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Marc Trachtenberg. *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement1945-1963.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. xi + 402 pp.

Marc Trachtenberg. *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement 1945-1963.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. xi + 402 pp. $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-691-00273-6; $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-00183-8.

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Note: H-Diplo recently ran a roundtable discussion on Marc Trachtenberg's book *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963.* The participants were Diane Shaver Clemens, Thomas Maddux, Tony Smith, and Odd Arne Westad. Each part of the roundtable will be posted to the Reviews website as an individual review, with Trachtenberg's comments linked to each individual contribution.

The focus of this work iterates a familiar thought, namely, that to understand the Cold War means understanding the key to it, Germany, and Berlin is the key to Germany. The question for the victors of World War II was what to do with Germany, the defeated Weltmacht, which had lost the two World Wars it started?

For two decades of policy makers, that challenge loomed, to use a Conradian phrase, as an "extravagant mystery." In Marc Trachtenberg's impressive explication, *A Constructed Peace* , the mystery becomes a complex and fascinating presentation, with new surprises, explained with care, caution, and due respect for the shifting postures, sinuous inter-allied conflicts, and unraveled [ends of a complex many-nationed confrontation. By any standards this book is indeed a page turner.

Trachtenberg concludes that the solution to the German problem assumed its final, stable shape only in 1963 and endured until the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. Elements of it persist today, e.g., in a NATO extending its reach now toward the Urals and in the European Economic Union. The general contours of the Cold War historical picture are familiar. Across the line, existing since 1945, dividing Europe east and west, neither side would transgress or intervene. Defeated Germany was transformed by this division, its national aspirations effectively modulated and subdued but also recognized by incorporation of its two eventually autonomous parts into binding alliance systems, each presided over by a rival super-power, the Soviet Union for the Warsaw Pact and the United States for the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (with and without France). In both systems a German nation played a key role; the GDR as the most productive member of the socialist camp, the FRG as the mainstay of western defense schemes and western economic strength. German military forces were integrated firmly within each alliance, subduing fears of German irredentist revival and revanche. Berlin, ever the point of peril, reflected the larger division into an eastern and western half, occupied respectively by Soviet and by western forces whose presence and access rights Russia and East Germany agreed, at last, not to disturb. Above all neither Germany was going to get its hands on atomic weapons. West Germany in resigning at last to this essential point sensibly turned her influence and interests towards negotiating a manner of detente in Central Europe. With the German problem stabilized at last, the two super-powers now could manage with this nuclear stand-off their rivalries through less than planet threatening maneuvers, achieving a tense but lasting peace.

This simple arrangement, in essence constituting a spheres of influence agreement writ in its implications globally large, seems yet so elegant, balancing, risk-reducing and sensible, that nobody on this H-Diplo list, of course, will be at all surprised to recall that working it out took 18 post-World War II years, generated a huge, impressive and agonizing amount of statescraft over ever shifting and often threatening grounds, and was arrived at by way of several episodes of major war alarms and one confrontation that stood on the edge of general worldwide nuclear disaster. Indeed, the settlement never was fully articulated, sheltering instead under the implicit links forged by the groundbreaking 1963 Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Addressing the oft-posited question, "when did the Cold War begin," Trachtenberg situates the onset in 1946, when the confrontations with the Soviet Union over Turkey and Iran led US leaders to perceive an alarmingly expansionist Russia, requiring a re-interpretation of prior Russian behavior and intentions in Eastern Europe and Germany. In 1945 at Potsdam those same leaders, and especially Secretary of State Byrnes, had considered that they had hammered out what was, beneath the clauses of a document that otherwise read rather to the contrary, a straightforward old fashioned spheres of influence agreement. Even at that early date unease was mounting over the practicality of administering Germany on a four power basis. Trachtenberg assures us that "when one strips away the verbiage and reads the internal documents carefully, when one looks at what was actually done and the sort of thinking that real policy was based on, it is clear that the Americans at Potsdam had indeed essentially given up on the idea that Germany could be run on a four power basis" (p. 26).

Trachtenberg presents an inevitable quality to the unfolding of events – Germany for all intents and purposes was to be divided in half economically and geographically. Byrnes' original proposal at Potsdam was "that each country take reparations from its own zone." Trachtenberg maintains that the US was willing "to sweeten the pot by making what they thought of as two major concessions" (p.29). 1. Reparations: Byrnes agreed to send east a fifteen percent share of German surplus industrial capital from the west zone in exchange for food and raw materials from the east zone, plus a further ten percent "free and clear" (p.28). 2. Byrnes offered to recognize the Oder-Neisse line as the eastern border of Germany. An incredulous Molotov asked, did Byrnes really mean "each country would have a free hand in their own zones and would act entirely independently of the others?" Byrnes clear confirmed that this was so (p. 26).

Zones of occupation had been created in part as temporary provisional measures for preventing a clash between converging western and Soviet armies. They had, however, begun to assume a permanence that was to transform the conquered Reich, with a perilous pressure point, a German capital, Berlin, deeply imbedded in the eastern zone, the city itself divided into occupation zones. General Eisenhower later regarded Berlin as an albatross and the US military position "wholly illogical" (p. 260).

