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Vladislav M. Zubok. *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, September 2007. 488 pp., \$39.95 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8078-3098-7.

Roundtable Editor: Thomas Maddux

Reviewers: Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Kevin O'Connor, Geoffrey Roberts

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

Vladislav Zubok arrived on the American scene as co-author of *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev* in 1996 and as an on-the-air commentator for CNN's documentary series on the "Cold War," 24 hours of narrated photos, action-footage, interviews of participants, and retrospective assessments by Tom Blanton of the CWIHP (Cold War International History Project) and Zubok. In his book with Constantine Pleshakov, Zubok evaluated the origins of the Cold War from the Soviet perspective with a focus on Stalin and Khrushchev. Geoffrey Roberts notes the significant impact of this book as "partly because it contained new evidence from recently accessible Soviet archives, and partly because it had a striking thesis to offer: the revolutionary-imperial paradigm." (1) Zubok's book also arrived as American Cold War specialists struggled to adjust to a post-Cold War perspective and the undermining of many assumptions and interpretations held in the various camps of traditionalists, revisionists of the 1960s, post-revisionists, and other "schools."

Zubok's latest book arrives in a different political and scholarly setting. An increasing number of scholars are exploring international and cultural approaches to foreign policy with the Cold War as a major focus. More authors are making effective use of primary documents, memoirs, and secondary works becoming available on the policies of America's Cold War adversaries and their allies. A recent example featured in an H-Diplo roundtable is Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* which explores, through multi-archival research, all sides in the Cold War in the Third World. Another example closer to Zubok's approach is Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali's *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* which, like Zubok, makes effective use of Soviet sources to offer a more favorable assessment than that provided by Zubok in either of his books. Zubok's book also coincides with significant shifts in scholarly assessments on the Cold War as a new generation of scholars arrives who neither lived through much of the early conflict nor staked out positions in the concrete-like grasp of published assessments the and pro and con labeling of different camps. An earlier generation of Cold War specialists are shifting as evident in Melvyn Leffler's *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* which relies extensively on Zubok for Soviet policy and, like Zubok, incorporates the importance that policy makers on both sides placed on defending and advancing their systems and visions on a global basis along with multiple other considerations shaping policy.¹

The reviewers are overall very impressed with Zubok's study, the breadth of his coverage from Joseph Stalin through Mikhail Gorbachev, the impressive research in a variety of Russian archives, printed documents and Soviet memoirs, and interviews with Soviet officials who advised Leonid Brezhnev and Gorbachev. They also agree with the importance that Zubok places on the Soviet leaders and many of his assessments on

¹ For H-Diplo roundtables on Westad, Fursenko and Naftali, and Leffler, see <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/>

Khrushchev and Gorbachev. The impact of the broader Soviet leadership in the Presidium and Politburo and the Defense and KGB agencies as well as Soviet allies are considered by Zubok as well as broader economic, social, and cultural changes in Chapter Six. However, the author affirms the primacy of individual Soviet leaders in making critical decisions on Cold War strategy and objectives. The reviewers do raise questions that Zubok engages with in his response on the role of ideology in shaping Soviet policy, the origins of the Cold War and Stalin's perspective and objectives, the diplomacy of Brezhnev, and the contribution of Gorbachev to the end of the Cold War and the end of the Soviet state.

1.) The revolutionary-imperial paradigm that Zubok incorporates from his first book is questioned directly by Hasegawa and indirectly by Roberts who thinks Zubok gives too much weight to ideology on Stalin. The impact of Zubok's paradigm in the first book on American scholarship was significant in reducing the neverending debate based on few Soviet sources as to whether state interests, security, and realpolitik shaped Soviet policy or Marxist-Leninist ideology. By blending the two together as a paradigm in which Stalin and Khrushchev operated, Zubok enhanced American understanding of Soviet policy, and in his new book, he extends the paradigm's shaping impact through Brezhnev to Gorbachev who eventually repudiates it. Hasegawa offers an informative clarification on the meaning of ideology as (1) "a guideline and the springboard of action and policy"; (2) as a justification for actions based on geostrategic interests; (3) as a "frame of reference, a worldview, as opposed to the engine of action, through which Soviet leaders and elites viewed and analyzed the world;" and (4) as a justification for actions in competition with China for leadership of the international communist movement after the late 1950s. Hasegawa does not see much support for the first meaning and Zubok agrees in his response. However, Zubok emphasizes that ideology was "a bubble from which Soviet leaders could not fully escape almost until the end of the USSR.... Even Stalin who studied and practiced *Realpolitik* in the most cynical and ruthless forms and ways, also continued to understand the world through the prism of Marxist-Leninist 'scientific theory' and acted as a 'revolutionary practitioner.'" Zubok also notes that "all facets of ideology" mix and resurface, for example, in a new generation, stimulated by Khrushchev, that came into prominence as advisers and speechwriters for Gorbachev. (1-2)

2.) The dark, bloody, and lively ground of debate on the origins of the Cold War will continue. Roberts and Hasegawa question Zubok's assessment that conflict between the U.S. and Stalin was most likely even given the preponderance of power held by the U.S. as "Stalin and his elites were prepared to deal with the U.S. only on their own terms; they believed any other option would be unacceptable.... The origins of the cold war cannot be explained without Stalin's miscalculations and without Soviet 'socialist imperialism'". (3) Roberts suggests that Zubok has provided a "gloss on the traditionalist and neotraditionalist contention that Stalin was the main culprit of the Cold War." (3) Hasegawa agrees with Zubok's emphasis on Stalin's determination to keep Eastern Europe at the end of WWII and to install governments that would not challenge the Soviet Union, but Hasegawa wants to leave room for contingency: "Was the Sovietization of Eastern Europe and the creation of GDR [German Democratic Republic in East Germany] preordained from the very beginning? In my view, given ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, some conflict was inevitable, but it does not

necessarily mean that the way the Cold War was set in motion was also inevitable and preordained.” Hasegawa refers to Finland and Czechoslovakia before 1948 as possible alternatives to Soviet satellites with the “unfolding of the Cold War more as a contingent process rather than historical inevitability resulting from competing ideology, with both sides reacting and over-reacting to the other side’s actions, harboring mutual misperceptions about the other side’s motivations and designs.” (5-6)

3.) Roberts focuses most extensively on the critical issue of Germany and the much debated question of whether or not Stalin was prepared to head off the creation of a separate West German state (the Federal Republic of Germany) and its inclusion in the emerging Western alliance in the late 1940s and early 1950s. According to Roberts, Stalin’s first choice for Germany was a united Germany under Soviet “control or influence”; second choice of a communist East Germany; and third alternative of a neutral, united Germany. (9) As Roberts summarizes Stalin’s perspective, “Stalin was prepared to contemplate the neutralization of the whole of Germany, including communist controlled GDR. At the same time he remained skeptical of the possibility of a deal with the west over Germany and pursued an alternative policy of building up the GDR as a separate communist state.” (9) In a forthcoming essay for the Cold War International History Project entitled “A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955,” Roberts explores the continuing efforts of Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov to negotiate a “deal with the west on Germany in exchange for the creation of pan-European collective security structures that would lead to the dissolution of Cold War blocs.” (10) Zubok agrees with Roberts on the impact of the rivalry between Molotov and Khrushchev in ending any Soviet demarches on German unification. However, Zubok concludes that Stalin and Molotov aimed at hindering Western plans to integrate West Germany into NATO with a bluff about holding all-Germany elections after the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Germany. (3-4) ²

4.) One area of general consensus on Zubok’s book pertains to his assessment of Nikita Khrushchev in Chapters Four and Five. Kevin O’Connor suggests that Zubok could have given more weight to the impact of communist leaders in Eastern Europe on Khrushchev’s policies such as Walter Ulbricht on Berlin. After 1956, however, Zubok depicts Khrushchev as increasingly pursuing his own course without much consultation with the Foreign Ministry and Presidium. Zubok does not disagree completely with the recent assessment of Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali in *Khrushchev’s Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary*, but he does reject their conclusion that the Soviet leader had a grand strategy for détente with the West so that Soviet resources could be devoted to internal development.³ Zubok recognizes that Khrushchev faced a number of difficult challenges including internal opposition in the Presidium through 1956, the repercussions at home and in Eastern Europe over de-Stalinization, the expanding conflict with Mao Ze-dong and China, as well as the Cold War with the West.

² See also Geoffrey Roberts’ [Stalin’s Wars. From World War to Cold War 1939-1953](#) and the H-Diplo roundtable on this book, which includes a review by Zubok.

³ See the H-Diplo Roundtable on Fursenko and Naftali and Zubok’s review.

Zubok views Khrushchev as operating within the revolutionary-imperial paradigm (127-128) and determined to undermine Western nuclear superiority and advance communism through the anti-imperial, decolonization struggle spreading in the third world. What troubles Zubok the most about Khrushchev's leadership is the degree to which he relied on reckless gambling and nuclear brinkmanship on Berlin and Cuba: Khrushchev's "nuclear brinkmanship was exceptionally crude and aggressive, reckless and ideology-driven. The architect of the New Look played hardball. But he relied more on his instincts than on strategic calculations. And he was not a master of diplomatic compromise. His improvisations, lack of tact, rudeness, and spontaneity let him down, after several strokes of luck. His ideological beliefs, coupled with his emotional vacillations between insecurity and overconfidence, made him a failure as a negotiator." (153 and 338)

5.) In *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Zubok did not cover Leonid Brezhnev. In his assessment, Zubok rates Brezhnev next to Stalin with respect to his leadership of Soviet diplomacy, giving him high marks for his pursuit of détente with the U.S. and West Germany to avoid the prospect of war that Khrushchev risked. Although Brezhnev and Politburo members operated within the revolutionary-imperial paradigm and supported competition with the U.S. in the Middle East and Africa, Zubok emphasizes Brezhnev's skillful management of the Politburo to achieve détente with the U.S. and a strategic arms buildup despite the Soviet setbacks in the Middle East in the aftermath of the 1967 war and conflict over Richard Nixon's Vietnam policies, most notably his response to Hanoi's offensive in the spring of 1972. Hasegawa questions Zubok over his depiction of Brezhnev, most notably over Zubok's reliance on memoirs written by Brezhnev's advisers. From Hasegawa's perspective, Brezhnev pursued a conservative approach of seeking strategic parity with the U.S. but kept bringing out new weapons that contributed to undermining U.S. support for détente. Furthermore, the Kremlin's intervention in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa as well as Angola helped to ensure that détente would not survive. Finally, Hasegawa emphasizes that Brezhnev's intervention in Czechoslovakia undermined the possibility of necessary internal reforms in Eastern Europe to help communist regimes gain legitimacy and that Brezhnev drifted through the 1970s with respect to a stagnating command economy and a society falling further behind West and East. By 1972, Brezhnev suffered from a gradual brain atherosclerosis and excessive reliance on an opiate-based sedative. Zubok's response to Hasegawa addresses a number of these issues, and the two chapters on Brezhnev are certainly stimulating.

