

## Trends and Dimensions of the Cold War: An Apprehension in the Midst of Practicality and Mythology

Dr. Abdul Zahoor Khan

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, Iqra University Karachi (Islamabad Campus), 5, Khayaban-e-Johar, Sector H-9, Islamabad- Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

These tragedies can only be understood-and, it is hoped some future disasters averted by understanding the causes of this struggle between the United States and Russia. That conflict did not begin in 1945 or even with the communist victory in Russia during 1917. The two powers did not initially come into conflict because one was communist and the other capitalist. Rather, they first confronted one another on the plains of north China and Manchuria in the late nineteenth century. That meeting climaxed a century in which Americans had expanded westward over half the globe and Russians had moved eastward across Asia.

**KEY WORDS:** Cold-War, CSCE, Pinning-Down, Russian-Power, American-Expansionists, Averell-Harriman, Manifest-Destiny, Spectacles, German-Unanimity, Weighing-Scale.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Cold War has dominated American life since 1945. It has cost Americans \$4 trillion in defense expenditures, taken the lives of nearly 1000, 00 of their young men, ruined the lines of business of lots of others at some point in the Mc Carthyite witch hunts, led the nation into the horrors of Southeast Asian conflicts, and in the 1980s triggered the worst economic depression in forty years. It has not been the most satisfying chapter in American diplomatic history.

Until that confrontation the two nations had been good friends. Whenever conflicts arose (as over settlements in California and Alaska), the Russians retreated before the demands of United States expansionists. Encounters outside the New World, however, could not be settled so easily. Americans swept across a continent while sending out tentacles of trade that quickly seized upon Asia as the great potential market for their magnificently productive farms and factories. By the 1890s Russia, after five centuries of expansion, controlled a grand continental empire containing (like the United States) peoples of many cultures. Americans believed the “manifest destiny” of supernatural force directed their conquests. The Russians similarly viewed their czar, or emperor, as an instrument of God’s will.

### WHAT WENT BEFORE PERCEPTION

It was the vivid truth that the two nations also differed sharply. The American empire was decentralized, or “federal,” with states and outlying territory enjoying considerable freedom. The Russian empire was tightly centralized, with an army of bureaucrats working antlike for the czar (and, later, a small Communist party elite in Moscow). Russian officials agreed that only rigidly enforced order from above could preserve the nation. Such bureaucracies are not renowned for imagination and originality. In part because of the resulting uncreativity, Russia, both before and after 1917, necessarily borrowed technology and new industrial methods from the West. [1]The oppressive bureaucracy also was brutal, especially in the post 1880 era when it condemned political dissenters to Siberian prison camps and accelerated pogroms against Russian Jews. Anti Russians feelings spread across the United States. Congress threatened to cut trade with the czar. Mark Twain caught the mood when he exclaimed if the regime could be ended only with dynamite, “then thank God for dynamite.”

And Americans were also finding another fault with their former friends’. The United States honored not bureaucracies, but businessmen who moved across the oceans to profit in open world marketplaces. Russians, however, moved across land, not water. They developed an empire that was more political than commercial. After annexing land in Asia, they tried to control it tightly by closing the markets to foreign businessmen with whom they could not compete. This highlighted the problem between the two countries in the 1890s; the United States believed its prosperity increasingly required an;’ open door’ to trade in China’s rich province of Manchuria, but the Russians were determined to colonize and close off parts of Manchuria. Two hostile systems confronted much as they would during 1945 in Eastern Europe, and of many of the same reasons.

From the 1890s until 1917 the United States tried to contain Russian expansion, usually by supporting Japan, which, for its own purpose also wanted an open Manchuria. President Theodore Roosevelt exemplified American sentiments; the Russians” are utterly insincere and treacherous; they have no conception of the truth...

And no regard for theirs.” As for the czar, he was “a preposterous little creature. “More to the point. Theodore Roosevelt feared Russia was trying to “organize northern China against us.”[2]

These views did not change even in 1914 when the czar allied with England and France against Germany. Colonel Edward House, President Woodrow Wilson's closest advisor, starkly outlined the alternatives that would haunt Americans throughout the twentieth century; "If the Allies win, it means the domination of Russia on the continent of Europe; and if Germany wins, it means the unspeakable tyranny and despotism of militarism for generations to come. 'Either way the United States would lose.[3]"

The traditional Russian danger grew more threatening in late 1917. Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik movement used the devastation, chaos, and poverty caused by World War I to overthrow the Russian government and establish a Soviet. The ever-expanding czarist empire now possessed an ideological force, Marxism that was supposedly driven by historical law and dedicated to world revolution. Between 1918 and 1920 Woodrow Wilson dispatched more than 10,000 American soldiers as he cooperated with Allied attempts to overthrow Lenin by force, and simultaneously, tried to prevent an invading Japanese army from colonizing and closing off Siberia. The President finally stopped the Japanese, but the Allied intervention was disaster. In the short run many Russians fled from the foreign troops to support Lenin. In the long run Soviet leaders would not forget that the intervention seemed to confirm their belief that 'capitalist encirclement' aimed at strangulating the communist regime.