With reparations from Germany dependent on Germany's ability to pay for its imports and without a four power agreement on reparations, a divided Germany would inevitably result. "If there were no common regime for foreign trade, normal commerce between eastern and western Germany would be impossible: the two parts of the country would have to relate to each other economically as though they were foreign countries" (p. 25). At war's end, the wartime coalition fractured when the former allies entered the postwar period. In the deeply worsening climate of 1946 US policy shifted 180 degrees. Moving away from their previous accommodating attitude, US representatives now insisted that Germany should be treated as one economic unit, which the Potsdam document had officially called for. Finances and reparations became the language through which cold war tensions were communicated. After the April 1947 foreign ministers conference, it was clear to then Secretary of State Marshall that hopes for four power cooperation had foundered indeed. The Soviets would be blamed for the failure and the West freed to integrate its zones into a Western European economy.

As a recurring theme, Trachtenberg presents Soviet concerns throughout the book. In one 1947 last formal chance for four power cooperation before the dividing line of the Marshall Plan, Trachtenberg demonstrates this ability to see the other side via a vignette. Marshall complained to Stalin: the Soviets often failed to reply to American messages; they unnecessarily fretted about the Anglo-US bi-zonal agreements (not a violation of Potsdam in Marshall's eyes); they were skeptical about the American- proposed four power treaty guarantee of German demilitarization. Marshall had insisted that if America gave her word that should suffice. Should the Soviets spurn this proffered treaty, there would be little hope of cooperation. "It is not hard to imagine how the Soviet dictator must have reacted to Marshall's litany of complaints. The U.S. President in the Truman Doctrine speech, had just portrayed the conflict with Russia as a struggle of world-historical importance–as a titanic conflict between the forces of freedom and an aggressive totalitarian movement. And now Marshall's number one complaint was the Soviets often did not answer their mail?" Stalin "chose to humor and sought to smooth his ruffled feathers," saying these matter had a way of working themselves out (pp. 61-2).

But instead the 1947 decision to revive the European economy determined the shape of things to come. The Russians feared the implications for Germany. The best place to make this concern felt was Berlin. Trachtenberg emphasizes that the various Berlin crises were not about Berlin per se, but always about Germany. In Berlin, Russia's strongest demands were made. The US presidents, Truman and John F. Kennedy drew the line in the sand with a nuclear stick.

Other significant portions of Trachtenberg's work with their ground breaking research, and important interpretations include, for example, the Eisenhower years. Trachtenberg emphasizes that the early 50's were a very perilous time. After the 1949 breaking of the American atomic monopoly, "the USSR seemed to be getting ready for a real confrontation" (p. 95). Stalin deliberately challenged the United States in Korea and the Cold War spread from Europe to Asia. The American response, a military build-up as envisioned by NSC-68, ended US vunerability. And by 1952 the "military balance had in fact been utterly transformed." By 1953-4, "America would win, and the Soviet Union would be utterly destroyed [p. 158]." This basic fact was understood at the time by US military and civilian officials (p. 156ff) who could thus contemplate the survival of "the American way of life." The remarkably crude illustrations for JCS briefing pamplets of the "late Eisenhower period" which Trachtenberg reproduces on p. 301 capture the atmosphere of the time. War plans in the Eisenhower age came to envision, in the event, perhaps in even the anticipation of imminent hostilities, a swift and overwhelming nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union itself. "Thus massive retaliation . . . really meant massive pre-emption" (p. 162). The 1954 MC 48 NATO plan for nuclear "defense" endorsed escalation, if war threatened, so rapid as to be indistinguishable from a policy of preemptive strike. MC 48 reveals "one of the most extraordinary features of the NATO system that took shape in the 1950s; the effective delegation to SACEUR [Supreme Allied Commander, Europe] of authority to initiate nuclear operations in an emergency" (p. 166).

One of the outstanding features of Trachtenberg's book is the successful inclusion of the many nations and issues that the complex cold war period brought forth. The reader is treated to the atmosphere of the time with Trachtenberg's well-woven presentations as the American statesmen endeavored to adjust and balance the myriad concerns of America's allies vis a vis each other, the United States, and the Soviet Union. He shows Eisenhower's strong desire to cut back on US force commitments in Europe, in order to build a flourishing economy. Eisenhower sought to make Europe a third force, "a third great power block (p. 147)," no longer dependent on overseas US forces. The implications of that goal implied a Western Germany with nuclear weapons. And that prospect did not necessarily sit well with the British or the French. It was, as ever, unacceptable to the Russians. When Eisenhower left office these matters, however, were unresolved, and there was "an alliance in disarray" (Chapter Six).