6.) Gorbachev is America's favorite Soviet leader and Zubok understands why. Zubok, like many American Cold War specialists, gives Gorbachev primary credit for bringing the Cold War to a peaceful end under significant pressures from the United States and growing resistance within the Politburo and Soviet bureaucracies that profited from the Soviet empire and its allies around the globe. Gorbachev's eventual abandonment of the revolutionary-imperial paradigm enabled him and his advisers to give up the global Cold War competition and to reduce significantly the strategic nuclear and conventional forces of the Soviet Union. "The peaceful and rapid end of the Cold War secured Gorbachev's place in international history," Zubok concludes, but "the unwitting destruction of the Soviet Union made him one of the most controversial figures in Russian history." (335, and see also 344) On the latter critical point, Zubok recognizes the impact of the general

erosion of the Soviet economy, Eastern European satellite regimes, and the drain of external alliances from Cuba to the conflict in Afghanistan, especially in contrast with the strengths of the American model of modernization. Any Soviet leader taking over in 1985 faced a number of escalating challenges without clear viable alternatives. However, following his thesis of emphasizing the personalities and beliefs of each Soviet leader, Zubok gives primacy to the impact of Gorbachev's "peculiar preferences and personality traits" and criticizes him for the collapse of the Soviet Union. (335) In reviewing alternatives for Soviet leaders, Zubok emphasizes that Gorbachev failed to pursue any option systematically, took ideas too seriously as he scrapped the revolutionary-imperial paradigm for "new thinking", a radical transformation of Soviet ideology and political and economic systems with an opening to the West and the world. (302) The reviewers are sympathetic to Zubok's mixed assessment on Gorbachev's contribution and they recognize certain benefits in Zubok's preference for a more cautious, gradualist, and forceful preservation of the Soviet state in something like a federation of republics with, as Hasegawa suggests, a Finlandization of Eastern Europe, a "step by step integration of two Germanys rather than complete absorption of GDR by FRG ... and the creation of an all-european security system incorporating the Soviet Union." (11) O'Connor, however, has reservations about whether another, more pragmatic and realpolitik leader, could have achieved Zubok's or Hasegawa's alternative courses. Zubok criticizes Gorbachev's unwillingness to use force to hold the Soviet Union together, but O'Connors wonders if "the use of force to maintain the Soviet empire could have had far, far bloodier consequences" along the lines of the Balkans. (4)

7.) And where is the United States in Zubok's assessment of the Cold War? Faced with the enormous challenges of covering over forty-five years of Soviet diplomacy under four major leaders with many new sources to consider, Zubok necessarily avoids almost all of the historiographical debates on U.S. Cold War leaders and policies. An exception is Ronald Reagan and the continuing debate about the impact of Reagan's policies on Gorbachev and his decisions to end the strategic arms competition with the U.S. and the larger Cold War competition on a global basis.⁴ Zubok rejects the view that Reagan's military buildup, Strategic Defense Initiative, "evil empire" rhetoric, and Reagan Doctrine to resist communism from Central America to Angola to Afghanistan and Cambodia contributed significantly to Gorbachev's moves to end the Cold War. Instead, he provides more support for the interpretation that Reagan's policies cited above retarded Gorbachev's efforts, and that the explosion of the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl on April 26, 1986 had far more impact than Reagan's policies on Gorbachev and the Politburo's stance on nuclear arms control, military doctrine, and Soviet foreign policy. (285-289). "Economic, political, and military pressures from the West only pushed the Kremlin to become a beleaguered fortress and to perserver," Zubok concludes, as "the second wind of the Cold War [in the 1980s] only perpetuated the Soviet confrontational stance and the anti-American

⁴ George W.H. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker do receive some attention from Zubok in his analysis of Gorbachev's efforts to deal with the splintering of the Soviet Union and the fate of East Germany. Zubok depicts them as pretty cautious gamblers, keeping their cards face down, and encouraging Gorbachev's internal reforms and endorsing his unwillingness to use force to hold together either the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe or state. Bush and Baker, however, are unwilling to bail out the Soviet leader with massive funds, a "Gorbachev version of the Marshall Plan." (328-332)

component of the collective identity of Soviet elites and the aging Politburo leadership.” (341) Zubok does give Reagan credit for recognizing the opportunity that Gorbachev provided and engaging with him: “It was Reagan the peacemaker, negotiator, and supporter of nuclear disarmament, not the cold warrior, who made the greatest contribution to international history.” (343)

Participants:

Vladislav Zubok is Associate Professor of History at Temple University and a Research Fellow and Director of the Advanced Training Program of the Carnegie Corporation on Russia. He is co-author of *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev* (with Constantin Pleshakov), (1996), which won the Lionel Gelber Prize as a best English-language book on international relations in 1996 and *Russian Anti-Americanism: From Stalin to Putin* (with Eric Shiraev), (2000). Zubok was a Senior Series Consultant and on-air commentator for CNN's "Cold War," a 24-hour documentary series, 1995-1998. He is currently working on a new project "Soviet Sixties: Soviet Power and Culture between the Cold War and the West."

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa is professor in the Department of History and co-director of the Center for Cold War Studies and International History at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Specializing both in the Russian Revolution and in Russo-Japanese Relations, he has written *The February Revolution: Petrograd 1917* (1981); *Daily Life of Petrograd During the Russian Revolution* (1989, in Japanese); *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (1998) (see H-Diplo Roundtable Review), which received the Ohira Masayoshi Memorial Prize; *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (2005), which received the Robert Ferrell Book Prize from the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations in 2006, and its revised translation into Japanese, *Anto: Sutarin, Toruman to Nihon kofuku* (2006), received the Yomiuri-Yoshino Sakuzo Price (2006) and the Shiba Ryotaro Prize (2007).

Kevin O'Connor is Associate Professor of History at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. He received his Ph.D. at Ohio University and is the author of *The History of the Baltic States* (Greenwood, 2003), *Intellectuals and Apparatchiks: Russian Nationalism and the Gorbachev Revolution* (Lexington Books, 2006), and *Culture and Customs of the Baltic States* (Greenwood, 2006).

Geoffrey Roberts teaches History and International Relations at University College Cork, Ireland. His books include: *The Unholy Alliance: Stalin's Pact with Hitler* (1989); *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War* (1995); *The Soviet Union in World Politics, 1945-1991* (1998); *Victory at Stalingrad: The Battle That Changed History* (2002); and *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (Yale University Press 2007).

Vladislav Zubok has written a superb book on Soviet policy from the beginning of the Cold War under Stalin to the collapse of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. I wholeheartedly endorse William Taubman's blurb on the jacket cover: "This book is the best history we have of the Soviet side of the Cold War. Far more than a survey, Zubok's analysis is based on cutting-edge historical scholarship. He makes use of the most recently available sources and brings to their interpretation an unusually sharp mind."

An ordinary mortal may concentrate on one specific topic or, if much broader, on one of the specific periods (such as the Stalin period, or the Khrushchev period,) to write a book using archives and available published primary sources. Or if one surveys the entire Soviet period from 1945 to 1991, one usually relies on the most up-to-date secondary sources for the periods he/she is not specialized

on. Rarely can historical research combine original research based on archival and primary sources with a comprehensive history that spans the entire period of the Cold War. Zubok accomplishes this dual task admirably. As Taubman writes, this is not merely a survey; it is original research on each period and each topic, based on a wide array of primary sources, including archival sources, as well as the most recent secondary works, which not only include books in Western languages—English, German, French, and Italian—but also, more significantly the secondary works written in Russian that have not been widely known outside Russia or beyond specialists.

I also agree with Taubman's second point: Zubok "brings to their interpretation an unusually sharp mind." This book is not merely a textbook-like comprehensive survey of Soviet role in the Cold War, but it provides Zubok's original interpretations on the nature of Soviet policy during the Cold War, the origins of the Cold War, the role of individuals in determining the course of events, continuities and differences among Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev, the origins of détente, and the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union. Each interpretation is forcefully presented. No doubt historians will disagree with some of his interpretations, but there is no question that Zubok's book has established an important marker by which future historical studies will be measured. I do not believe that there is such a thing as a "definitive" work in the historical profession, but Zubok's book represents an important milestone not only on the Soviet role in the Cold War, but also in the interpretations of the Cold War in general.

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa is professor in the Department of History and co-director of the Center for Cold War Studies and International History at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Specializing both in the Russian Revolution and in Russo-Japanese Relations, he has written The February Revolution: Petrograd 1917 (1981); Daily Life of Petrograd During the Russian Revolution (1989, in Japanese); The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations (1998) (see H-Diplo Roundtable Review), which received the Ohira Masayoshi Memorial Prize; Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan (2005), which received the Robert Ferrell Book Prize from the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations in 2006, and its revised translation into Japanese, Anto: Sutarin, Toruman to Nihon kofuku (2006), received the Yomiuri-Yoshino Sakuzo Prize (2006) and the Shiba Ryotaro Prize (2007).

I would like to offer my views on the merit of this book, and disagreements with some of his interpretations in the following six sections: (1) Sources; (2) Revolutionary-imperial paradigm; (3) Origins of the Cold War; (4) Brezhnev and détente; (5) Gorbachev and the collapse of the Soviet Union, and (6) Issues that Zubok Left Out.

1. Sources

One of the strengths of this book is that it is based on a wide array of primary and secondary sources. First of all, Zubok's wide use of archival sources throughout the book is an amazing feat, unparalleled by any other books dealing with Soviet policy during the Cold War comprehensively. In addition to Soviet foreign ministry archives (AVPRF), party archives (RGASPI and RGANI), state archives (Stalin dossier on GARF), he used the Central State Archives of Contemporary History in Tblisi, Georgia, party archives in Azerbaijan (GAPPOD AzR), National Archives (especially Cherniaev diary), Archives of the Gorbachev Fond (AGF), Central State Archives in Sofia, and the Volkogonov archives in the Library of Congress. As for the most important archives in the coveted Presidential Archives (APRF), however, other than the photographs he uses in the book, even Zubok does not seem to have been able to enter into its inner sanctum.