At the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, the Allies sought another approach. With the shadow of Lenin darkening every discussion, the Western powers tried to isolate the Soviets by creating such buffer states as Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia in Eastern Europe. As a young embittered American official named Walter Lippmann then phrased it the Allies created a military cordon sanitaire, when peace required a 'sanitary Europe,' that is, a prosperous, less militarized areas that could build a more attractive and equitable society that Lenin could devise.[4] (In 1947, as dean of American journalists, Lippmann would again condemn American postwar policy, and again be rejected by Washington officials.)

Attempting to isolate the Soviets, Woodrow Wilson refused to open diplomatic relations. Sounding like Theodore Roosevelt discussing the czar, Wilson declared the Lenin's government "is based upon the negation of every principle of honor and good faith. "But others refused to follow his lead. England began trading with Russia in 1921. A year later the two outcasts, Russia and defeated Germany, signed a treaty of cooperation. Though shocking Americans by condemning religion and private property, the Soviets were apparently here to stay.

The United States by no means ignored the Bolsheviks. An American let off mission distributed over \$60 million worth of aid to starving Russians in the 1920s. When Lenin announced in 1921 he would welcome foreign capital for reconstruction projects, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover believed this meant communism was collapsing. Hoping that Americans could control as well as profit from a more capitalist Russia, Hoover encouraged businessmen to look upon Russia as an "economic vacuum" That, like all vacuums, invited invasion | They responded Ford, General Electric, and Westinghouse were among the many major firms that invested millions of dollars. Young W. Averell Harriman also took the plunge. Heir to a great railway fortune, Harriman began to develop a billion-dollar manganese concession in Russia during 1926. When his venture ran into financial trouble, the Soviets freed him from his contract. (Harriman found them less cooperative when Franklin D. Roosevelt named him Ambassador to Russia during World War-2) Meanwhile, between 1925 and 1930 Soviet-American trade rose to over \$100 million, well above the prewar figure.

The economic relationship was suddenly transformed after 1928, but not as Hoover had hoped. When Lenin died in 1924, Joseph Stalin used his control of the Soviet party bureaucracy to boost himself to the top. Son of a cobbler educated at (and expelled from) an Orthodox theological seminary and frequently arrested before 1917 for revolutionary activities, Stalin's brutality had so alienated Lenin that the Soviet leader had nearly broken off personal relations. Lenin's death solved that potential problem; then Stalin brilliantly played faction against faction to defeat his opposition. In 1928 he enhanced his power by announcing five-year plans for rapid economic development. These schemes required a tightly run, self-sufficient society. The communist call for worldwide revolution became less important to Stalin than unchallenged personal power and a rebuilt Russian strong enough to withstand "capitalist encirclement."

American Russian trade consequently dropped just as the United States entered the worst depression years. Many businessmen pressed the newly elected President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to recognize Russia formally He did so in November 1933, but only after overcoming, or ignoring, strong anti-Soviet feeling from his own State Department, as well as from the American Legion, Roman Catholic Church leader, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the American labor movement, Justifiably concerned that Russians might not be warmly welcomed. Roosevelt scheduled the arrival of the Soviet delegation at the same time his country men raucously celebrated the end of Prohibition.

Stalin welcomed recognition, but not for economic reasons, He wanted American help against the Japanese army that began rampaging through Manchuria in 1931. Roosevelt refused to respond to the Russian appeal. The State Department event assured the Japanese in 1933 that recognition of Russia should not be taken as a threat against Japan. [5] Until World War II the United States never deviated from this policy. Twice in the next five years, in 1934 and 1937, American officials rejected Soviet requests for joint policies against Japan and Nazi Germany.

The administration received strong support from many American liberal, even former communists who grew disillusioned as Stalin began bloody purges of his political enemies. After the war these liberals would not forger their earlier disenchantment with communism, "The God who failed."

