidence which he assembles does not establish that calculations concerning Europe were a major factor in the decision to drop the bomb; it does, however, reinforce his thesis that greater consideration was given to the political exploitation of the bomb than has usually been recognized.

But even here, where Alperovitz is on relatively strong ground, he fails to establish his central hypothesis that American diplomacy from May to July was shaped by a coherent strategy of settling the outstanding issues through a diplomatic confrontation ("showdown") after the dropping of the bomb. As we have seen, there was in fact no showdown over Eastern Europe: it seems evident, moreover, that there was no planning of a showdown, no thinking through of how, precisely, Washington would exploit the bomb. Rather, there was a mood on the part of some American leaders—an expectation that America’s bargaining position would improve, coupled with a desire for a rapid political settlement; it would be more plausible to interpret American diplomacy in the early months of Truman’s Presidency in terms of keeping options open, postponing final decisions until the situation was clearer, than in terms of a "strategy" of the kind which Alperovitz postulates. The new President, seeking to master the most demanding of offices at a time when the rush of events might have seemed beyond control, pressed from all sides with competing claims and advice, no doubt welcomed any rationalization for delay on complex issues on which he was still briefing himself; he was in no position to impose a daring long-term plan which required perhaps two decades of hindsight even to formulate.27

Vague notions of exploiting the bomb were one reason why the decision whether or not to drop it was not reopened as the military arguments for its use were weakened with Japan’s increasing readiness to surrender; but they were probably not the main reason. Alperovitz overstates American awareness of the Japanese situation, and avoids a systematic discussion of the key decisions leading to Hiroshima. Kolko, who does examine the decisions, is much closer to earlier interpretations: the momentum of the atomic program and the expectation of further protracted struggle with Japan set up a powerful bias in favor

26 Stimson, for example, who was the adviser most concerned with the political implications of the bomb, advised a relatively accommodating approach to Soviet demands in Eastern Europe.

27 A reading of the early chapters of Truman’s memoirs suggests that the postponement of Potsdam was due less to any specific consideration than to his determination to master the issues and options before him, to avoid merely being swept along by events; his interest in the budget (dismissed by Alperovitz) was an important aspect of this,
of the military use of the bomb; the only real alternatives considered in May were an advance warning to Japan or a demonstration atomic strike, which was rejected as undermining the bomb's "shock" potential, and hence its prospect of ending the war; and in July the American leaders discounted the ambiguous evidence of Japan's peace feelers just because there had been so much similar evidence in the preceding months (pp. 539-43; 549-67).

Mechanism prevailed. No one seriously explored any of the options—neither Japanese surrender, nor delay, nor withholding the bomb... The United States would take no chances. For precisely the same reasons of mechanism and conservatism, which the Japanese in their own desperate way shared, the Americans decided to use the bomb as a known and now predictable factor of war, an economical means of destroying vast numbers of men, women, and children, soldiers and civilians. Well before August 1945 they had reduced this to a routine (Kolko, 566-67).

On the issue of the international control of nuclear weapons, Horowitz presents the United States as wantonly repudiating the kind of agreement proposed by Stimson in September 1945—direct negotiation with Russia on the non-manufacture of nuclear weapons—in favor of the unrealistically one-sided Baruch Plan, which provided that after a transition period, all sensitive nuclear operations would be managed by an international authority which would take decisions by a majority vote; i.e., there would be no veto.

It is easy, with hindsight, to identify the weaknesses of the Baruch Plan: the Soviet Union could not be expected to entrust its security to a Western-dominated international agency nor to remove its barriers to the substantial number of foreign experts that would have been involved, and the transition period of a continuing American nuclear monopoly was an obvious target for Soviet suspicion. However, it is worth recalling that the Baruch Plan has been discussed nostalgically or approvingly by such diverse writers as D. F. Fleming and Philip Noel-Baker, and that its principal features were those of the Acheson-Lilienthal Report, heavily influenced by Robert Oppenheimer, which had been based on the not implausible view that a nuclear arms race could be prevented only by an innovation as radical as the international management of nuclear activities: that nothing less measured up to the magnitude of the task.