Zubok further uses numerous published documents. The most important among them are Dimitrov Diary, Vostochnaia Evropa (edited by Volotkina et al), Documents of the Politburo and the Council Ministers, 1945-1953 (edited by Khlevniuk et al), and the Presidium Minutes, 1954-1964 (edited by Fursenko).

Other important sources he uses abundantly are the memoirs of former leaders (Mikoian and Shelest) and advisers (Inozemtsev, Cheniaev, Aleksandrov-Agentov, Troianovskii, Georgi Arbatov, Burlatskii, Bovin, Kornienko, Andrei Grachev among others). Exploiting his vast network of connections, he conducted numerous interviews with policymakers and historians as well.

As long as the Presidential archives are still closed to most scholars, we may still say: "We don't know the answer until the Presidential archives become open." But it is also true that compared with 20-30 years ago, we have an abundance of materials. We don't know everything, but we now know a great deal about the nature and motivations of Soviet policy. We must go further, but thanks to Zubok and others such as Odd Arne Westad, Hope Harrison, Mark Kramer, Alexander Fursenko/Timothy Naftali, Katherine Weathersby, and Lorenz Lüthi, we have a substantial accumulation of sources from which to begin further research. In fact, we may have reached the point, where, no matter on what topic and aspect of the Cold War one does research, one must read Russian to know the Soviet side of the story.

Nonetheless, we have to be careful about the use of sources. First, we may not know certain matters, even if the Presidential archives become completely open. I give one example to illustrate my point. We may not know exactly what was in Stalin's mind, when the Soviet Union abstained from the United Nations Security Council to condemn the North

Korean aggression in June after the North Korean invasion of the south. Zubok presents the thesis that “Stalin had learned from the past and was prepared for a nasty surprise.” (p. 80) In order to prove this interpretation, he cites Stalin’s August 27 cable to the Czechoslovak Communist president, Klement Gottwald, explaining the reasons for this abstention as a calculated move designed to entangle the Americans in the military intervention in Korea. If North Korea began to lose the war, then China would come to North Korea’s assistance, in which case the United States would be bogged down in Korea, distracting the United States from Europe, and a third world war would be postponed indefinitely. (pp. 80-81). This information came from RGASPI, and is also quoted in A. V. Ledovskii’s article in *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* in 2005. I believe that this information is valuable, since previously we were in the dark as to why Stalin instructed the Soviet UN delegation to abstain from the crucial Security Council meetings in June, when Gromyko had strongly urged him to attend and veto the resolution. Some historians speculated that he intentionally abstained, thereby getting China involved in the war against the United States, precluding the possibility of Sino-US rapprochement. But others believe that Stalin miscalculated the US motivations. Zubok seems to take this document at its face value, and accepts Stalin’s explanation. Certainly, this document appears to prove that the China factor was an important reason for Stalin’s decision, and further that his policy toward Korea was closely connected with the situation in Europe. But how do we know that that was exactly what Stalin thought when he decided to abstain from the Security Council meetings in June? This document can also be interpreted as Stalin’s ex post facto justification of his cardinal miscalculation about the United States’ intention. In fact, while Zubok takes the part of the China factor at its face value, he casts doubts about Stalin’s intention to postpone the third world war, arguing that he was fearful of the possibility of the war escalating into a nuclear war. If the second part of his assertion is doubtful, why should we take the first part as its face value? I do not believe Stalin’s cable to Gottwald was a smoking gun as Zubok presents it. We need additional information to prove that Stalin was not surprised by US action.

Archives rarely present a smoking gun. (This also applied to U.S. archives which are exponentially more available and accessible than Russian archives. Even here, for instance, we may never know exactly what was in Truman’s mind when he used the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.) Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and even Gorbachev said different things to different people at different times on various issues. The difficulty is how to connect all this diverse, somewhat contradictory evidence to present a coherent picture. The historian’s craft is tested by the ability to entangle the complicated skein of contradictory evidence and present a plausible picture with due attention to the evidence that contradicts his/her argument, and explain how to interpret the contradictions. Zukov has performed a great service in presenting his evidence and his interpretations, based on newly available sources. We must be aware, however, that these sources are still thin, and we must delve deeper on each point using his book as a starting point on many issues.

2. The Revolutionary-Imperial Paradigm and the Role of the Ideology

The question is whether Soviet policy during the Cold War was primarily determined by its revolutionary zeal to spread Communism to the world or by Realpolitik, by which the

Soviet Union, like any other great powers, was, first, concerned with its own security, and second, interested in expanding its sphere of influence. If it is the former, Marxist-Leninist revolutionary adventurism and expansionism were the basis of Soviet foreign policy. If it is the latter, Soviet behavior was not much different from Tsarist Russian foreign policy. Zubok and Pleshakov first advanced their theory of the revolutionary-imperial paradigm in their influential book, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (1996). Zubok and Pleshakov argued that Soviet foreign policy under Stalin and Khrushchev cannot be understood without both elements. Soviet expansion was motivated by both traditional imperial impulses, but these impulses were also highly colored and influenced by the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It was not an either-or question, but it was both.

In *A Failed Empire*, Zubok pushes this argument further, extending the concept to the Brezhnev period and beyond to the interregnum (Andropov and Chernenko) before Gorbachev rejected the concept. Gorbachev's rejection of the revolutionary-imperial paradigm meant a death sentence to the Soviet Union.

There should be no debate about Stalin's expansionist designs—into Central and Eastern Europe, Turkey and Iran, Manchuria, and the Kurils—about Khrushchev's reckless adventures in Berlin, Cuba, and the Middle East, and about Brezhnev's expansion into Africa and Afghanistan. The question is how to explain these expansionist designs—geopolitical/security interests or Communist revolutionary impulses?

Zubok explains that the Soviet socialist empire was constructed and defended in the name of revolutionary and anti-imperialist ideology. He further states, "Ideological factors contributed to Soviet determination to confront the United States and expand Moscow's socialist empire, until it became truly global in the 1970s. Despite the decay of its belief system and growing cynicism, the Soviet leadership and elites contributed to articulate its international behavior and security interests in both realist and ideological language. But the same ideological factors made the Soviet Union behave in peculiar, even bizarre, ways in international arena." (p. 342) Here, in my view, Zubok confuses different meanings of ideology.

In my view, "ideology" has three distinct functions. First, ideology can be the guideline and the springboard of action and policy. For instance, the Soviet policy in Iran in 1945-46 can be interpreted as its intention to expand Communism in Iran. The use of the Tudeh Party and the Azerbaijan separatist movement can be cited as the evidence of Soviet ulterior motive of its policy to extend Communism to Iran. Second, "ideology" can be used to justify actions. The Soviet motivations in Iran were fundamentally geostrategic, especially motivated by its interest in controlling oil, but in order to explain its actions, it used the idiom of Marxist-Leninist ideology, depicting U.S.-British actions as imperialist expansionism and characterizing Soviet actions as "anti-imperialist, proletarian internationalist actions." Third, "ideology" is a frame of reference, a worldview, as opposed to the engine of action, through which they interpret and understand the working of the international relations. The Marxist-Leninist ideology provided the prism through which Soviet leaders and elites viewed and analyzed the world. Specifically, they saw the world as the arena where the two irreconcilable systems representing the incompatible class

interests engaged in a constant zero-sum struggles, and where the ultimate reconciliation of conflicting interests would be impossible. Further, they believed that the crucial element in determining the outcome of this zero-sum game was the utility of force, either in its actual use, or in the form of deterrence or as a negotiating ploy. Thus, they saw in Iran an arena of conflict between the two competing powers, and attempted to push its influence as far as possible until it was resisted by the Western powers. I present these three functions of ideology as Weberian ideal types, and in reality, these functions may be mixed.

Thus, when one advances the theory of “revolutionary-imperial” paradigm, it is necessary to define more precisely which part ideology he attributes to its “revolutionary” part of the paradigm. In my view, generally speaking, throughout the Cold War, there is little evidence to show that the Marxist-Leninist ideology served as the springboard for Soviet leaders’ actions, and that Soviet expansionism can be largely explained by their security concerns and geostrategic interests. But by carrying out expansionism, their actions were interpreted and justified in ideological terms, thus the second and the third functions of ideology were relevant. Also whenever there was conflict in international relations, this conflict was interpreted in the ideological framework through which they viewed this conflict, provoking actions that resulted from the analyses thus derived. Thus the concept of the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm” may not be useful unless one identifies what functions of ideology are manifested in a certain action/policy.

In addition to these functions, the fourth component of ideology became added after the Sino-Soviet conflict emerged in late 1950s-1960s and intensified in 1970s: the competition to lead the international communist and anti-imperialist movement. In this competition, the Soviet leadership was compelled to emphasize the ideological commitment to the Communist/anti-colonialist movement in the world, even if their actions were motivated by geostrategic interests (while explaining their actions in the Marxist-Leninist language) or sometimes when they adopted policies against their geostrategic interests.

Furthermore, the question of the role of ideology in Soviet foreign policy cannot be divorced from the institutional framework. The International Department in the Central Committee and KGB were generally more ideological (meaning, viewing the world in more ideological terms than the realist terms of the Foreign Ministry), and how each leader adjusted the differences of views represented by different institutions depends on the outlook of the leader and the dynamic of the political process. Although I support Zubok’s emphasis on the role of the individual leaders, we must not forget that Soviet foreign policy, even under Stalin, was not a one-man show, but the product of more complicated decision-making process involving different institutions that pushed their own bureaucratic interests.

3. Origins of the Cold War

Historians have been engaged in a debate on when the Cold War began, and this debate is directly related to the issue of how to interpret the concept of revolutionary-imperial paradigm. In this debate, Zabok tends to lean more toward the orthodox interpretation, dating the beginning of the Cold War far before 1947. He argues: “It has now been

established beyond doubt that Stalin was determined to keep Eastern Europe in the Soviet Union's grip at any cost. The Kremlin leaders regarded Eastern Europe and the Balkans through strategic lenses as a potential Soviet security buffer against the West." Likewise, Zubok rejects the notion that Stalin entertained the possibility of a "united neutral Germany," The Soviets were determined from the beginning to "build their own socialist Germany in their zone of occupation," bringing together "the fulfillment of Bolshevik internationalist dreams of the 1920s and the acquisition of the empire during the 1940s." Zubok also asserts that "Stalin never wanted to withdraw Soviet troops from East Germany." (p.63)

"Stalin moved unilaterally and with complete ruthlessness," Zubok writes. If he "prudently measured his steps, advancing or retreating," it was mere a tactical move to "avoid an early clash with the Western powers." (p. 25) Thus in the historiographical divide, Zubok clearly sides with the orthodoxy. In fact, he states: "Ideological influences, as John Lewis Gaddis has noted, explained Stalin's expansionism" (p. 48). His interpretation will please neo-Orthodox historians like Gaddis and most recently Wilson Miscamble.

