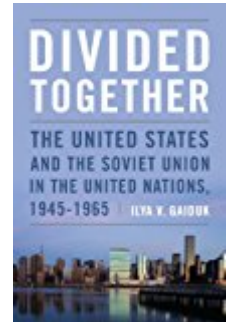


Ilya V. Gaiduk. *Divided Together: The United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press with Woodrow Wilson Center Press, May 2012. 288 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-8292-0.



Reviewed by David S. Foglesong

Published on H-Diplo (May, 2013)

Commissioned by Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of New York)

Ilya Gaiduk, who died in 2011 at the age of 50, was a fine, fair-minded, conscientious, and highly productive historian. His first book, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (1996), focused on the period from the escalation of the war in the mid-1960s to the North Vietnamese victory in 1975. It drew on unprecedented access to Russian archival materials in the first years after the disintegration of the USSR to produce an authoritative account that highlighted how Soviet leaders had sought to restrain both Hanoi and Washington. Gaiduk then turned his attention back to the preceding decade in a second volume, *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954-1963* (2003), which illuminated the dilemmas of Soviet leaders torn between their ideological commitments and their desire to improve relations with the West. In the same year, Gaiduk published *The Great Confrontation: Europe and Islam through the Centuries*, which challenged the notion of an inevitable “clash of civilizations,” in part by tracing

the history of trade and cultural exchange that benefited both European and Islamic nations.

Like Gaiduk’s previous books, *Divided Together* is based on impressively thorough research in both published and unpublished materials. Over a ten-year period Gaiduk conducted extensive research in archives in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia. His access to many documents in the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVPRF) is especially valuable; it allows him to shed new light on many questions, including Soviet policy toward Iran in 1945-46 and Soviet relations with the People’s Republic of China.

Divided Together builds upon a number of earlier studies of the United Nations and it often quotes or cites many of them, including books by Alexander Dallin, Evan Luard, Robert Hilderbrand, and Paul Kennedy.[1] Gaiduk did not seek to supplant such previous studies with a comprehensive narrative of the UN in the first two decades of the Cold War. Instead, he chose to

write a comparative study of US and Soviet policy toward the UN and to focus on issues of security and crisis resolution. That approach allowed him to illuminate how the superpower rivals often treated the UN as a forum for propaganda against their Cold War antagonists, especially in the first decade after the Second World War, but also occasionally cooperated with the UN in efforts to settle or at least contain conflicts. The first five of eight chapters text focus on the period from the end of World War II through 1951. The last three chapters address the years from 1951 to 1965 in less depth and detail.

Chapter 1, "On the Way to the United Nations," describes the development of the UN from the early ideas of President Franklin Roosevelt and his advisers to the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco in June 1945. It emphasizes the changing and at times diverging conceptions of the UN by American, Soviet, and British leaders. As Gaiduk shows, Joseph Stalin prioritized working together with the United States and the United Kingdom to maintain peace and security after the war and was ready to follow Roosevelt's lead on specific issues, such as whether the UN would be built on worldwide or regional lines. While the USSR consistently preferred to concentrate decision making in the hands of the leaders of the wartime allies represented in the Security Council, the United States and the United Kingdom gradually inclined to expand the roles of France and other lesser powers and to broaden the authority of the General Assembly.

In chapter 2, "A Very Tense Opening," Gaiduk examines how the UN drifted away from its original promise as a mechanism for great power cooperation in its first year, from the San Francisco Conference through the Iran crisis in the spring of 1946. Like Evan Luard, Gaiduk faults US policymakers for using the UN as a place to rally world opinion against the Soviet Union over its occupation of northern Iran and thereby damaging its potential as a site for the negotiation of differ-

ences between the major powers. As Gaiduk notes, Soviet officials bitterly resented the double standard whereby the UN did not condemn British, French, and American troop deployments around the world but singled out the Soviet presence in Iran for critical attention.

Chapter 3, "The Cold War Enters the UN," focuses on the US-Soviet war of words from 1946 to 1949. While the West started the use of the UN as a propaganda forum, Gaiduk writes, "the Soviets soon outmatched the Western powers in the scope and tenor of their confrontational rhetoric" (p. 86). In those years, when the United States led a stable majority of the countries represented in the UN, the Soviet Union could not hope to prevail in votes on substantive issues and came to view the UN as an organization hostile to its interests.