By 1938 Stalin's relation with the western powers were disintegrating. The climactic blow occurred that year at the Munich conference, when the French and British appeased Hitler by giving Germany part of Czechoslovakia. At the Communist party's Eighteenth Congress in early 1939, Stalin declared that the west hoped to turn Hitler east toward war with the Soviets, This would not happen, he indicated, for although "new economic crises" in the capitalist world made inevitable another "imperialist" war, this time Russia would not pull Western "chestnuts out of the fire.[6] Making much of a terrible situation, Stalin stunned the West in late August 1939 by signing a nonaggression pact with Hitler. The two dictators agreed to divide Poland and the Balkans, A week after the treaty was negotiated, and Hitler began World War 11.

During the next eighteen months Russian-American relations hit bottom. The Soviet invasion of Finland secured a strategic buffer for Stalin but simply confirmed to Americans that Russia brutalized small neighbors. In early 1941, however, Hitler tired of negotiating with the Russians and decided to take Eastern Europe fully into his own hands. On June 22 Nazi armies swept into the Soviet Union in history's greatest military operation.

The State Department debated for twenty-four hours before issuing an announcement that condemned the Soviet view of religion, declared that "communistic dictatorship" was as intolerable as "Nazi dictatorship," said nothing good about the Russians, but concluded they must be helped since Hitler posed the larger threat. Harry S. Truman, Democratic senator from Missouri, bluntly expressed his and some other congressmen's feelings; "If we see that Germany is winning we should help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kills many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances." [7]

It was not the best spirit with which to start a new partnership. But such statements only climaxed half a century of Russian American enmity. Possessing drastically different views of how the world should be organized, unable to cooperate during the 1930 against Nazi and Japanese aggression, and nearly full-fledged enemies between 1939 and 1941, the United States and the Soviet Union finally became partners because of a shotgun marriage forced upon them by World War 11.

### **SPECTACLES OF THE COLD WAR**

Why insist on terms? Does the discussion of meaning of the "cold war" have any more than academic interest, given the fact that, whatever the analysis of the past, we are now surely in a post-cold war era and should get on with the task of building that world? In fact, our analysis of what we have been through –whether that analysis is made explicit or not–will inevitably affect our idea of what the most important problems of the present and future are. It is a cliché by now that strategists tend to plan for the last war; perhaps this should be extended to include pat cold wars as well. We should be very careful, then, in weighing the only evidence that can guide us in the future, that is, our common past. This is no easy task, as the distinguished historian Michael Howard ahs warned us. We should beware of "false premises based on inadequate evidence," and we should know that "the past is a foreign country; there is very little we can say about it until we have learned its language and understood its assumptions." [8]

In a related vein, if it is the cold war, as the popular imagination would have it that has just ended, what now are the corresponding U.S. and Soviet stakes in international politics? If the end of the cold war or simply of the most recent phase of East. West relations has resulted in the achievement of the most important U.S. foreign policy objectives, as the rhetoric of "winning " the cold war implies, then what remains to justify the commitment of U.S lives and treasure to far flung regions of the globe? In short, our view of what the cold war was about–the stakes involved and the policies pursued–will shape our view of the nature of the interests that have been, are, and will be involved in East West and U, S, Soviet relations, It will shape our understanding of the posture, active or reactive, of the policies that are called for; of the means required to secure the interests at stake; and of the implications of success (or failure) in achieving the goals of policy.

### **PINNING DOWN THE COMMUNISM**

If, for instance, the cold war, for the United States, was primarily about containing "communism" (or capitalism, for the Soviet Union), one would then expect that the interests of the states involved would tend to be global in character. Ideological constructs such as capitalism, communism, and democracy are universal by nature. They advance, or are said to advance, claims upon all mankind. Consequently, the sphere of competition between such ideological causes embraces the entire planet. The stakes are correspondingly unlimited, in that victory for one implies the total defeat of the other. A U.S. policy aimed at containing communism (with a view to its eventual transformation or elimination), although global in focus, would be essentially reactive in thrust, inasmuch as communism seen as the assertive challenger to the global status quo. Indeed, this is how both sides in the East West conflict have claimed to see the character of the East West, or U.S. Soviet relationship.

Given the enormity of the scope and stakes of such an ultimately irreconcilable conflict of world historical missions (going far beyond simple conflicts of interest), the means that are considered legitimate to employ would be correspondingly unlimited in scope. At the same time, the stress in U.S. (or Soviet) policy would tend to be on political ideological means as opposed to purely military ones. In the end, it is much better testimony to the value of one's ideology to convert or render irrelevant one's opponent than to coerce him. In the event of success in this grand ideological struggle, world politics would no longer be primarily a national security issue for the states involved but rather an issue of social economic and political development.