I have no problem agreeing with his assertion that the Stalin and the Soviet elites were determined to keep Eastern Europe as their own sphere of influence for security reasons, ruthlessly and unilaterally, and they also were determined to install governments that would not threaten Soviet security. But I am troubled by Zubok's categorical assertion—I usually feel rather uncomfortable with the expression, "beyond a shadow of doubt"—when it comes to Soviet policy--: "He [Stalin] also assumed that the Soviet sphere of influence must and would be secured in the countries of Eastern Europe by imposing on them new political and social orders, modeled after the Soviet Union... For Stalin, the two aspects of Soviet goals in Eastern Europe, security and regime-building, were two sides of the same coin."(p. 21).

Was the Sovietization of Eastern Europe and the creation of GDR (German Democratic Republic) preordained from the very beginning? In my view, given the ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, some conflict was inevitable, but it does not necessarily mean that the way the Cold War was set in motion was also inevitable and preordained. Would the Finlandization of Eastern Europe have been an absolutely impossible possibility? In fact, if Stalin was determined from the beginning to transform the countries of Eastern Europe into Stalinist socialist regimes, how did Finland escape this fate? The Czech leaders, like their Finnish leaders, were fully aware of their security predicament, never intended to challenge Soviet security, and managed to keep their independence until 1948. I see the unfolding of the Cold War more as a contingent process rather than historical inevitability resulting from competing ideology, with both sides reacting and over-reacting to the other side's actions, harboring mutual misperceptions about the other side's motivations and designs.

Here is the limitation of Zubok's interpretation. Because of the nature of the book, Zubok is obviously Soviet-centric, but it is not an international history. The unfolding of the Cold War, however, cannot be understood without placing the process in the context of international history where multiple actors acted and reacted, and where various other

alternative courses existed, and were not chosen. Perhaps, as Marc Trachtenberg showed, the mutual acceptance of “spheres of influence,” advocated by James Byrnes, might have been possible.

In the H-Diplo roundtable discussion on Wilson Miscamble’s book, Robert Jervis rejects the possibility of “soft spheres” (like Finland) being established in Eastern Europe. One wonders then why Finlandization was possible in Finland? According to Wojtek Mastny in *The Cold War in Soviet Insecurity*, Finland was saved because Stalin was preoccupied with the excommunication of Tito. But the Tito excommunication took place after the formation of the Cominform, which resulted from the Marshall Plan. Here I feel historians have to be careful in examining more closely causalities of various events and chronological sequences. Even Jervis cautions: “although I think the balance of evidence is on Miscamble’s side, serious alternative views of Stalin are possible and I would dissent from his degree of certainty.” The same can be applied to Zubok.

Zubok does an excellent job of introducing Stalin’s policy toward Turkey and Iran by relying on the most recently available sources. Nevertheless, what emerges from this evidence is that Stalin’s actions were more motivated by geopolitical concerns, such as securing the Soviet rights over the Straits and oil in Iran than expanding Communism in these countries. In fact, when the revolutionary zeal threatened to provoke serious danger, undermining the relations with the Western powers, he was quick to retreat from any recommendations for military action and called off the revolutionary/nationalistic movements that he had exploited to pursue his geostrategic goal. In his recent work *Stalin’s Wars*, Geoffrey Roberts dismissed these two events as minor episodes without consequences on the outcome of the Cold War. Here I agree with Zubok, emphasizing the importance of these events. Zubok makes the point: “It is clear...that Stalin’s actions helped pave the way for the Cold War.” (p. 48).

But if these events, “pave the way for the Cold War,” when did the Cold War begin? Zubok does not answer this question directly. Roberts, on the other hand, finds the direct cause of the Cold War in Western reactions, especially in the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. These American offensives made it impossible for Stalin to continue his policy to seek cooperation with the Western powers, and, Roberts argues, the world was ushered into the Cold War. I am extremely uncomfortable with Roberts’ pro-Soviet bias, characterizing Stalin’s policy in the brightest light, dismissing the importance of his transgressions (in Iran and Turkey, for instance), and finding justifications for his brutal repressions. Nevertheless, Roberts’ main contention that the Soviet leadership, despite the increasingly deteriorating situations, believed that some form of accommodations with the Western powers to divide the spheres of influence was possible through negotiations before 1947 is worth considering. It was in my view the Marshall Plan (not the Truman Doctrine, as Roberts argues) that marked the onset of the Cold War, where both sides concluded that nothing would be gained by further negotiations. What was responsible to the outbreak of the Cold War was not solely Stalin’s “revolutionary-imperial paradigm,” although it certainly “pave[d] the way to the Cold War,” and not solely Western actions, as Roberts argue, but the spiral of actions, reactions, and misperceptions. It seems to me that the formation of the Cominform, Zhdanov’s two camp thesis, expulsion of Tito, the

Sovietization of Eastern Europe, the Berlin crisis, and the Korean War all resulted from the siege mentality of the Soviet leadership, none of which was necessarily preordained by the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm.”

I have doubts about Zubok’s interpretation on the German question, and his categorical rejection of the notion that Stalin entertained the possibility of creating a united neutral Germany. Norman Naimark (in *The Russians in Germany*) depicts different views advanced by different institutions (Sokolovskii, Semenov, Tiulpanov), and I read his book as suggesting that Stalin’s mind was not made up. But I will leave this question to the specialists on this subject.

4. Brezhnev and Détente

I have little to say about Zubok’s chapters on the Khrushchev period. I find myself in agreement with his criticism of Khrushchev’s brinkmanship and adventurism, lack of clear strategic goals, his impulsive personal style, and his exploitation of the anti-colonial movement in Asia and Africa. Zubok argues that Khrushchev, as “a genuine and passionate believer in the global victory of Communism,” used nuclear threats to advance his cause. (pp. 143). Nevertheless, it appears to me that his policies during the Berlin and the Cuban Missile crises may not have resulted from a romantic revolutionary impulse to spread Communism. Khrushchev may have been interested in protecting Cuba from an American invasion, in redressing the strategic balance by installing the medium and intermediate range missiles in Cuba, and showing the Chinese that he was the leader of the international communist movement fighting against American imperialism. In this sense, Khrushchev’s policy can be interpreted as the manifestation of the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm. And yet, his actions cannot be mistaken for his intention to spread Communism in the rest of Latin American, thereby threatening the American sphere of influence. In other words, ideology played a crucial role in the second and the third functions, mentioned above, but not the first.

My greatest objection to Zubok’s work concerns his interpretation of Brezhnev. Zubok portrays Brezhnev as deeply committed to avoiding war, and this commitment came from his father’s “Sermon on the Mount” that “left an indelible impression on Brezhnev, his international worldview, and his policies—indeed, on his whole work and life.” (p. 202) He portrays Brezhnev, battling with old Stalinists in the Politburo, as heroically seeking détente with the United States. In fact, détente “was not preordained nor inevitable,” (p. 223), but possible only because of Brezhnev’s personal leadership.

This portrayal of Brezhnev comes almost exclusively from memoir materials written by advisers to Brezhnev (especially Aleknasdrov-Agentov). Zubok’s interpretation must be verified and be tested by further research based on archives. But Zubok’s elevation of Brezhnev to the pedestal of détente and peace seems a little far-fetched. Zubok admits that there was a limitation to Brezhnev’s policy on détente: “it was clearly based on the formula of ‘peace through strength’ and it left all the props of Soviet ideological orthodoxy intact, so as to make détente palatable for hard-liners.” (p. 225). Here Zubok seems to believe that Brezhnev’s ideological orthodoxy was a tactical move.

An alternative interpretation is possible. I would argue that my Brezhnev, unlike Zubok's, was a part of his conservative leadership, presiding over the military-industrial complex as the Chairman of the Defense Council, believing that correlation of forces was inexorably moving in favor of the socialist camp and the Soviet Union not only because of the retreat of imperialism, but also because of the accomplishments of the relentless Soviet military buildup. His position on arms control, seeking parity with the United States, stemmed from strategic reality, not necessarily from his desire for peace. Only when the Soviets reached numerical parity with the United States in strategic forces, did the Soviet leaders begin asking questions about the consequences of seeking strategic superiority. Brezhnev should be credited for changing Soviet military strategy in the direction of mutual deterrence, but because of the ideological commitment that he shared with the rest of the Soviet leadership, he could never overcome the inherent contradictions of deterrence itself, thus further provoking the spiral of the arms race, which eventually contributed to the demise of détente.

Zubok divided Chapter 7 on Détente and Chapter 8 on Soviet Overreach, as if Brezhnev had pursued détente, but his policy to pursue peace was derailed by his opponents as a result of Soviet overreach in the Third World. In my view these two were integrally connected. The failure of arms control during the 1970s cannot be attributed merely to the Soviet side, but the rapid development of Soviet strategic forces, especially SS-18s, and the modernization of theater nuclear weapons (SS-20) were bound to alarm and provoke reactions from the United States and Western Europe. Zubok seems to accept Aleksandrov-Agentov's view that Brezhnev only followed the lead of the military leaders, but this picture—a weak leader whose commitment to détente was sabotaged by the hardliners such as Grechko, Ustinov and Gromyko—does not seem plausible. At best, we must test Zubok's thesis by examining archives.

Furthermore, I do not believe that the Soviet adventures in Angola, Ethiopia, and eventually in Afghanistan were the policies in which Brezhnev played little role, and were carried out by the hardliners led by Gromyko, Andropov, and Grechko (p. 251). Brezhnev represented the whole team of Soviet leaders who prided themselves on achieving superpower status, having this status recognized by the United States in the Basic Principles of the U.S.-Soviet relations. The importance of the agreement on Basic Principles of U.S.-Soviet Relations, which the United States did not take seriously, cannot be stressed more, and Zubok fails to do so in his book. Having reached strategic parity, and achieved superpower status, by which, as Gromyko stated, "there is no corner of the globe where the Soviet Union is not interested in," Soviet leaders believed that they were entitled equal rights to extend their influence in Africa and the Middle East, and Vietnam. And Soviet involvement in these regional conflicts had another important feature that did not exist in the Soviet support of anti-colonial movements under Khrushchev: Soviet military involvement and aid that reflected the Soviet power of projection under the Brezhnev period.