Where Horowitz is at fault is in supposing that there was an obvi

ously more promising means for preventing a nuclear arms race, along the lines proposed by Stimson and by the Soviet Union. But Stimson's was not a full-fledged proposal, but rather an attempt, at his final Cabinet meeting, to argue for a basic reorientation of American policy. Had it been developed more fully, it would have had to provide for a system of inspection to give assurance that materials from "peaceful" nuclear facilities were not being diverted to military ends. The lack of such a system—or a sufficiently convincing one—was the basic Western objection to Soviet "ban the bomb" proposals, which were just as untrustworthy to suspicious Western governments as the Baruch Plan was to the Russians. The Baruch Plan has rightly been criticized as a brilliant propagandist ploy which by its very radicalism and one-sidedness obstructed real negotiation, and indeed there were voices in the West calling for much more modest measures of international control. It is unlikely, however, that there was any basis for agreement on such proposals in this period, given the problems which inspection posed for the Soviet Government. Horowitz overlooks the magnitude of the practical obstacles to an agreement and the unprecedented nature of the aspiration to prevent, by an international agreement between suspicious rival powers, the further development of a new, potentially dominant weapon. The history of disarmament negotiations, before and since, suggests the unlikelihood of such an agreement. Fleming, a participant in American policy-making at the time, was aware of the intractability of the problem: "The trouble was not in the Baruch Plan; it was in the world. Nations which could not come together in sympathy and understanding could not be saved by legalistic formulas."29

SOVIET AIDS IN WESTERN EUROPE

Stalin was in a bizarre Byzantine way scrupulous, legalistically scrupulous, in his bargains with his bourgeois allies. . . . He had committed himself to respect the predominance of the bourgeois order in postwar western Europe and he carried out his obligations. Long before the Truman Doctrine was proclaimed, Stalin had very effectively saved western Europe for capitalism.30

During the critical period in the history of French capitalism the major party of the Left took upon itself, with the guidance of the Soviet Union, the responsibility of managing and restoring a tottering system during its moment of greatest danger (Kolko, 444-45).

Only Russian conservatism stood between the Old Order and revolution (Kolko, 450).

29Fleming (fn. 28), I, 373.
Kolko and Horowitz follow Deutscher in his image of Stalin as "the most conservative statesman in the world." Yet there is a strange discrepancy between the general picture formulated above and the qualifications which Kolko begins to develop in his account of the Italian and French situation in 1944-45. He concedes that there was no chance of a violent Communist takeover of power with the Allied armies present in France and Italy, and in France with the further factor of de Gaulle's determination to gain unfettered control of the armed forces. The Communists, then, had to work within the system, and their leadership made a virtue of this, overruling opposition from some of the Resistance leaders. As the party of patriotism, reconstruction, and working class unity the P.C.F. (Communist Party of France) could extend its membership and support. For the first time it became a mass party, and was able to play a leading role in the governing coalition: as militant revolutionaries the Communists would have been an isolated minority inviting repression.

Still, the role of the Communists as the party of production and wage restraint is a surprising one and lends some color to the Deutscher-Kolko theses. It appears to have been the product of two strategic choices, essentially choices by Moscow (the P.C.F. being dominated by Thorez and his Moscow-based colleagues): to promote French independence from the United States, which required the recovery of France's economy independent of massive U.S. support; and to induce France to follow an independent, non-Western-bloc foreign policy, which would be assisted if the P.C.F. was both respectable and powerful.\textsuperscript{31} And indeed, France sought to play such an intermediary role and was reluctant to abandon it even in 1947.

The French economic and social structure (the "Old Order") was neither as vulnerable as suggested by Deutscher and Kolko nor as close to complete recovery as presupposed in the Communist strategy. Despite Communist efforts to restore production, the need for American credits remained. On the other hand, the still ailing socioeconomic system was able to withstand the onslaught of Communist militancy when, after the open break between the Soviet Union and the West in 1947, the Communists launched their political strikes against the Marshall Plan. Kolko, indeed, is the victim of a myth—perhaps his distinctive contribution to revisionism—the myth of a revolutionary Left on the point of sweeping away the Old Order throughout Europe, but foiled by

the ruthless repression of Western arms and by Stalin’s Realpolitik. Although the Resistance movements were imbued with a spirit of radical change, they were neither united nor organized politically; nor were the major political forces in Western Europe revolutionary.

Communist policy in Western Europe in this period was one of building up the strongest possible position within the new economic and political structures whose long-term prospects were uncertain. A central feature of the policy, in Germany as well as in France and Italy, was the attempt to bring about an amalgamation of the Communist and Socialist parties. The unity of the Left had strong appeal to the Socialist rank and file, but was successfully resisted by the Socialist leaders in each country, who feared Communist dominance of the united party which was to be organized along Communist lines of “democratic centralism.” Though aware of this strand in Communist policy, Kolko misconstrues it as a willingness to abandon the Party, to submerge its identity (p. 440)—a view which was shared by none of the Socialist leaders.