### **TO HOLD DOWN THE RUSSIAN POWER**

If the crux of the cold war was the containment, not of communism as such, but of Russian power, one would identify corresponding differences in the interests, instruments, and reaction to success (or failure) of the parties involved. Russian power, as part of the normal warp and woof of world politics, implies a less than universal challenge to the states and social systems that make up the international system. The interests of the United States and its allies incoming to terms with the nature of Russian power would thus be more limited than if it is communism as such that is the problem. Of course, the extent that Russian or Soviet Russian and Communist interests are equated with each other, the field and intensity of the conflict would tend to expand. Nevertheless, the possibility of using non Soviet Russian Communist powers (such as Yugoslavia and the People's Republic of China) to help check the extension of Soviet power in principle ensured that the Soviet challenge, however serious, would always be less total than that posed by communism.

Although U.S. interest in containing the Soviet Union are in principle more restricted than its interests would be in containing communism, the thrust of its policy would still reactive; It would concede the initiative to a Soviet power that it sees as consciously attempting to shift the balance of global power in Soviet favor, The means employed would tend to be political economic and political military as opposed to purely military, although the intrusion of ideological phobias, which transcend the purely doctrinal aspects of ideology, may encourage reliance on armed force as the basis of a containment policy. In the case of success that is, with the effective removal of the Soviet challenge to the existing world order, it is not clear what would continue to move U.S. international interests and policies. Having for so long defined its mission in world affairs in negative ways, by what it is against (whether it be communism or the expansion of Soviet power) rather than by what its intrinsic long term international stakes are, the United States would find itself in a quandary as its ought to sort out the justification for a global foreign policy in such a post –cold war environment.

### **EUROPEAN AND GERMAN UNANIMITY**

If, to take another view, U.S. (and/or Soviet) policy in the cold war was driven by nominal commitment to restore the unity of Europe, and thus of Germany, the interests involved would be much more regionally specific than in either of the two previously mentioned cases. at the same time, such a policy would be aimed at subverting the status quo in Europe , which has been recognized throughout the cold war period (and after) as the central theater (if no longer the cockpit) of world politics. The instruments of policy would vary according to circumstances, but for the Americans policy would be largely dependent on the preferences of West Germany, given the intensity of U.S. commitment to German unity, U.S good test of this notion would thus be the extent to which U.S. policy consciously followed the course of West German foreign policy. In the event of success, that is, the unity of Europe and of Germany, U, S, policy would find itself in a quandary similar to that governing the demise of the Soviet challenge: With the specific goal of unity accomplished, it is no longer clear what drives the U.S. commitment to Europe.

### **THE WEIGHING SCALE OF POWER**

If the cold war was about the more prosaic issue of maintaining the balance of power, albeit in a very dynamic setting following the collapse of Europe and Japan in 1945, then U, S, interests would be limited to the geopolitical “soft spots” of the balance. Metaphorically, a balance may be maintained at a single point, although considerable and increased pressure may be brought to bear from various sides over time in order to preserve the static state of equilibrium. The means used to create or preserve the balance would tend to be political economic and political military in character, with raw military force held in the back ground as a necessary, though by no means sufficient, condition for maintaining a stable and healthy balance. That is, external military force cannot over the long run be a substitute for the emergence of stable societies and polities, necessary for a plural and stable distribution of global power. [9]

Reaction to “ success,” if that term can be applied to the maintenance of a balance, depends on what the sources of threat to the balance of power are considered to be: the nature of certain political systems (communist, capitalist, or democratic); an unbalanced distribution of international economic, political, and military power (bipolar, tripolar, or multipolar); the quantity and quality of weapons systems in given states or throughout the

international system; or the presence of aggressive leaders of powerful states. Whatever the source of the threat, the fact remains that the responsibility of maintaining that balance can never end. As a balance is by definition a process, there is in the long run no final success, or failure, for that matter.

### **PUT A STOP TO THE WORLD WAR-III**

If, finally, the cold war was about preserving the peace, that is, preventing World War 3, then the interests at stake may be related to all of the challenges mentioned above: communism capitalism, Soviet Russian (or U.S.) power, the division of Germany and of Europe, and the maintenance of the balance of power. The means employed, however would be considerably less varied: they entail armed force, the purpose of which in the nuclear age is to deter the outbreak of war, as opposed to winning war when it comes. The philosophy of deterrence that is thus expressed assumes the existence of a threat to be deterred: In the absence of deterrent means, an aggressive design would have taken place.

Such a view would tend to militarize the entire East West relationship. It is then not simply the prevention of war but the broader management of political objectives that is held to be most reliably served through the threat, implicit or explicit, or even the actual use, of armed force. This deterrent perspective on the cold war, aside from taking as given a premise- the existence of an imminent threat-that sorely warrants examination, tends to reinforce the problem it purports to resolve. Not only does it reduce the spectrum of international relationships to a military dimension; it even draws the question of war and peace in largely military terms. If the causes of war transcend issues of military balance to include political ambitions-themselves rooted in particular social, economic, and political contexts- then the management of international relations is only secondarily a military issue, and thus only secondarily a subject for the application of deterrence theory.