Describing Soviet action in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa in 1978, Odd Arne Westad states: "To Leonid Brezhnev and to the majority of his colleagues, the principle of superpower equality that they felt had been established in their negotiations with the

Nixon administration not only entitled them to intervene in areas where local revolutions were coming under threat, but also to keep their Third World policies separate from the bilateral relationship to the United States.” (Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 283). I tend agree with this interpretation more than Zubok’s.

I am glad that Zubok emphasizes the importance of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Zubok mentions that one of the important consequences of the intervention was that it killed any socialist illusions among the Soviet educated class, creating an unbridgeable chasm between the supporters of de-Stalinization and the Soviet system. Whether or not Brezhnev was a “reluctant” interventionist, this intervention seems to have more far-reaching consequences than Zubok indicates. It eliminated any possibility of internal economic (and eventually political) reform by gradually dismantling the command economic structure. Instead of carrying out economic reforms, Brezhnev’s cadre policy even reinforced and strengthened the ossified command economic structure, leading to the “era of stagnation.” The Czechoslovakia intervention also killed any indigenous reforms within the East European satellite countries, ruling out the possibility of developing Eastern Europe along the path toward Finlandization. By compensating for the lack of political legitimacy of the Eastern European communist regimes with generous subsidies that drained Moscow’s coffers, Brezhnev created a hopeless situation from which no escape could be found. The Empire had to strike back. In this way, 1989 was the inevitable consequence of 1968.

I would like to add another aspect of the Brezhnev period I wish Zubok would have included: the emergence of professional class in the Soviet Union, especially knowing that Zubok himself, as a young researcher in the Institute of U.S.A. and Canada, represented this elite class that grew up under Brezhnev. This book points out the importance of generational differences among Soviet leaders and the Soviet elite, and one excellent chapter is devoted to the importance of de-Stalinization that had a defining impact on the “men (and women) of 1960s (shestidesiatniki),” which later became the main ideologues of Gorbachev’s perestroika. Zubok also briefly, although not systematically, refers to the generation of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, who came of age during the 1930s and greatly benefited from Stalin’s Great Purge to acquire the position of power (vydvizhentsy), and experienced the war as their defining moment of political and personal convictions. To this generation, the victory in World War II was closely connected with Soviet legitimacy, and this is the generation who ruled over the Soviet Union from Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Andropov, to Chernenko. And yet, we have also the young generation of political elite that grew up under Brezhnev—semidesiatniki. What is often overlooked is the growing professionalization during the Brezhnev period. These members of the professional elite, working in various research institutes, like young Zubok, other government and party organizations, and various literary journals and newspapers, had professional competence, intimate knowledge of the outside world, an attraction to rock music and blue jeans, and awareness of the fundamental defects of their own system. Increasingly stuck in ideological strait jackets, their career aspirations in the Soviet system (including the privilege of traveling abroad) and their professional integrity often collided, and eventually created cynicism and despair. They were the producers of countless devastating anekdoty

(political jokes) that eroded the legitimacy of Soviet power. The existence of these elites provided a time bomb in the time of stagnation that was to be ignited under Gorbachev.

5. Gorbachev and the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The last two chapters dealing with the Gorbachev period are excellent. Zubok offers sober and critical evaluations of Gorbachev. He criticizes Gorbachev's personality--his proclivity toward temporizing and procrastination, his lack of a comprehensive vision for his goals, and his habit of making decisions on an ad hoc basis. Above all, Zubok criticizes Gorbachev's aversion to the use of force.

One of the most interesting points Zubok makes is that Gorbachev failed to protect Soviet national interests by accepting the collapse of East European Communist regimes, the reunification of Germany, and the end of the Cold War, without attempting to protect the Soviet sphere of influence, prevent NATO expansion to the East, and dissolve the military blocs on both sides.

After the collapse of Eastern Europe, Gorbachev let the Soviet Union itself collapse by exacerbating the economic crisis, the rise of nationalist separatism, and the erosion of the existing state structure. He alienated and antagonized the nomenklatura who controlled the state and economic structure, and attempted to create grassroots democratic structures from scratch—an impossible task. And yet, he refused to run for president, and failed to legitimize his position as the President by popular mandate. He failed to silence Yeltsin, the demagogic troublemaker, by sending him off to some ambassadorial position, and kept the unreformed hard liners such as Yazov, Kriuchkov, and Oleg Baklanov, who eventually plotted a coup against him.

Zubok argues: "Without Gorbachev...the end of the Cold War would not have come so quickly. Also without him, the rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union itself would not have occurred. At each stage of the Soviet endgame, Gorbachev made choices that destabilized the USSR and sapped its strength to act coherently as a superpower....A different person could have taken a very different course of action, and perhaps as a result the Soviet Union would not have collapsed as disastrously as it did, creating so many problems for the future." (p. 335)

Or the Soviet Union may not have collapsed. The rejection of the "revolutionary-imperial paradigm" had to end the Cold War and to end the Soviet Communist rule that depended on that paradigm, but the ways that the Cold War ended and the ways that the Soviet Union ended did not have to follow the path that they took. Different alternative courses would have been possible. A different Eastern Europe, freed from Communist rule, but not threatening Soviet security--in other words, the Finlandization of Eastern Europe; the gradual, step by step integration of two Germanys rather than complete absorption of GDR by FRG (Federal Republic of Germany); simultaneous dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact Organization and the creation of an all-European security system incorporating the Soviet Union; even the maintenance of the Soviet Union (without the Baltic states) with a loose, but genuine federation of the republics; the gradually dismantling of the command

economy, transforming the Soviet economy into a market economy, and integrating it into the world economy; the maintenance of an authoritarian political system rather than plunging into a democracy, ensuring a modicum of stability in society, occasionally with the use of force, and overseeing the economic transition—these would have been some options that could have been attempted and implemented. These pictures, which Zubok presents, will undoubtedly be opposed by many, and offend many. But I am convinced that the world might have been better off with the preservation of the transformed Soviet Union, and a different way of ending the Cold War. Here I salute Zubok's sober assessment of Gorbachev.

6. Issues that Zubok Left Out

It is inevitable that a comprehensive book like this cannot deal with all the issues, and Zubok is quite aware of some important issues that he could not adequately include in this book. He regrets especially the omission of a systematic review of Soviet economic and financial history. (p. xi) It is not fair, of course, to criticize the issues that he elected not to include in the book, but to the extent that the Cold War competition was the context of competing ideologies for modernity, I would have welcomed some reference to the appeal of the Soviet vision of modernization in the 1960s, and the loss of that vision in the 1970s-1980s in the age of the third industrial revolution and the emergence of transnational economies. Not everything that was happening in the world was related to the Cold War, and the profound change in the world economy was one of those things that had little to do with the Cold War competition, but this competition has to be placed in the larger framework of the shape of the world economy.

Which brings me to another issue that Zubok largely left out: the Cold War in Asia. Zubok touches on the Sino-Soviet dispute, the Korean War, and the War in Vietnam, but only in passing, without attempting to place them in the overall framework of the Cold War. What was the nature of the Sino-Soviet conflict? Was it an ideological conflict, a geostrategic conflict, or a cultural conflict? How did this conflict change the nature of Soviet foreign policy? Zubok does not deal with these questions adequately. Recently Chen Jian in *Mao's China and the Cold War* postulates that the Sino-Soviet split was an inevitable outcome of Mao's culturally-rooted understanding of Marxist-Leninist ideology. I am not quite convinced by Chen Jian's argument. Nevertheless, I would argue that the Sino-Soviet conflict injected a more decisive element in the shape and the framework of the Cold War than Zubok suggests in his book. It also touches on the nature of ideology. Why was it that the Communist ideology that claims universality had to end up with a deadly state-state conflict that experienced military clashes with a contemplated nuclear preemption? I would argue that rather than geostrategic and cultural differences, this conflict resulted from the nature of the Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Zubok omits one issue completely: Soviet-Japanese relations. With the exception of a few pages dealing with the end of World War II, Japan is completely ignored in this book. Or perhaps, it might be more correct to say that Soviet foreign policy throughout the Cold War did not have a comprehensive policy toward Japan. This defect is in a way a reflection of the Soviet policy that emphasized the strategic aspects in a global contest at the expense of

the economic dimension. It is important to note, however, that the Soviets persistently missed the opportunity to reach rapprochement with Japan by resolving the territorial issue, in 1956, 1973, 1987, and 1991. Zubok's characterization of Gorbachev's personality traits— his lack of strategic vision, ad hoc decisions, procrastination, West-biased policy orientation, underestimation of the economic factor—is right on the dot for Gorbachev's treatment of Japan.

Finally, I want to praise Zubok's emphasis on the nuclear issue that constituted the core of Soviet foreign policy from Stalin to Gorbachev. Especially important is his argument that Stalin overcompensated for the American nuclear monopoly by pursuing a more aggressive policy to show that the Soviet Union was not intimidated by nuclear weapons, while avoiding at all cost the possibility of escalating any conflict into a war involving nuclear attacks. Zubok duly notes the change of nuclear strategy under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev. But since these changes are dispersed in different parts of the narrative, the process of the evolution of Soviet nuclear strategy is not presented systematically—the process in which the Soviet Union dealt with nuclear weapons under Stalin (downgrading the importance of the nuclear weapon), incorporated the nuclear weapon in its overall strategy under the conditions of numerical and technological inferiority under Khrushchev (the nuclear revolution), changed its strategy as it reached parity with the United States, reexamined the military doctrine based on parity under Brezhnev, and came to reject, with Gorbachev's new political thinking, the very notion of nuclear deterrence. It is important to note that the Soviet nuclear strategy evolved in tandem with Soviet foreign policy, and that strategy evolved differently from the American nuclear strategy, reflecting its geographical, military-technical, and technological constraints. It was also the process in which nuclear weapons gradually eroded Marxist-Leninist precepts, by rejecting the inevitability of war, abandoning the goal to seek superiority in the military balance, denying victory in nuclear war, and eventually rejecting Clausewitz's dictum that war is an extension of politics by different means, which was to reject the class struggle as the foundation of international politics. When the Soviets rejected the class struggle and presented "common human values" that united both systems, then the Cold War was destined to end. As Gergiii Arbatov aptly put it, "We will deprive you of the enemy." Despite all personal faults and mistakes he made in implementing his policy, Gorbachev should be credited to the end of the Cold War more than Ronald Reagan. His contribution to the transformation of the international system should not be obscured by ill-placed triumphalism.

A *Failed Empire* is essential reading for anyone with a scholarly interest in the Cold War. This volume would be a significant achievement even had Zubok based his book solely on his reading of the secondary literature and the many memoirs published in both English and Russian during the past two decades; however, the author has also mined the archives and conducted dozens of interviews with former officials in the Soviet foreign policy establishment. The result is a charged but supple analysis of Soviet foreign policy from 1945 to 1991 that examines the interplay of ideology and personality in explaining Soviet international behavior during the Cold War.