The Soviet reaction to the Marshall Plan, and Soviet policy towards Germany at least until 1948, show that Stalin was not prepared to regard Western Europe as a capitalist sphere in which he would refrain from intervention. Admittedly, the ultimate aims of Soviet policy in Germany in this period remain obscure. Many contemporary Western observers saw Moscow making a bid for the support of German nationalism in 1946, when Molotov announced Soviet support for a centralized German government and major increases in the authorized level of German industrial production; others saw the proposal for a centralized government as an attempt to secure a structure easily amenable to Soviet control. Djilas reports his own puzzlement over confident statements by Stalin and other Soviet leaders in the spring of 1946 that all of Germany would become Communist, a confidence that had been replaced in 1948 by resignation to the division of Germany. Adam Ulam suggests that Soviet policy in Germany was tentative, unclear as to what would best serve Soviet interests, but clearer as to what it wished to avoid: the consolidation of the Western zones into a powerful anti-Soviet state. Certainly the Soviet interest in reparations

33 M. Djilas, Conversations with Stalin (Harmondsworth 1963), 119: a passage never cited by the revisionists but conveying the same impression of authenticity as the rest of his memoir.
34 Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence (London 1968), 440-47.
cut across any attempt to appeal to German nationalism, and Soviet diplomatic proposals in 1946–47 can quite plausibly be read as giving priority to reparations. What can be postulated is that Soviet policy engaged in a number of endeavors, mostly unsuccessful, to keep all-German options open, to build up a power base in Berlin and the western zones of Germany, and to obtain through diplomacy a voice in controlling the economy of Germany as a whole and especially the Ruhr. The Berlin blockade was a last-ditch attempt to pressure the Western governments to refrain from creating a West German state or, failing that, to oust them from Berlin. The Soviet moves prior to this have some resemblance to the earlier Western efforts to achieve a voice in the affairs of Eastern Europe, based on a similar reluctance to concede the region completely to the other side; given the strong position of the Communist parties in France and Italy, these moves gave substance—before the economic recovery sparked by the Marshall Plan—to fears of the spread of communism into Western Europe.

1947: Europe Divided

1947 saw the end of ambiguity: the lines of the Cold War in its main theater, Europe, were now drawn clearly, the landmarks being the Truman Doctrine, the March–April Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow, the Marshall Plan and its rejection by the Soviet Union, and the formation of the Cominform. The picture of these events that emerges from revisionist studies such as that by Horowitz is that of an ideologically militant United States throwing down the gauntlet, the timing and tone of the Truman Doctrine destroying any hope of compromise at the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference and provoking Stalin's counter-move—the founding of the Cominform. Moreover, although the Marshall Plan was theoretically open to Soviet participation, in reality Washington officials were determined to avoid this, and succeeded in maneuvering so that the onus for the break would fall on the Soviet leaders rather than themselves (pp. 70–74). Walter Lippmann's contemporary critique of the containment doctrine is enlisted in support of the thesis that the final division of Europe could have been avoided by a more far-sighted American policy: the Marshall Plan, instead of being placed in a context of ideological conflict, could have been combined with a more enterprising diplomacy, and a determined effort could have been made to negotiate a German settlement based not on hardening ideological frontiers but on acceptance of a neutralized region in Central Europe,
which would have involved the early withdrawal of the American, British, and Soviet occupying forces from Europe.  

On examination there is little to be said for this version of the situation in 1947. Whatever the long-term objections to the Truman Doctrine, it did not have the immediate effect on Soviet-American relations that is postulated by the revisionists, perhaps because the combination of negotiation with harsh rhetoric was so much in accord with the Soviet *modus operandi*. At the Moscow Conference it was the Americans, especially Marshall, who were dismayed by the lack of progress, while Stalin was relatively relaxed.