John F. Kennedy undertook to tackle the issue of Germany's desire for nuclear weapons in face of Soviet fears and now his own reluctance. Trachtenberg does not go into the genesis of the major policy shift represented by Kennedy's initiatives. JFK emerges in this account as an impressive figure, well informed, a quick learner, and capable of thinking on his feet with fast and nuanced diplomatic responses. Kennedy surrounded himself with skilled advisors whose advice he could at critical moments ignore, contravene, or improve upon. He was a war veteran not overawed by military pomp and brass, and a President determined to reach a settlement with the Russians over the German problem. Kennedy was fundamentally motivated by approaching Russian nuclear parity. Thus he was willing to deal comprehensively with the issues: to agree upon the Oder-Neisse line as Germany's eastern boundary, to recognize the status quo in Central Europe, to de facto recognize East Germany (a very touchy sore point to Germans ardent for reunification), to guarantee to face down the increasingly insistent West German demands that they be included as full partners in joint nuclear defense arrangements, to relieve German defense anxieties by guaranteeing a substantial American military presence in Germany, and in general, to do what had to be done to bring American allies into line. (In the end France and Le Grand Charles went their own way).

Unlike Eisenhower, Kennedy was one with the Russians in wishing to keep atomic weapons out of the hands of the Germans. In exchange for his package Kennedy needed a Russian (and Russian supported East German) guarantee for access rights and presence of western troops in West Berlin. The 1948 Berlin blockade had made Berlin the symbol for US resolve and integrity throughout the world. Since any concessions would vitiate US credibility, Kennedy would resolve to go to war. For the Soviet Union and the United States Berlin was an absolute sticking point.

Why Khrushchev continued his obdurate stand over West Berlin, when a Russian recognition of the status quo that had prevailed there since 1945 was the only concession the Americans needed, is a puzzle that Trachtenberg admits he cannot answer. In the changed circumstances of the 1960's, the western enclave well within the Soviet sphere apparently seemed as intolerable to the Russians as the specter of abandoning it seemed to the Americans. Additionally the US and its allies, even West Germany, had allowed a de facto consent to Khrushchev's August 1961 erection of the Berlin wall, recognizing in spite of strong outward protest that the Wall was a measure necessary for general stability. Khrushchev pressed

for a full yield. "The NATO military base and the occupation regime in West Berlin represented a rotten tooth that must be pulled out," he conveyed to Kennedy, September 28, 1962. Kennedy prepared for an inevitable showdown, wishing, he told French foreign minister Couve de Murville on Oct 9th, that "we ought to have forces ready to go within one or two hours on the Autobahn," in the event access routes were denied (p. 350).

But the showdown came in Cuba a few days later. The clandestine installation of Russian missiles on that island seemed clearly linked to the posturing about Berlin, and it is one of the virtues of *A Constructed Peace* that this episode, often presented as isolated, a case study of its own, is firmly integrated with the confrontation brewing in Germany. Kennedy seems to have decided to make his stand over Cuba with the Berlin situation in mind – US determination in the Caribbean would declare US determination on Berlin. The logic of confrontation in Berlin carried over to the logic of Cuba – better to go to the brink now when the US still possessed daunting nuclear superiority, soon to fade. The message of American resolve was heeded. Khrushchev stood back. By 1963, suddenly Khrushchev was assuring the Americans that Berlin was no longer a problem.

The cumulative result of these two crises – Berlin and Cuba –according to Trachtenberg, was the reaching of a general stabilizing agreement, the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, rising above the specific irritants which had in the past goaded dissension. The Treaty was the one formal agreement to come out of the Moscow July 1963 negotiations, but it offered the opportunity for additional settlements under it: "major political understandings could be reached in the guise of arms control agreements" (p. 382). In April 1963 Khrushchev had already linked the test ban proposal to a Berlin's settlement (pp. 387-8). When the East Germans signed it, they enhanced their sovereign status, but to their own surprise, the West Germans also signed, ending the German nuclear threat to the Soviet Union. A system came into existence, a "web of linkages" surrounding this treaty. It provided for an equipoise: "to threaten the status quo in Berlin would put Germany's non-nuclear status at risk. The same point applied to the Germans, but in reverse: they could not move ahead in the nuclear area without creating tension around Berlin. The existence of a connection–not formal, but tacit and structural–thus tended to tie both Germany and Russia into the status quo" (p.390).

For these reasons, by 1963 a World War II peace settlement had finally come into existence regarding Germany. This was "a relatively stable system [p. 398]" founded on a respect for the Central European status quo, a West Germany without atomic weapons, and a continued presence of strong American forces in Germany. The system worked because it guaranteed everyone's basic security interests, and it ensured as well that "Germany would be part of the West, with all that implied in terms in the political transformation and moral rehabilitation of the country [p.400]." It encouraged hope for detente in the long run and for the eventual re-unification of Germany.

I welcome this impressive synthesis with its assessment of international Cold War diplomacy. It is an account of a settlement in lieu of a formal peace treaty after World War II. Marc Trachtenberg has judiciously assessed the problem of Germany as central to the Cold War travail of nations which he sets forth in the eminently constructive piece of *A Constructed Peace*.

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