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Appropriately for a diplomatic historian, Zubok judges Soviet leaders not by their intentions but by the results they achieved. Thus Josef Stalin gets generally high marks for advancing Soviet state interests and transforming the USSR into a nuclear superpower,¹ while Mikhail Gorbachev comes across as a naïve optimist whose muddled thinking and inconsistent policies destroyed an empire. Both were captives of Leninist ideology and believed in the inevitable triumph of socialism; however, while one was willing to use force to strengthen the Soviet state, the other was so repulsed by violence that he would not sanction the use of force even when the state's very existence was at stake.

Stalin's behavior was influenced by a number of factors, including his enigmatic personality and character, the Russian imperial inheritance, and an ideology that saw the USSR as the base of international socialism and the core of a future "socialist empire." Zubok believes that Stalin's ideological convictions were often the root cause of the miscalculations that resulted in the Cold War, as they misled him into believing that an inevitable falling out between the western, imperialist nations would pave the way for the extension of his socialist empire into the heart of Europe. His expansionist course, though mitigated by a certain element of realism and caution that was notably lacking in his successor (Nikita Khrushchev), was "spectacularly successful" until 1945, but its continuation after the war's end made confrontation inevitable, as Stalin failed to foresee the American commitment to Europe or to understand U.S. President Truman's determination to use America's new global power (49, 336). Whether the Cold War was the result of Russian power-grabbing² or a series of miscalculations, domestically it suited Stalin's purposes: the rising hostility between the Soviet Union and its former partners, accompanied by the Soviet regime's campaign against "Titoism," facilitated the consolidation of the Soviet core of the "socialist

¹ This point is made more forcefully by Geoffrey Roberts in *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

² Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

empire” and helped make possible Stalin’s assertion of absolute control over the communist parties of eastern Europe.

Inheriting a bipolar view of the world that envisioned the USSR in a permanent struggle with capitalist powers who were bent on, at minimum, containing Soviet power, Stalin’s successors were stuck in an ideological box—what Zubok calls a “revolutionary-imperial paradigm”—that rendered impossible a peaceful settlement between an American superpower that was no less committed to containing Soviet expansion than Moscow was to advancing world revolution. The most that could be hoped for was “détente,” a relaxation of tensions. This turned out to be the crowning achievement of Leonid Brezhnev, a leader usually caricatured as the embodiment of mediocrity but who gets high marks from Zubok for advancing Soviet state interests by reducing the likelihood of military confrontation with the U.S.A. Although neither an innovative thinker nor a clever strategist, Leonid Brezhnev was motivated by one core belief—that war had to be avoided at all costs. With the help of a team of “enlightened” speechwriters and advisors, Brezhnev, a centrist and reluctant interventionist (despite his decision to crush the Prague Spring in 1968), shaped Soviet foreign policy to that end.³ Yet when Brezhnev’s health began to fail and he was no longer willing or even capable of maintaining the same level of personal contact with U.S. leaders, the good will of the détente era of the early 1970s gave way to increased mistrust as Soviet leaders, still hostage to their “revolutionary-imperial paradigm,” alienated their American counterparts by cracking down on dissent at home while launching a disastrous—in both diplomatic and military terms—invasion of Afghanistan. Now exposed to the perils of imperial overstretch, by 1981 the Soviet Union “assisted or maintained sixty-nine Soviet satellites and clients around the world,” as American pressure on the USSR increased to its highest levels since the 1950s (268).

A central premise of Zubok’s book is that personalities matter. While the assertive but careful Stalin and the moderate and centrist Brezhnev are rated positively in their role as statesmen, the “undereducated and erratic” Nikita Khrushchev and the well-meaning but hopelessly naïve Mikhail Gorbachev are excoriated for their failures (167). Like other Soviet leaders, Khrushchev passionately believed in the victory of communism, but lacked either the statesmanship of Stalin or the tact of Brezhnev. Convinced that the U.S.A. was encircling the USSR with military bases, Khrushchev was certain that building up the country’s nuclear capacity would make the country more secure from attack and give it unprecedented diplomatic leverage. But Khrushchev’s path of resistance led from one gamble to the next—from the Berlin ultimatum of 1958 to the nearly catastrophic Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. His nuclear optimism notwithstanding, Khrushchev pursued an inconsistent foreign policy that, by exacerbating the level of superpower confrontation, ensured his political demise and helped shape the attitudes of the future “enlightened” apparatchiks.

³ This phrase recalls Tsar Nikolai I’s “enlightened bureaucrats” who prepared the way for the Great Reforms of Aleksandr II. See W. Bruce Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia’s Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1825-1861* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986).

While Zubok correctly emphasizes the role that Khrushchev's personal foibles played in the miscalculations and setbacks of his foreign policy, he sometimes neglects to explain the roles played by foreign communists, especially the leaders of the satellites of eastern Europe. For example, it was the East German leader Walter Ulbricht who wanted a wall to be erected in Berlin—a wall that stood for twenty-eight years as a testament to the failures of communism—and who obtained Khrushchev's approval for it; yet one could easily come away from *A Failed Empire* with the impression that this was Khrushchev's initiative.⁴ The satellites also manipulated their benefactor for the sake of certain economic benefits, as the Soviet Union provided its clients with cheap resources and a ready market for their manufactured goods. For all its many virtues, *A Failed Empire* provides few insights into the ways that the eastern European tail could sometimes wag the Soviet dog and thus help shape Soviet foreign policy during the Cold War. Moreover, Soviet policy in Latin America—Cuba excepted—is almost entirely ignored, a rather odd omission given that Soviet activities in the region merely fed American suspicions in the late 1970s and early 1980s that the USSR was still bent on expanding its influence around the globe.

On the whole, Zubok writes deftly and perceptively about the foreign policy decisions of Soviet leaders, yet he is at his best when exploring the changes in attitudes typical of the young communist intellectuals of the 1960s. It was the group of young men drawn from this generation, the “desyatniki,” who formed the core of the “enlightened” speechwriters and advisors—Anatoly Chernyaev, Georgy Arbatov, Georgy Shakhnazarov—who helped Brezhnev pursue his goal of détente; many of the same apparatchiks would help Mikhail Gorbachev radically revise Soviet foreign policy with what Zubok holds to be calamitous results.

Zubok intriguingly suggests that Gorbachev's “new thinking” was an outgrowth of the foreign policy of the Brezhnev era, as it was during the 1970s that the potentially catastrophic consequences of the arms race became evident to the Soviet leadership—even if the Kremlin at that time remained convinced that strategic superiority would give Moscow greater diplomatic leverage. Yet it was the Chernobyl disaster that brought home to ordinary Soviet citizens what a real nuclear war, even a “victorious” one, might look like. “Certainly the [Chernobyl] catastrophe was much more responsible for the drastic changes in Soviet official mentality than the previous years of American pressure and nuclear buildup” (288). This is central to Zubok's argument about American victory in the Cold War: as much as American triumphalists like to credit Ronald Reagan's toughness and his dubious Strategic Defense Initiative (which, in theory, would reduce American vulnerability to a Soviet strike by attacking its warheads from space) for bringing the Soviets to the negotiating table, these were not the decisive factors. It was Chernobyl that flipped the switch in the Soviet official mentality: secrecy, Gorbachev (and not only Gorbachev) concluded, does not work; policies would now have to be based on candor.

Gorbachev's commitment to lessening tensions between the superpowers and reducing the defense burden that was hobbling the Soviet economy was noble and probably even

⁴ See Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

necessary; his muddled thinking on both domestic and foreign issues and his inability to follow one particular strategy, Zubok claims, doomed the Soviet state. By pursuing half-hearted economic reforms that crippled the Soviet economy, Gorbachev “essentially destroyed the Soviet capacity to act like a superpower on the international arena” (308). Excessively dependent on Westerners for approval while his domestic popularity, never great to begin with, plummeted at home, Gorbachev lurched from one crisis to the next while making unprecedented diplomatic concessions that outraged his enemies in the Soviet establishment.

According to Zubok, the problem was that “Gorbachev took ideas too seriously. They played an excessive role in his behavior” (309). Modeling himself on an “idealized Lenin,” Gorbachev replaced one messianic idea—international socialism—with another: “the birth of a new world order.” The basis of Soviet foreign policy, which by 1989 aimed at the creation of a “common European home,” had become excessively “idealistic,” as concrete Soviet state interests now took a back seat to Gorbachev’s grander vision of a peaceful, denuclearized world based on cooperation and the pursuit of common interests. Thus Gorbachev abandoned the satellites of eastern Europe without getting anything in return; he agreed to German unification without even holding any substantive discussions on the question at the highest levels. At the time, these were stunning and, from the Western perspective, quite welcome developments. In retrospect, Zubok seems to suggest, they were spectacularly irresponsible.

A Failed Empire is a meticulously-researched and thought-provoking book about the Soviet Union in the Cold War. Since the domestic scope of this book is understandably limited, this means that the nationalities problem, which is essential to explaining the Soviet collapse, is dealt with only in passing. Thus without discussing the reasons for the decay of the Soviet Union’s internal cohesion, Zubok concludes that the socialist empire “committed suicide.” Zubok attributes this outcome both to Gorbachev’s debilitating reluctance to use force and to the declining will since the days of Brezhnev of the Soviet elites to risk a nuclear war. While undeniably true, this strikes me as incomplete. One wonders if this outcome might not also have something to do with a waning belief in the system the Soviet elites served?⁵ In the end, not even the erstwhile empire-savers who launched the coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 could bear the thought that the blood of Ukrainians or Latvians much less that of Russians might stain their trembling hands. This was not because they feared a war between the superpowers; rather, they were not willing to wage a potential civil war for the sake of maintaining either socialism or Soviet power.

It may well be true that, as Zubok states, “A different person could have taken a very different course of action, and perhaps as a result the Soviet Union would not have collapsed as it did, creating so many problems for the future” (335). But it is equally possible that the use of force to maintain the Soviet empire could have had far, far bloodier consequences. Without understating the genuine suffering that millions of Russians and non-Russians suffered in the 1990s as a result of the collapse of the integrated Soviet

⁵ Paul Hollander, *Political Will and Personal Belief: The Decline and Fall of Soviet Communism* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

economic system, one need only to look to the Balkans during the same period to see how much more horrific the Soviet collapse might have been.