The Marshall Plan, and in particular its rejection by the Soviet Union, was more decisive for the final crystallization of the two blocs in Europe, and there is some truth in the revisionist characterization of American attitudes. Officials feared the loss of Congressional support for the Plan if Russia were to participate, yet did not wish to take the responsibility for excluding her. Ironically, it was a provision advocated by Walter Lippmann which appears to have led to the Soviet rejection of the Plan. This was the requirement that the European states coordinate their own plans for economic reconstruction, taking full advantage of intra-European trade, and submit to the United States a request based on their joint calculations. Molotov’s rejection of the Anglo-French proposals to exchange economic data and prepare such a collective proposal, and his insistence on a direct bilateral arrangement with the United States, led to the Soviet withdrawal from the Paris conference on the Plan and insistence that the East European states should also withdraw. This confirmed that there were to be two separate economic blocs in Europe and further restricted the freedom of the “satellite” governments: at the same time, their wavering and perhaps the increasing uncertainty on the part of the French and Italian Communist Parties appear to have precipitated the decision to found the Cominform, which introduced the full-fledged Stalinist “monolithic” bloc. It also initiated a more militant phase of Communist policy, characterized by political strikes in Western Europe and insurgency in Southeast Asia.

Lippmann was the first to admit that his alternative might not have

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36 At a meeting between Stalin and Marshall on April 15, Stalin responded to Marshall’s pessimism with the suggestion that: “these were only the first skirmishes and brushes of reconnaissance forces . . . when people had exhausted themselves in dispute they then recognized the need for compromise.” Joseph M. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York 1955), 222-23.
succeeded in restoring a Europe free from occupation by the great powers on its periphery. In calling for "the Marshall Plan purged of the Truman Doctrine," Lippmann did not envisage the withdrawal of all American influence, but merely the withdrawal of American, British, and Soviet troops. Since this was presumably one of the aims of the Foreign Ministers' conferences on Germany, one must ask what incentive Lippmann envisaged using to break the familiar deadlocks of those conferences. He referred briefly to the possible need to pay "ransom" to induce the Soviets to withdraw their armies; and he called on both sides to look ahead to the dangers of building up two rival Germanies as members of the two hostile blocs.

As the issue was never put to the test, it cannot be asserted with certainty that there was no chance of such a settlement. Ten years later, when George Kennan proposed disengagement in his Reith Lectures, the obstacles were even greater: many vested interests in maintaining the two Germanies in their respective blocs had by then developed. But the conditions for a settlement were not at all promising even in 1947. Within Germany there were the problems of four-power agreement on the form of government and the formation of a viable government willing to meet Soviet demands for reparations: there was no reason to suppose that this latter problem would be resolved any more easily than the similar dilemma after World War I (the more willing a government to meet reparations demands, the less the prospect of its viability). In the wider European context, Lippmann (like Kennan in 1957) proposed a Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe as well as from Germany. It is difficult to see what *quid pro quo* the Western powers had to offer for Soviet abandonment of control over its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Indeed, one of the surprising *lacunae* in Lippmann's 1947 argument is that, although he put forward a geopolitical explanation in place of Kennan's ideological explanation for Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe, he did not, in his discussion of his proposed German peace treaty, take account of the Soviet Union's security interest in remaining in Eastern Europe.\(^{37}\) Lippmann's brilliant and wide-ranging critique of American policy in 1947 shows nothing so clearly as the hazards of predictive analysis in international politics. The negative points in Lippmann's critique have more force than his positive advocacy of an alternative, which scarcely deserves to

\(^{37}\) Indeed, at this point in his analysis he suggests that Soviet insistence on retaining forward military positions would show that Moscow's motive was to dominate Europe. Lippmann (fn. 35), 43-44.
be elevated into the category of "missed opportunities," as is coming to be done in the revisionist literature. 38

**NATO AND REARMAMENT**

Throughout the period in which communism was a major threat, particularly in France and Italy, little thought was given to the problems of a military nature. . . . There was still some willingness in the West to take account of the incredible devastation visited upon the Soviet Union during the war. Indeed, one of the most significant facts about the formation of NATO is that the process began after the major internal threats to Western European countries were beginning to subside. 39

If any revisionist hypothesis is coming to acquire the status of the new conventional wisdom, it is that the Soviet Union, devastated by the second World War, never intended to invade Western Europe, whose real problems were socioeconomic, and that the foundation of NATO and the subsequent heavy rearmament represented a massive overreaction. This view follows the analysis of George Kennan, who argued unsuccessfully against the premises which led to the founding of NATO in 1948-49. The Western leaders, it is suggested, were led astray by the Hitler-Stalin analogy and the alarm engendered by the Prague coup and the Berlin blockade. A correct reading of these events would have emphasized Soviet caution in the blockade and the Soviet aim of rounding off the East European security zone in Czechoslovakia. It would have been seen that the Soviet "threat" to invade Western Europe was a deterrent one, analogous to the American nuclear "threat" against Russia itself, each aimed at deterring the other from exploiting its asymmetrical military superiority. By 1949, Western Europe was beginning to recover economically, and the Soviet attempt to prevent the formation of West Germany had been defeated: the stability so lacking in the first postwar years was on the way to being achieved.