However, sometimes the Soviet Union and the United States found themselves on the same side. In chapter 4, "The Friendly Enemies," Gaiduk discusses the unusual concurrence of views of the US and Soviet delegations on the question of Palestine, with both voting for the partition plan in 1947. While Gaiduk argues that that concurrence demonstrated the potential unity of the great powers dreamed of by the founders of the UN, the Palestine issue was not one of the core issues of the maintenance of peace in Europe that the leaders of the Grand Alliance had envisioned.

In the same chapter Gaiduk argues that one reason the United States brought the issue of the Soviet blockade of Berlin to the UN in 1948 was to assure Soviet leaders that it did not plan a military move in Berlin and that war could be avoided. Differing with the scholar Anthony Gaglione, Gaiduk argues that the UN's role in the Berlin crisis was more important than merely being a venue for bilateral talks between the Soviet Union and the West: the United Nations "did an important job in preventing the negotiation process from breaking down and thus averting war" (p. 144).[2]

Chapter 5, “The Long Year 1950,” focuses on the US nonrecognition of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Soviet boycott of the Security Council in protest of the failure of the UN to admit the PRC, and the Korean War. Gaiduk effectively uses Soviet documents to show how Soviet leaders urged Chinese Communists to demand the expulsion of Chinese Nationalist representatives from the UN, with Beijing “obediently following Soviet guidance” on the issue (p. 157). Since the United States was able to obtain UN sanction for driving across the 38th parallel and liberating North Korea, Gaiduk is less convincing when he argues that “the United States was obliged to respect the opinion of other members of the world organization,” which “served as a sort of restraint for a sometimes overly belligerent mood in Washington” (p. 168).

As its title suggests, chapter 6, “Frosts, Thaw, and Crises,” is broader in scope than the preceding chapters, ranging from the frosty Soviet-American relations in the last years of Stalin’s rule to the alternation between the easing and exacerbating of tensions in Nikita Khrushchev’s first years in power. Gaiduk sees a parallel between the unusual restraint of the Soviet Union at the outset of the Suez crisis, when it pushed Egypt to take the issue to the UN, and the initial US restraint in relation to the revolution in Hungary, which the United States put on the UN agenda only after the crushing Soviet military intervention on November 4, 1956. He argues that both superpowers followed policies of noninterference in the other’s spheres of influence. Still, one might quibble over whether Egypt was in 1956 within a US sphere.

Chapter 7, “In Search of New Allies,” discusses the Soviet Union’s relations with its East European allies at the UN (to whom it usually did not issue direct orders), Communist China’s desire to remain outside the UN for a time (when that was useful for its depiction of itself as a victim of imperialists), and Soviet efforts to find allies among new countries in Africa and Asia. While Soviet

leaders hoped that new members of the UN from former colonies would support its positions, Gaiduk writes, actually “the Soviet Union began to find itself on the side of the majority in the General Assembly ... because Moscow often supported Afro-Asian initiatives,” not the other way around (p. 255).

In a brief final chapter Gaiduk asserts that UN Secretary-General U Thant “played a crucial role” in the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 (p. 277). While it was easier for Khrushchev to accept a proposal from the UN secretary-general than “to appear to be yielding to the American adversary’s demand for the same action” (p. 283), Gaiduk may inflate the importance of U Thant’s service, which often involved relaying messages from American and Soviet leaders.

Divided Together does not present a bold, sweeping reinterpretation of superpower relations with the UN in its first two decades. However, it utilizes fresh archival research to add new details to our knowledge of specific developments and to challenge the ideas of earlier writers on a number of detailed points. As a result, specialists on Soviet-American relations and international relations more generally will find it enhances and refines their understanding of US and Soviet policies toward the United Nations.

Notes

[1]. Alexander Dallin, *The Soviet Union at the United Nations: An Inquiry into Soviet Motives and Objectives* (New York: Praeger, 1962); Evan Luard, *A History of the United Nations, Vol. 1: The Years of Western Domination, 1945-1955* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Evan Luard, *A History of the United Nations, Vol. 2: The Age of Decolonization, 1955-1965* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); and Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The United Nations and the Quest for World Government* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

[2]. Anthony Gaglione, *The United Nations under Trygvie Lie, 1945-1963* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-diplo>

Citation: David S. Foglesong. Review of Ilya V. Gaiduk. *Divided Together: The United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. May, 2013.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=38819>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.