In my contribution to this roundtable review of Vladislav Zubok's *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (University of North Carolina Press 2007) I will concentrate on the first postwar decade, with particular reference to the author's treatment of Soviet policy on the German question. This is the period that I know best and it is the site of most of my interpretative disagreements with Zubok. In general, the more Zubok's chronology progresses towards the present the more I find myself nodding in agreement. His treatment of the cold war détente of the 1960s and 1970s is highly illuminating and the book culminates with an outstanding analysis of the Gorbachev era. When Zubok says "the Soviet superpower met its end at the hands of its own leadership under the influence of new ideas, policies and circumstances" (p. 303) and that "it was Reagan the peacemaker negotiator, and supporter of nuclear disarmament, not the cold warrior, who made the greatest contribution to international history" (p.343), I couldn't agree more. I am also in fundamental agreement with the book's underlying philosophy: "every history is the story of people and their motives, hopes, crimes, illusions and mistakes". (p.ix) As Zubok demonstrates, in chapter after chapter, the differing personalities of successive Soviet leaders were critical in shaping the character of Moscow's cold war.

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Zubok's text is the successor to the book he co-authored with Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, published in 1996. When that book was published it had quite an impact, partly because of the novelty of a history of the cold war by two post-Soviet Russian scholars, partly because it contained new evidence from recently accessible Soviet archives, and partly because it had a striking thesis to offer: the revolutionary-imperial paradigm. This was the idea that postwar Soviet foreign policy could best be understood as a combination of expansionary geopolitical ambition and ideological commitment and aspiration. Zubok and Pleshakov were not the first to argue along these lines but the results of their research in the Russian archives showed that ideology mattered, both as an independent variable in Soviet foreign policy and as the conceptual framework for the pursuit of geopolitical goals.

A Failed Empire is the continuation and development of Zubok's work with Pleshakov. The period covered in *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* is reworked, utilizing the much greater quantity and variety of Soviet archival sources that have become available in the last decade or so. It takes the story of the Soviet role in the cold war forward from Khrushchev to Gorbachev. Most importantly, Zubok integrates developments in the domestic sphere with developments in the domain of foreign policy and demonstrates how the dynamic relationship between internal and external factors often had a determining impact on the

actions of the Soviet leadership. As the book's subtitle indicates Zubok's text is more than a history of postwar Soviet foreign policy: it is a history of the Soviet Union *in the cold war* – a story of how that conflict shaped social, political, and economic conditions within the USSR. In telling this story Zubok often adopts a highly critical - and sometimes censorious - tone, particularly in the early chapters dealing with Stalin and Khrushchev. These sections of the book seem to me to lack the empathy of his handling of the performance of Brezhnev and Gorbachev. I was struck, too, by the contrast with the more measured tones of *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*. In that book Zubok and Pleshakov arrived at the following conclusion on Stalin's role in the origins of the cold war:

“It is tempting to lay total blame for the Cold War on the delusions of Stalin and his lieutenants. A closer look at the Cold War from the Soviet side reveals, however, that they were not the only culprits in the conflict. We cannot disregard other, complex factors, such as the crass nature of power politics, the choices of the U.S. and British policymakers, and the deeper causes of hostility and mistrust between dictatorship and democracy in an uncertain world. Stalin, notwithstanding his reputation as a ruthless tyrant, was not prepared to take a course of unbridled unilateral expansionism after World War II. He wanted to avoid confrontation with the West. He was even ready to see cooperation with the Western powers as a preferable way of building his influence and solving contentious international issues. Thus, the cold war was not his choice or his brainchild. The arrangements at Yalta for Eastern Europe, and the critical victories of the Red Army in the Allies ultimate triumph over the Axis powers, led Stalin to expect that cooperative regulation of international relations would be possible. For this, by 1945, Stalin was ready to diminish the role of ideology in his postwar diplomacy to a minimal level. He was ready to observe the limits of Soviet spheres of influence in Europe and Asia and he was prepared to keep in power “transitional” regimes in Eastern Europe that would be acceptable to the west. That did not mean Stalin would cease to be the dreadful dictator and the pontiff of the Communist world. It did mean, however, that the Kremlin leader believed he needed years of peace in order to bring the USSR from its wartime destruction...to the status of an economic and military superpower.”¹

In *A Failed Empire* Zubok presents a much less balanced picture, portraying Stalin as a dictator who preferred unilateral action to multilateral negotiation; who curtailed his expansionism only in response to western resistance; who strove from the outset for a “socialist empire” in Eastern Europe; and whose main concern was the maintenance of his own power. The detailed picture drawn by Zubok is much more interesting than this sketch suggests, but it is difficult to read the early chapters of the book as anything other than a gloss on the traditionalist and neotraditionalist contention that Stalin was the main culprit of the cold war.

One example of Zubok's now less than even-handed treatment of Stalin is his citation from a telegram to Kaganovich and Molotov on 2 September 1935. Stalin was on holiday and his

¹ V. Zubok & C. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Harvard University Press 1996 p.276.

cable to Moscow was in response to a suggestion from Foreign Commissar Litvinov that the USSR should curtail exports to Italy in view of its impending conflict with Abyssinia. The section from the cable cited by Zubok is as follows:

“Two alliances are emerging: the bloc of Italy with France, and the bloc of England with Germany. The bigger the brawl between them, the better for the USSR. We can sell bread to both sides, so that they would continue to fight. It is not advantageous to us if one side defeats the other right now. It is to our advantage to see this brawl continue as much as possible, but without a quick victory of one side over the other”.

Zubok presents this statement as indicative of Stalin’s way of thinking about international relations and as a contrast to the views of Litvinov, who favoured an alliance with the western democracies against the fascist states. Zubok comments:

“Stalin expected a prolonged conflict between the two imperialist blocs, a replay of World War 1. The Munich agreement in 1938 between Great Britain and Germany confirmed Stalin’s perceptions. The Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 was his attempt to continue the “brawl” between the two imperialist blocs in Europe, although the composition of those blocs turned out to be drastically different from what he had predicted.” (pp.17-18)

There are a number of problems with Zubok’s treatment of this episode. Firstly, he presents Stalin’s telegram as being sent *after* the Italian attack on Abyssinia but that invasion did not take place until a month later and as war drew closer Stalin shifted his position. When war broke out Stalin accepted Litvinov’s advice and the USSR joined in the League of Nations’ sanctions against Italy.² Secondly, Zubok mentions Munich and the Nazi-Soviet pact but not the six months’ of triple alliance negotiations with Britain and France that preceded the pact. Only when these negotiations failed in August 1939 did Stalin turn to a deal with Hitler.³ As Stalin told Comintern leader Georgi Dimitrov on 7 September 1939: “We preferred agreements with the so-called democratic countries and therefore conducted negotiations. But the English and the French wanted us for farmhands and at no cost”. It is true that in the same conversation Stalin also spoke of taking advantage of the war between the imperialist states. But in subsequent talks with Dimitrov he was at pains to distance himself from the view that World War II was a rerun of World War I and that communists should copy the same tactics as the Bolsheviks in 1917.⁴

² R.W. Davies, O.V. Khlevniuk et al (eds), *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence, 1931-1936* (Yale University Press, 2003), pp.293-294. Zubok cites the Russian edition of this correspondence, which contains fuller documentation on this particular episode.

³ See G. Roberts, “The Alliance That Failed: Moscow and the Triple Alliance Negotiations, 1939”, *European History Quarterly*, vol.26, no.3, 1996.

⁴ I. Banac (ed), *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933-1939* (Yale University Press, 2003), pp.115-116, 119-121.

I agree with Zubok that Stalin was an ideological actor, albeit a cynical, pragmatic and realistic one. But Stalin's way of thinking about international affairs was far more sophisticated and nuanced than the fundamentalist Bolshevism imputed to him by Zubok.

Another example of Zubok's changed treatment of Stalin's views concerns the Soviet dictator's election speech of February 1946. According to Zubok, Stalin's speech was "infused with ideological language" and "announced an unabashedly unilateralist postwar course. For many observers, it meant a final break with the spirit of the Grand Alliance; there was not a single friendly word in the speech to the Western powers...Shrewd listeners and readers immediately recognized it as a death knell to hopes of a better life, as well as postwar cooperation with western allies". (p.52) It is true that many in the west interpreted Stalin's speech in the same way that Zubok does, but another reading is possible. While Stalin's speech was highly ideological, it was not explicitly hostile to his partners in the Grand Alliance (which was far from over at this point in time); indeed, it contained a very significant gesture of friendship. Stalin began his speech by arguing that both the First and Second World Wars were the result of the contradictions and crises of world capitalism, but, he continued:

"This does not mean that the Second World War was a copy of the First. On the contrary, the character of the Second World War was fundamentally different from that of the First. Bear in mind that before attacking the allied countries the main fascist states – Germany, Japan and Italy –had destroyed the last remnants of democratic freedoms in their own countries, had established a cruel terroristic regime, had trampled on the freedom and sovereignty of small states, had proclaimed a policy of seizing foreign lands and publicly declared they were striving for world domination and the spread of the fascist regime throughout the whole world...In this light the Second World War against the Axis differed from the First World War in having from the beginning an anti-fascist character, a liberating character, with one of its tasks the restoration of democratic freedoms. The entry of the Soviet Union into the war against the Axis states could only strengthen – and did strengthen - the anti-fascist, liberating character of the Second World War. On this basis was formed the anti-fascist coalition of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Great Britain and other freedom-loving countries, which then played the decisive role in the crushing defeat of the armed forces of the Axis states."⁵

Zubok's book is based on a hugely wide and impressive range of published and unpublished sources. I doubt there is another book on the history of the cold war that contains more material and references to Russian-language sources and Zubok's researches will provide a rich vein of information for scholars to mine for years to come. Particularly useful and illuminating are the published and unpublished archival documents cited and the quotations from the contemporaneous diaries of Soviet decisionmakers, which reveal the calculations and motivations of policymakers at the time – as opposed to their retrospective views and embellishments. More problematic is Zubok's extensive use of Soviet and post-Soviet memoirs. Maybe I have read too many of these memoirs but for

⁵ I. Stalin, *Sochineniya*, vol.16, Moscow 1997 p.6.

me the first rule of historical evidence is: don't believe anything you read in a memoir unless there is independent documentary confirmation (and another memoirist saying the same thing doesn't count, especially if s/he has read the other person's memoirs). Zubok is well aware of the problems of memoirs as an historical source. In his chapter on Gorbachev he goes to great lengths to point up the contrasting views and "memories" of Gorbachev's supporters and critics, and does so in such a way as to allow readers to evaluate both the credibility of the conflicting sources and the validity of his own interpretation of them. Elsewhere in the book, however, Zubok is content to interweave citations and references to memoir evidence with those from primary source documents and diaries. Zubok is scrupulous in denoting which of his sources are memoirs but the way he deploys them in the text conveys an impression of reliability and accuracy that in many cases is undeserved. Let me give three examples.