Hindsight lends plausibility to this analysis, but it is nonetheless highly questionable, not only because it is impossible to say what the consequences of the non-existence of so major a factor in contemporary

38 E.g., Horowitz, 19. It is possible to suggest a parallel between Lippmann and Henry Wallace, both of whom remained essentially within the mainstream of American policy thinking even when opposed to pressing particular issues as the Truman Administration chose to. Thus Wallace, arguing for a more conciliatory line, insisted on an "Open Door" to trade in Eastern Europe (as, in different words, did Lippmann). See La Feber (fn. 1), 37-39.
international politics as NATO would have been, but also, more concretely, because it cannot be asserted with confidence that Soviet intentions would have remained unchanged had there been no American guarantee to Europe and no American intervention in Korea (which was based on the same general reading of Soviet intentions). The past two decades in Europe would surely have followed a different course if the Soviet Union had been the only superpower militarily present in Europe.

Moreover, the Western governments were thinking largely in political terms: they were not so much reacting to an anticipated Soviet invasion as seeking a political framework which would promote a sense of security in Western Europe, and thus provide the necessary climate of confidence for the economic recovery to come to fruition—a factor which even Kennan acknowledged. They wished to avoid a psychological situation of inferiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Harriman’s defense of NATO was that without it there would be “a reorientation” in Europe leading to “a restrengthening of those that believe in appeasement and neutrality.” A little later this sort of consideration led many to overcome their objections to West German rearmament: the point was not so much the need for German divisions as the need to associate West Germany with the NATO security framework in preference to any alternative.

It is necessary to bear in mind the uncertainty with which Western leaders in 1948–49 contemplated their future relations with the Soviet Union. Decisions were taken in anticipation of the period when America would no longer have a nuclear monopoly: what confidence could there be that Western Europe could then withstand Soviet pressures without an American guarantee? And after Korea, the question was posed in terms of a need for armed forces on the ground, to resist a potential Soviet attack.

But was it reasonable to anticipate hostile Soviet pressures? No doubt Western decisions were influenced by the memory of over-optimistic analyses of Hitler’s intentions, but there was sufficient unpredictability in Stalin’s policies and a sufficient sense of hostility and mutual incomprehension for prudent leaders to conclude that a military imbalance in Russia’s favor would be dangerous.

Given this uncertainty and lack of meaningful communication with the Soviet leaders, Western decisions were based increasingly on the military maxim that policy should be based on an opponent’s capabilities rather than his presumed intentions, and on “worst-case” rather

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40 Cited in La Feber (fn. 1), 78.
than "best-case" assumptions. In this context we can observe the weakness of Kennan’s argument against the need for a military alliance:

The Russians had no idea of using regular military strength against us. Why then should we direct attention to an area where we were weak and they were strong? Time and again, in the ensuing weeks, I said to my colleagues: "All right, the Russians are well armed and we are poorly armed. So what? We are like a man who has let himself into a walled garden and finds himself alone there with a dog with very big teeth. The dog, for the moment, shows no signs of aggressiveness. The best thing for us to do is surely to try to establish, as between the two of us, the assumption that teeth have nothing whatsoever to do with our mutual relationship—that they are neither here nor there. If the dog shows no disposition to assume that it is otherwise, why should we raise the subject and invite attention to the discrepancy?"  

The reply was all too obvious. Governments could not assume that the dog would remain permanently docile, but had a duty to supply themselves with some form of self-protection. Nor could they, given the many uncertainties, rely on Kennan’s assurance that the Russians had no intention to use force. This particular argument, in any case, was greatly weakened by Korea.

The argument, then, is partly that even if the revisionist hindsight analysis is correct, it was not very convincing at the time: the decisions were reasonable in the circumstances, and to act on the opposite set of premises would have been verging on the irresponsible. The greater the uncertainty, the more reasonable the policy of rearmament. The strongest argument for NATO, however, was the need for a power balance and a security system. A decision against a Western alliance would have had momentous consequences for Europe’s political and economic future. West Germany would have been subject to strong Soviet influence, and it is difficult to imagine that the various European Communities could have been established. The revisionist thesis appears to be based on a static image of international politics which deserves to be examined in greater detail.