Paradoxically, the view that the stake of the cold war was the prevention of World War-III and the establishment of credible deterrence toward the end could actually have resulted in the most restrictive of all policies. The aim of preventing an attack on the United States could have been reliably served by maintaining in a minimal number of nuclear weapons capable of inflicting a devastating retaliatory attack on the Soviet Union. Had that indeed been the goal of U.S. policy, the entire apparatus of cold war-the elaborate and comprehensive military preparations, the far-flung network of military and political intervention (blatant and clandestine), worldwide alliance systems, and the various aid programs-would have been unnecessary. That this was not the case, that U.S. policy throughout the cold war embraced the totality of means that were technically and financially available, and at a very high level of material and political commitment, suggests that the cold war went far beyond the simple prevention of global war, if indeed it was about that at all.

None of the schema proposed here alone provides an adequate explanation of the cold war or of U.S. cold war policy. Each does explain an important part of both. This suggests the complexity of the subject and the importance of nuance in the analysis of something that is multidimensional in character. At a minimum, we should be clear about our premises when we review the past. Our understanding of where we have been will have a decisive influence on where we think we are and what we imagine our choices, actual and possible, to be.

To a large part of the American public, the "cold war" has been "over" since the late 1980s, the era of Gorbachev. The insight perception suggests that the public projects its hopes and self-image onto the world stage and particularly onto relations with its chief international adversary, the Soviet Union. Such a projection reflects the persistent U.S. conviction that it is the nature of the Soviet domestic system that is largely responsible for the kind of foreign policy the Soviet Union has and that if the former changes, so must the latter and with it the entire character of U.S. Soviet relations and of U.S. foreign policy in general. The problem here is that the phrase "cold war" has become a kind of totem of political discourse, a reflex choice of words obscuring more than enlightening by appearing to provide a quick and simple explanation for international tensions. If the concept of cold war is to retain any analytical significance, it must first be put aside, as it were, and reduced to its constituent elements. Therefore, before one can raise the question whether the cold war is over, one first has to ask, what was (is) the cold war about?

### **MORAL FIBER OF THE COLD WAR**

Part of the difficulty in answering this second, more substantive, question lies in the fact that the cold war was multidimensional in nature and went through several stages. The highly charged political atmosphere that was part of the cold war itself tended to cloud the meaning of the concept, as many of the participants involved attached their own tendentious interpretations to its meaning. This became most evident when either side would accuse the other of conducting a "policy" of cold war, denying that it could be an interactive process, deeply rooted in historical and geopolitical forces. In this view, the cold war represented the unilateral projection of tension and hostility by one side onto the other, which allegedly reacted in a passive, defensive, and thoroughly justified manner to the aggressive depredations of the adversary. The idea that there might have been a tragic

incompatibility of interests involved (given the nature of the respective political systems and the character and magnitude of the stakes involved) does not enter into this orthodox interpretation of the cold war.

Thus Soviet officials and commentators, along with U.S. revisionist historian, have long denounced the cold war “policy” of the United States Throughout the 1980, Soviet commentators continued to judge U.S. foreign policy by the extent to which it deviated from its traditional cold war policy (*politika kholodnoi voyni*). The idea that U.S.-Soviet relations respond to a logic of interaction, rather than to one of U.S. challenge and Soviet response, is still largely an alien one in Soviet writings on the subject.[10] The mirror image of this view was expressed by Marshal Tito in March 1953, several weeks after the death of Joseph Stalin, when he said of the Soviet leaders, “I can say that I don’t believe they will end the cold war very soon. It is likely that they will still continue it.”[11] U.S. leaders of the time and later could hardly dissent from this independent Communist’s assessment that it was precisely Moscow that has initiated and pursued the cold war and that it was therefore up to Moscow to end it.