Revisionist Assumptions

Revisionist interpretations typically imply that disturbances in European politics in the early postwar period were due solely to untimely American initiatives. This may be a function of a narrowly bipolar vision of the period: the pawns are of so little interest to the revisionist historian that he does not concern himself with the various actors

within them. The suggestion is not that every history of the Cold War must enter into the details of European politics, but that there should be an awareness of the main political forces and their evolution: the failure of the Resistance to emerge as an effective political force, the realignment under pressure of Communism, social democracy, Christian democracy, liberalism, and conservatism. It is discouraging when cardboard characters, the Left and the reactionaries, are presented as a sufficient account of the mosaic of European politics. Mesmerized by a one-dimensional image of political change, Kolko and his predecessors neglect the multi-dimensional character of Europe’s political cleavages, especially significant in the immediate postwar period when, as in the 1930’s, there was real uncertainty which kind of political system would win out over much of the Continent.

Underlying the static image, one discerns the ancient fallacy of the harmony of interests, the assumption that conflict—improper and abnormal—must be explained by the presence of a villain. Thus there is the tacit assumption that it was natural for the broad coalitions that governed most European countries in the aftermath of war to continue indefinitely. In fact they were necessarily transitional, and politics was concerned with which kind of regime was to be established, and which forces were to be dominant. Again, the tone of revisionist discussion of the Baruch Plan or Lippmann’s alternative to containment suggests that it was natural, after a war which had seen the final collapse of the European international order, to expect agreement between the emerging superpowers on a new basis for international order, and a degree of arms control never achieved in the past; these would have represented extraordinary feats of statesmanship.

The revisionists lack a conception of international order: their bipolar focus is not developed into a concept of the international system. While analysis at the system level alone tends to be unrewarding, neglect of the system is equally so; it was at the root of the failure of many of the classic theories of war, and is the source of much of the revisionist flaying about in search of the guilty. Not to perceive that there was a fundamental problem of international order in 1945 inevitably leads to caricature.

A striking example of the lack of a system perspective is Alperovitz’s

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42 The term is used here not to refer to any specific systems theory, but in the manner of Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York 1959); he posits three basic images which underlie interpretations of international conflict: the individual-psychological, the type of nation-unit, and the international—the milieu in which international politics takes place, whether envisaged as Hobbesian anarchy or as international society.
speculative essay "The United States, the Revolutions, and the Cold War: Perspective and Prospect" (Cold War Essays, 75-121), which sees American Cold War policy in terms of a tradition of anti-revolutionary interventionism, impelled by a common ideological motive. A system approach would suggest that hegemonial intervention in support of business interests, for example, is so different from intervention to restrain a competing great power that one explanation is unlikely to fit both cases. The one is a matter of marginal advantage, the other concerns the basic power relations of the system. This suggests that Alperovitz's remedy (to change grassroots American attitudes) may be no more relevant than the proposals of those classic "utopian" theorists who neglected system pressures in prescribing remedies for the prevention of war.

A further assumption concerns the general character of American foreign policy, viz., the view that it can be understood in terms of an overriding strategy or design. Two examples are Alperovitz's strategy of the delayed showdown and Kolko's view of American policy towards Germany at Potsdam. As we have seen, the one represented a mood rather than a strategy; the other a policy tendency, but not the dominant one. While there are occasions when policy is shaped by long-term considerations—the Marshall Plan would be a good example—it is more typically the product of competing interests and analyses within the executive and pressures from without, and this was surely true of the two examples mentioned. A faulty image leads to the neglect of the more plausible hypothesis.

Related to this is a fault natural to the critic of policy, which a critical historian should, however, overcome: the neglect of the actors' perspectives, the failure to reconstruct their perceptions and problems, or even to characterize them in any detail. Thus Truman, Byrnes, or Harriman are presented as uniformly anti-Soviet; their more aggressive phrases are seized on out of context—perhaps a provocation or a policy argument—and are never juxtaposed with their more conciliatory expressions. Admittedly, there is a dilemma here: to enter into the actor's world, to inquire into his purposes, may blunt the critical edge of polemic. But such an effort of understanding need not lead to identification with the actor, though it will break down simple stereotypes and thus undermine standard criticisms. The historian-critic should be equal to the task of formulating a more subtle critique: the alternative is a failure to test his hypothesis against a rounded view of the main actors.

The question of testing hypotheses bears further examination. First,
there is the selection of evidence: we have noted the selective use of the evidence in the State Department Papers and other sources. One example is the use of Djilas's *Conversations with Stalin*. Djilas's observations are just as damaging to a simplistic revisionist standpoint as to any other simplistic point of view, but revisionists overcome this difficulty by selecting only the passages that fit the desired interpretation, for instance Stalin's remark that the Germans were not suited to Communism—but not his assertion that all Germany would be Communist.

One cannot avoid concluding that the revisionists violate the basic methodological rule formulated by Karl Popper, that one should seek to falsify rather than verify hypotheses. It is possible to find confirming evidence for most hypotheses; a hypothesis is not seriously tested until it has withstood attempts to disprove it. The style of the revisionist histories leaves an overwhelming impression that this has not been attempted. Rather, there is an amassing of favorable evidence, and a neglect of awkward evidence or alternative hypotheses. Hence the assertion of over-Machiavellian interpretations based on an ingenious construing of a fraction of the evidence. Not infrequently plausibility is achieved only by limiting the discussion to an artificial time period; consideration of subsequent events would expose difficulties for the interpretation. Most striking of all, there is the loss of a sense of the distinction between intended and unintended consequences.

What we have, then, is not so much Cold War history as Cold War polemic. The narrowness of vision appears to stem from the values and assumptions of the writers. As to values, the revisionist writings exemplify certain dangers in the current trend in favor of "commitment" in the social sciences. What is overlooked is that scholarship is itself a value, as well as a discipline, and that its demands represent the essential commitment of the scholar, which may conflict with his other social and political commitments. Revisionists are very conscious of this in commenting on views opposed to their own (cf. Alperovitz on Herbert Feis, *Cold War Essays*, 73). There is value in what might be termed the naive commitment of the historian to follow his material regardless of where it may lead him: "Historians often dislike what happened or wish that it had happened differently. There is nothing they can do about it. They have to state the truth as they see it without worrying whether this shocks or confirms existing prejudices." The revisionists, however, give the impression of quarrying purposefully for material to fit a structure fully designed in advance.

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The effect of the value systems of the New Left, typical of the revisionists, is to project back onto the 1940s the conflict of values in America which preoccupies them twenty-five years later. As a consequence, most of the European actors disappear from view and a mythical Left has to be created to represent the forces in conflict with the counterrevolutionary United States. New Left historians lack awareness of the value systems which led socialists and liberals into alignment with Christian Democrats and conservatives against what they perceived to be the overriding totalitarian threat.

The disability of an intolerant value system is accentuated by the commitment to certain images such as the counterrevolutionary character of American policy. In contrast to those who see this largely as the consequence of attempting to apply policies appropriate to Europe (i.e., in line with the predominant values and interests of the Europeans) to the very different societies of, for example, Southeast Asia, the revisionist works back from Vietnam and postulates a simplistic revolutionary situation in postwar Europe in order to be able to assert that the United States has played a monolithic counterrevolutionary role in the whole postwar period.44

Directions for Research

Rejection of the image of the postwar period offered by the revisionists does not imply the rejection of every revisionist hypothesis. Perhaps the major revision supported by the evidence is the abandonment of the notion of the American leaders as innocents abroad—the gentlemanly Uncle Sam of the cartoonists. American leaders were much more aware of the political issues than has been supposed, and much more ready to take initiatives to secure American or non-Communist interests: they were not merely responding to Soviet aggressiveness, but anticipated challenges and sought unilateral advantages. "Containment" was not the purely defensive, reactive policy depicted by its supporters and critics alike. The universalist, idealist strand in American foreign policy had hegemonic overtones. Americans were

44 Horowitz argues for continuity between American policy in Europe and the Third World by suggesting somewhat more subtle similarities; e.g., American resistance to a Lippmann-type negotiated settlement in Europe is likened to counterrevolutionary policies elsewhere (pp. 16-19). For Kolko the case is more straightforward: the U.S. and Britain systematically cut down the Left (as it were, a Greek model for Europe as a whole). He can even assert: "The existence of Soviet power in Eastern Europe permitted more or less natural and indigenous forces to take their logical course, while in Western Europe, American and British power contained these forces directly or indirectly, a containment that became the preeminent unifying element in the Western alliance after 1945, and which also hindered postwar economic recovery" (pp. 169-70).
Insensitive to the problems of the Soviet leaders, hence prone to overreaction.