Beyond this basic disagreement about the sources of the cold war (which masks agreement about its unilateral dynamics) lies a further divergence of views as to its character. In both the Soviet Union and the United States the cold war was popularly portrayed as nothing less than an irreconcilable clash of civilizational destinies: capitalism versus socialism for one, freedom versus slavery for the other. The Leninist tenet about the ultimate incompatibility of socialism with “imperialism” and the inevitability of war as long as imperialism exists was deeply rooted in the Soviet ideological arsenal. Andrei Zhdanov’s “two camp” thesis of 1947 had merely put a contemporary gloss on this. More novels were the U.S. conversion to such apocalyptic visions. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles put the issue very squarely in 1953 when he observed of Soviet communism that it believes that human beings are nothing more than somewhat superior animal ...and that the best kind of a world ... is organized as well managed farm... I do not see how, as long as Soviet communism holds those views...there can be any permanent reconciliation.... This is an irreconcilable conflict.”[12] From this angle the cold war was “a contest of ultimate destinies,” [13] and President John F. Kennedy’s promise in his inaugural address that the United States would “pay any price; bear any burden” in defense of freedom around the world in “a long twilight struggle” reflected that view.

For others the cold war was a much more specific and limited political contest flowing out of the way in which World War II was concluded, mainly in Europe, a contest that revolved about the reestablishment of a viable balance of power on the Old Continent. Indeed many in this school, such as George Kennan, architect of the policy of containment, resisted applying the rubric of cold war to the carefully calibrated strategy of geopolitical containment of Soviet power in Europe, which they advanced as the main task of postwar U.S. foreign policy. Many of the attributes that would later come to be identified with the cold war—the militarization of relationships, the globalization of commitments the ideological hysteria—were absent from U.S. containment policy as formulated and implemented in 1947-1948, though aspects of the public presentation of the Truman Doctrine were to presage each of these three defining characteristics[14] From the Soviet side as well, excepting the ideological paranoia characteristic of Stalin’s time, Soviet Western policy, as aggressive as its intentions were, displayed a fine respect for the limits of what the United States regarded as its truly vital interests.[15]

This divergence of views on the sources, nature, scope, and inner dynamics of the cold war actually serves as a reliable indicator of the multidimensionality of the problem. For there was no one cold war, fixed in space and time. What began as a rather predictable political contest to secure, or frustrate, the age old pretension to European hegemony (the very justification for U.S. entry into both world wars) eventually turned into a worldwide ideological confrontation dependent on military, as opposed to political, instruments for its conduct. Just to grasp the issue one must distinguish the geopolitical from the ideological from the purely atmospheric sources of tension and conflict; the political objectives of the conflict from the means—political, diplomatic, psychological, economic, and military—used in their support; and the Eurocentric from the global scale and interests at stake.

### **THE OPINIONATED COLLAPSE AND BE UNSUCCESSFUL OF EUROPE**

If the cold war can be said to have been about something, then it was about the implications, feared and promised, of the political collapse of Europe for both the United States and the Soviet Union. The disintegration of, first, an autonomous European balance of power and, subsequently, German power thrust the United States and Russia into the heart of Europe. They were the only powers capable of reconstituting a stable equilibrium there and at the same time the only ones capable of decisively upsetting that balance to the disfavor of the other. Regardless of ideological considerations, this would have been so in 1945, given the way the war was fought and concluded. Long experience and political theory should have indicated that tension and discord were endemic in such a situation.

But does such rather traditional tension equal cold war? The term itself did not begin to acquire currency in the United States until mid-1947; it was introduced first in a speech by elder statesman Bernard Baruch and then

popularized by Walter Lippmann in a series of articles attacking George Kennan's famous containment article (much to Kennan's chagrin) for its allegedly open ended prescription for U.S. intervention against the expansion of Soviet influence around the world.[16] In retrospect, the term at first appears to reflect the general U.S. frustration that, after four years of global war and the establishment of the United Nations, power politics continued to be the leitmotiv of international relations. Lippmann specifically meant by the concept of cold war an ideologically based, globalistic foreign policy strategy based on reacting to soviet power as such rather than an autonomous U.S. assessment of its foreign policy priorities. Hence, the strategy was, in Lippmann preference, a geopolitical confined approach aimed at the reestablishment of stable balances of power in Europe and East Asia.

There was at first less disagreement between Lippmann and Kennan than met the eye, because the actual foreign policy then being carried out by the Truman administration reflected a carefully tailored strategy of encouraging indigenous forces in areas of vital U.S. interest almost exclusively in Western Europe at the time rather than an unlimited commitment to the military containment of Soviet power around the globe. A number of critical indices, including the political and economic focus of U.S. policy as represented by the Marshall Plan; the decision to support the Communist Tito and encourage national communism (rather than to "roll back" communism as such); and the cautious and ultimately noninterventionist attitude struck toward the Communist revolution in China, all suggest the limits, based on exacting geopolitical criteria, of U.S. containment policy at the time. To identify this policy of containment with the cold war, then, is to give a highly qualified meaning to the idea of cold war, especially in light of the shape that East-West relations would assume after 1948-1949.