However, the foregoing critique reflects disappointment that the gleanings are so meager—assuming of course that one is juxtaposing revisionist interpretations not against the world view of John Foster Dulles, but against the mainstream of scholarship on the period. This is not the place to develop the views on Cold War origins implied or sketched above, but it may be useful to indicate some of the areas for further research which are suggested by this analysis.

The first would be the detailed reconstruction, in the light of the evidence now available, of the interaction of the two leading powers, in the spirit of Popper, Taylor, and McNeill: how far would one now be led to modify the picture that emerges from McNeill's masterly survey? American foreign policy is beginning to receive this kind of scrutiny, but the single-actor focus accentuates some of the shortcomings discussed above.

This suggests a second and more thematic approach, the study of the Cold War in terms of the breakdown of an international order—the European states system which provided a framework and a tradition of rudimentary ideas for international order from the seventeenth century until 1914; both were shattered in the first World War and swept away in the second. By the 1950's it had become commonplace to speak of the new bipolar framework, and by the 1960's some new rudimentary rules of the game, perhaps implicit in the foreign relations of the whole period, were more clearly perceived and formulated by the contestants. But in the 1940's it was not clear what the new framework would be, nor how, in the welter of competing universalist doctrines and self-regarding practices, a set of rudimentary understandings could be arrived at. The significance of ideology is usually blurred by attempts to relate it to the motivation of one or the other superpower: from the standpoint of the international system as a whole, its significance was that of a barrier to communication, an "Iron Curtain" that impeded the necessary minimum of understanding.

Ideology was also bound up with the partition of the postwar world between two economic systems. It is very difficult to conceive of any "missed opportunity" for creating a single economic system, and the analysis has pointed to major obstacles to linking the two systems through cooperative relations. The crystallization of the two systems is an area worth further research, especially as it would seem that it was a more fundamental reason for the onset of the Cold War than the quarrel over Eastern Europe.
The absence of agreement on a framework for the international system of the 1940's explains much of the confusion over which power, America or Russia, was the potential hegemonial aggressor. The revisionists are correct that in the world as a whole the United States was by far the superior power; but in Europe the Soviet Union, despite its wartime devastation, would even more clearly be dominant unless the United States were present as a power, as it had not been in the 1930's. Thus the decisions of 1947 and 1949-50, in which the U.S. resolved, contrary to the prevailing expectation in 1945, to underwrite Western Europe, first economically, then militarily, were indeed major turning points. It is obvious, as the revisionists insist, that war-weary Russia was unwilling to provoke a war with the United States, but it is equally obvious that, without the American presence, Russia could have dominated war-weary Europe.

In the European context, Eastern Europe was not just another anonymous sphere of influence. Long an area of Russian aspiration, it had for the greater part of modern history been divided between two or more powers. In 1945, contrary to the twentieth-century trend towards greater national autonomy, it fell totally under Soviet control—to the Western Europeans, a looming reminder of the Soviet colossus and of their new vulnerability.

This suggests a third promising area for research: an examination of European views of the early Cold-War issues in order to discern how much of American policy was in accord with a wider "Western" perception of the threat to liberal values, and how much of it was uniquely American.

Research along the lines suggested would tend to remove the study of the Cold War further from participant accounts by bringing out the significance of factors of which they were not, and could not have been, fully aware: their own perceptions; diplomatic interactions from the standpoint of both sides; and the wider "systemic" implications of their actions in an undefined, newly-forming international system. Such research is not likely to overturn certain hypotheses such as the existence of a basic asymmetry in the Cold War in Europe. However cautiously, Stalin challenged the survival of the capitalist-democratic order in Western and Central Europe in the crucial period of its weakness. Thanks to Berlin and the presence of large Communist parties in France and Italy, he had greater leverage in the West than the United States could exert in Eastern Europe, whatever its inclinations. Research should, however, throw some light on the escalation of Cold-War tension as it came to dominate world politics. A full account would have
to relate external policy to the internal politics of the superpowers and would have to show the interrelation of the European and Asian theaters of the conflict. In all this the revisionist school has something to offer, but not if it simply reverses the errors of the participants: if American policy has suffered from ethnocentrism, misperceiving Asia in European terms, it is not an advance to perceive Europe as an earlier Vietnam. That is merely to confuse successful policy with tragic miscalculation.