From the Soviet angle one might argue, as Andre Fontaine did, that "cold war" was intrinsic to the Leninist concept of international relations and that the course of Soviet foreign policy may thus be interpreted in terms of tactical maneuver within the limits given by the postulate of systemic antagonism and irreconcilability. In Fontaine's book, the history of the cold war thus began in 1917. Some Soviet analysts have also argued recently that the origins of the cold war must be interpreted with the nature of the Soviet domestic system, specifically Stalin's despotic, "irrational" rule at home, very much in mind.[17] Such views, which root the cold war in the character of the Soviet system, say much about the essential traits of the traditional Soviet world outlook but much less about the behavioral evolution of Soviet foreign policy throughout the cold war period. As Soviet international conduct is in large measure an interactive process, an assessment of the Soviet system alone cannot exhaust the answer to the question of the sources, nature, development, and resolution of the cold war. Whatever the functions that the image and reality of cold war served for the Soviet system, and they were real enough, the cold war as an international event was much more indeterminate in its direction and in the scope ultimately assumed than its identification with a particular political system implies.

### **GEO-POLITICS**

Without going into historical details [18] and being aware of oversimplification for the sake of presentation, if one asserts that the cold war was about the frustration of yet another hegemonic enterprise in Europe, then one must admit that by 1949 the elements of its resolution had been laid down in place, in the form of an independent West and East Germany, rooted in the Western and Eastern alliance systems, respectively, i.e., a divided Germany (and, later, a divided Berlin) in a divided Europe. Although neither the United States nor the Soviet Union professed itself satisfied with such a scheme as the basis for a "settlement" of the war (which according to the Potsdam Agreement of July-August 1945 was to have awaited the convocation of a peace treaty with all-German representation), in fact such a solution, especially when compared to the risks ascribed to any politically realistic alternative, was eventually to prove eminently acceptable to both superpowers, both alliances, and with only partial qualification to both German states themselves.

"Facts" speak louder than words, and it is a fact that after the establishment of the two German states neither East nor West was prepared to challenge the division of Europe by offensive action. At the one point where a peaceful revision of the European schism became at least conceivable, upon the Soviet offer of March 10, 1952, to discuss terms for a neutral and unified Germany, the West reacted with remarkable uninterest. Taking into account the inevitable uncertainties about the motivations behind Stalin's actions and the conditions that might have been attached to any negotiations, the fact remains that at the one point where the Soviet leadership faced with the prospect of West Germany's formal military integration into the Western alliance system seemed prepared to entertain the prospect of a withdrawal from Germany, the Western allies did not deem it proper even to explore the notion with the Soviet Union.[19]

In other instances, such as the civil disturbances in East Berlin and Pizen, Czechoslovakia, in 1953 and the Hungarian revolution of 1956, Western inaction confirmed the underlying tolerance of the division of Europe, if challenging it meant a possible military confrontation with the Soviet Union. One may even go beyond "tolerance" and use the word "preference" to describe Western and Eastern attitudes to the division of Europe as the basis of East-West relations, as George Kennan discovered to his dismay in the response to his British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Reith lectures of 1957. Kennan had put forward a concept for the disengagement of superpower

forces from Germany as part of a scheme that would reestablish a united, though neutral, Germany. The overwhelmingly negative reaction to his lectures in Paris, London, and Washington apparently surprised Kennan, who until then had been laboring under the assumption that repairing the division of Germany (and thus of Europe) was the actual policy of the West." [20] Subsequent events, especially Western refusal to block the building of the Berlin Wall, provided convincing proof to such West Germans as Berlin mayor Willy Brandt that the Western powers simply did not share West German enthusiasm for eventual reunification and that any amelioration of the conditions of the Germans in the East would have to depend primarily on a more independent West German diplomacy. [21]

The Soviet preference for codifying the territorial and political status quo goes back to the mid-1950s, when it first advanced the concept of an all-European security conference. That this reflects more than a simple desire to secure existing Soviet gains, that the Soviet government and its allies have also seen a kind of security partnership with the Americans in Europe, is shown by their eventual acceptance of the United States as a full participant in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which came to embody the original Soviet idea for a pan-European security conference. The nuance in Soviet appreciations of the European role of the United States is also shown by Brezhnev's remarkable acceptance of the principle of negotiated reductions of conventional forces in Europe in 1971, just four days before the scheduled U.S. Senate vote on the Mansfield Amendment proposing extensive unilateral withdrawals of U.S. troops from Europe. [22] Soviet statements in the year before the outbreak of the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe also confirmed this sense of partnership with the United States in presiding over a divided but stable Germany and Europe. [23] The East European states themselves, even when under Communist rule, also expressed the conviction that the presence of U.S. forces in West Germany was essential to the containment of long-term German ambitions and that precipitate U.S. withdrawals were not at all in the Eastern interest. [24]

In many ways, then, the year 1956, which saw western inaction in face of the Hungarian revolt (as well as quiet support of the Polish Communists' defiance of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev), open divergence in Western aims over the Suez crisis, and Khrushchev's revision of basic Leninist tenets about the inevitability of war and a peaceful road to socialism, marks the turning point in the evolution of the cold war. Many of the elements that would later be identified as the new forces of world politics, such as growing polycentrism within alliances, the limited political utility of nuclear weapons, and the basic respect by each side for the other's vital national and alliance interests, had all been implicitly or explicitly recognized by 1956. [25]

It would still be some time before the implications of these changes would be fully absorbed by leaders East and West. Indeed, the series of crises concerning Berlin from 1958 to 1961 may be seen as the last test of the stability of this system; during that period Khrushchev sought to undermine the West's political and military position in Western Europe as a means of ratifying Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe (and his own power base at home). The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 underscored the unwillingness of the West to challenge Soviet vital interests (as represented by the wall itself). The Soviet priority of defending their gains along the imperial periphery, and the virtual impossibility for offensive actions to upset the geopolitical status quo. In this light the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 merely confirms the latent stability of the East-West structure then coming into existence. Only by such a dramatic and risky "end run" could Khrushchev hope to pressure the United States into formally ratifying the division of Germany: The balance that had been established in Europe itself had proven too stable to plausibly challenge. Upon the frustration of his Cuban adventure, East and West began the long process that would, by promoting stability over system change, yield detente and the post-cold war era by the early 1970s.

Such, in simplified form, was the geopolitical essence of the cold war. The often-grandiose verbal commitment of the superpowers to "liberation" or revolution had to come to terms with the stability of each alliance system within its own sphere and with a divided Germany in a divided Europe. In this structural sense, the cold war had gelled into stable form around 1956, although it would continue to be fought for some time and on many fronts, including for a while longer in Europe itself. The series of arms control agreements and confidence-building measures instituted in U.S. Soviet relations, as well as the group of bilateral treaties entered into by West Germany in the 1970s with its eastern neighbors, formalized the shared East-West interest in stability on the Old Continent. The extension of this detente process through the multilateral CSCE process set the framework within which East-West relations are conducted to this day, encompassing military, economic, political, and humanitarian dimensions. [26]

## CONCLUSION

However, covertly and overtly in both ways the cold war was conducted with far greater ideological intensity; less well defined objectives, and far higher casualties. The displacement of the initial U.S. Soviet dispute over the future of Germany to the wider world reflected the progressive militarization of the cold war, the definition of specific national interests in vague, universal language and imagery, and the pervasive fear that what was at stake was no

less than the existence of (one's own) civilization itself. As the above analysis has tried to show, ideological differences were not at the heart of the cold war in its initial stages. The international dispute between the United States and the Soviet Union as states in no way flowed from the differences in their social and economic systems (need for surplus markets, character of central planning, and so on). Although each superpower believed deeply in the universal validity of its own revolutionary experience, this messianic inclination could not by itself unleash the tensions that led to cold war. What the ideological conflict could and did do was to exacerbate serious, but otherwise normal, geopolitical conflicts of interest and contribute to a complex process whereby the policy of the adversary, now become "enemy," was endowed with coherence, direction, and specific malevolence in a single conceptual framework, one in which far-flung events look on an ominously strategic shape. The ideological preconceptions that each side brought to the cold war thus had the effect of prolonging it, as in the U.S. dispute with China and the war in Vietnam, long after the main issues of the cold war had been effectively decided.

Paradoxically, the truly deadly ideological disputes of this time were those between Communist states, i.e., Soviet Union versus Yugoslavia and Soviet Union versus China. Whereas the United States reacted with remarkable acuity to the former quarrel, the ideologization of the U.S. foreign policy vision and domestic political life that had set in after 1950 inhibited the United States from exploiting the potential inherent in a strong independent China and then in the Sino-Soviet conflict itself. A major opportunity, which did not return for two decades, was thus lost. The United States could have transformed the nature of the cold war competition by dealing with national communism in China as it had done shortly before, in a somewhat more permissive domestic climate, with Communist Yugoslavia. The detente that the United States ultimately concluded with Mao's China in 1971-1972 constituted belated recognition on the U.S. part that its global containment policy had been seriously out of phase with developments for at least a decade and that U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson's intuition in 1950 that a national Chinese communism could constitute an effective barrier to Russian imperialism, and thus an effective foundation for a stable balance of power in Asia had been right all along.

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