First, there is Zubok's citation of the story told by Soviet diplomat Anatoly Dobrynin that on the train to the Tehran Conference in November 1943 Stalin ordered that he be left undisturbed, alone in his compartment. "He was not shown any documents and he sat there for three days", recalled Dobrynin, "as far as anyone knew just staring out of the window, thinking and concentrating". Bizarrely, this was a story that Dobrynin told Henry Kissinger at a meeting in July 1970. Its punch line was that Stalin emerged from his splendid isolation to perform brilliantly in the negotiations at Tehran.⁶ Zubok cites the story as a scene setter for a discussion of the enigma of Stalin's innermost thoughts (p.16). While Dobrynin's story may have a certain apocryphal value it is not to be taken seriously. Dobrynin did not join the Soviet diplomatic corps until long after Tehran let alone attend the conference itself. To believe that Stalin, the Supreme Commander, would cut himself off from military reports and decision-making for more than a few hours is simply absurd. Indeed, according to General S.M. Shtemenko, the Red Army's Chief of Operations, who accompanied Stalin to Tehran, the train made regular stops so that he could contact the General Staff in Moscow and report to the dictator three times a day.⁷

A second example of dubious use of memoir evidence is Zubok's treatment of Molotov's famously bruising first encounter with Harry Truman in April 1945. According to Zubok Molotov was so disturbed by his row with Truman about the Yalta agreement on Poland that "the shaken and distressed Molotov spent long hours at the Soviet embassy in Washington writing a cable to Stalin with a report of the meeting. Gromyko, who was present at the meeting, believed that Molotov 'feared that Stalin might make him a scapegoat in this business'. In the end, Molotov decided to let the episode pass unnoticed: his record of the conversation with Truman bore no trace of the president's pugnacity and Molotov's ignominious exit." (pp.14-15) Again, it is an implausible story even on the face of it. Would Molotov really risk submitting an inaccurate report to Stalin in front of witnesses (not only Gromyko, but also Pavlov the interpreter at the meeting)? Would the man who had stood up to Hitler's histrionics in November 1940 be unnerved by some tough talking from Harry Truman? Doubts grow when you consider Zubok's source – not even Gromyko's memory but those of another Soviet diplomat Oleg Troyanovskii who in his

⁶ *Sovetsko-Amerikanskie Otnosheniya: Gody Razryadki, 1969-1976*, vol.1, Moscow 2007 doc.71.

⁷ S.M. Shtemenko, *The Soviet General Staff at War, 1941-1945* (Moscow, 1970), pp.189-193.

memoirs, published in 1997, says that this is what Gromyko told him (when it is not clear).⁸ I don't know if Troyanovskii's memory of what Gromyko told him is accurate, but I do know that the contemporary American reports of Molotov's two meetings with Truman in April 1945 correspond with those in the Russian archives. These reports reveal that there was some very tough talking by both sides there was nothing like the bust up depicted by Zubok. The idea that there was such a bust-up was a post-hoc embellishment by Truman in his memoirs.⁹ Like many other historians, Zubok has been seduced by Truman's striving to present himself as an early cold warrior.

Zubok's tendency to succumb to the temptation to cite memoir evidence when it makes for a good story is also evident in our third example. According to Zubok, at the Vienna summit in June 1961 "Soviet diplomat Georgy Kornienko was stunned to learn that Khrushchev had said to Kennedy that it was better to let war start now, before the emergence of new, even more terrible means of warfare. This remark was so provocative that both U.S. and Soviet official transcripts omitted it." (p.140) Zubok's source for this revelation is Kornienko's memoir-history of the cold war. According to Kornienko there exists an unofficial copy of the transcript of the meeting that preserves Khrushchev's statement.¹⁰ Maybe there is such a record and maybe such tampering did take place on the Soviet side, but why on earth would the Americans gloss their record in this way?¹¹

One of the major themes of Zubok's coverage of the first postwar decade is Soviet policy on the German question. These sections of the book do effectively capture the ambivalences, contradictions and crosscurrents of the USSR's German policy. Ideally the Soviets wanted a united Germany under their control or influence. A second-best alternative was a communist-controlled East Germany but the pursuit of socialism in the Soviet zone reinforced the division of the country and contributed to the further integration of West Germany into an anti-Soviet western bloc. While Soviet strategic interests weighed against a divided Germany the political and economic dynamics within the GDR were socialist and separatist. Stalin was desperate for reparations but the economic exploitation of the GDR undermined political support for the German communists.

Stalin's response to these various dilemmas was the campaign for the reunification of Germany as a peaceful and democratic state. This was the public policy of the Soviet state on the German question and all the archival evidence shows that this was the private policy as well.¹² This policy had an ideological dimension in that Stalin hoped a reunited Germany

⁸ O. Troyanovskii, *Cherez Gody i Rasstoyaniya* (Moscow, 1997), pp.128-130.

⁹ See G. Roberts, "Sexing up the Cold War: New Evidence on the Molotov-Truman Talks of April 1945", *Cold War History*, vol.4, no.3, April 2004. Myself and Zubok have clashed over this episode before – in the H-Diplo roundtable on my book *Stalin's Wars*.

¹⁰ G.M. Kornienko, *Kholodnaya Voina* (Moscow, 1994), p.63.

¹¹ The US record of Khrushchev's remarks may be found in the relevant volume of FRUS.

¹² Postwar Soviet policy on the German question is amply documented in J. Laufer & G. Kynin (eds), *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros, 1941-1949*, 3 vols, Moscow 1996, 2000, 2003. Additional material covering the late 1940s and early 1950s may be found in the newly-released foreign policy files of the Molotov fond in RGASPI. The chief revelation of these new documents is the continuing centrality and importance of Molotov's role in foreign policy decision-making even after he was dismissed as Foreign Minister in March 1949 following the

would be some kind of people's democratic state or at least a left-wing regime with a strong communist influence, but the priority was the long-term containment of German aggression and averting the danger of a new war – a goal that became even more urgent with the integration of West Germany into an anti-Soviet western bloc in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In this context Stalin was prepared to contemplate the neutralization of the whole of Germany, including communist-controlled GDR. At the same time, he remained skeptical of the possibility of a deal with the west over Germany and pursued an alternative policy of building up the GDR as a separate communist state.

Zubok has a different view of the Soviets' German policy:

“Evidence shows that Stalin and Soviet elites never entertained the idea of a neutral Germany. At a minimum, the Soviets wanted to neutralize the part of Germany under Western control and build their own socialist Germany in their zone of occupation.”
(p.62)

Zubok's claim notwithstanding, the evidence is that Stalin and the Soviet leadership did indeed entertain the idea of a neutral Germany in the form of a peaceloving and democratic state that would remain disarmed and non-aligned in the cold war. Zubok cites much of this evidence himself, including Stalin's conversations with the communist leaders of the GDR. The consistent theme of these conversations is the struggle for a united Germany. Zubok is content to characterise the campaign for a united peaceloving and democratic Germany as a propaganda exercise designed to impress public opinion in the FRG and disrupt western plans for German remilitarization and the expansion of NATO. But that is not how the GDR leaders understood Soviet strategy; although some of them might have wished otherwise, they understood Moscow's demands for a united Germany under certain conditions as a real set of demands.

Only once in his meetings with the GDR leaders did Stalin display any real ambiguity about the demand for a united Germany and that was at the last meeting he had with them on 7 April 1952. This meeting took place in the immediate aftermath of the western rejection of the so-called 'Stalin note' of March 1952 – Moscow's proposal for the negotiation of a peace treaty for Germany that would lead to the reunification of the country on condition that it remained disarmed and neutral. At this meeting Stalin continued to urge the East German communists to make propaganda in favour of a united Germany but he was pessimistic about the prospects:

“Whatever proposals we make on the German question the western powers won't agree with them and they won't withdraw from West Germany. To think that the Americans will compromise or accept the draft peace treaty would be a mistake. The Americans need an army in West Germany in order to keep control of Western Europe...The Americans are drawing West Germany into the [NATO] pact. They will form

arrest of his wife as a Zionist. This was especially true in relation to Soviet policy on the German question and Molotov can be seen as the main architect of that policy, including the so-called 'Stalin notes' of 1952.

West German forces...In West Germany an independent state is being formed. And you must organise your own state. The demarcation line between West Germany and East Germany should be considered a frontier, and not just any frontier but a dangerous frontier."¹³

Zubok's comment is that from now on "Stalin began to treat the GDR not as a provisional arrangement but as a permanent strategic asset" and points out that in July 1952 the Soviet politburo authorised the accelerated construction of socialism in the GDR. (pp.83-84) But what Zubok does not point out is that the demand for a German peace treaty leading to a united but neutral Germany remained Soviet policy long after April 1952. During the course of a continuing exchange of diplomatic notes the Soviets conceded the main western demand that there should be free all-German elections, but only on condition that a united Germany would be prohibited from joining western alliance structures. The last Soviet note in this sequence was issued on 23 August 1952. That same day Vyshinskii, the then Soviet foreign minister, met Walter Ulbricht, the East German communist leader. According to Vyshinskii's report to Stalin, Ulbricht welcomed the Soviet note as a contribution to the struggle for a united Germany and noted that since the decision to build socialism in the GDR some had said there would be no more talk about a united Germany. But the Soviet note made it clear, said Ulbricht, that the aim was a united democratic Germany.¹⁴

Soviet policy on the German question remained the same after Stalin's death and Zubok deals with the revival of Soviet policy on the reunification of Germany in spring 1953. However, Zubok presents this revival as a new departure rather than the continuation of the previous policy and depicts the idea of a deal with the west over Germany as a short-lived one that did not survive the denunciation of Beria at the CC plenum of July 1953 as an imperialist agent seeking to betray the GDR to the capitalists. Zubok also distances Molotov and the foreign ministry from the new initiative, saying that "by all indications Molotov never wavered from his view that German peace talks were a zero-sum game between East and West" (p.87) and claims that the Soviet foreign ministry's documentation on the German question differed from proposals pushing the case for a united Germany produced by Beria and others at the Presidium level (p.89).¹⁵

These are common themes and claims in the literature on post-Stalin Soviet foreign policy, but they do not survive serious scrutiny. The Soviet campaign for a united Germany continued for two more years after the fall of Beria and there is a wealth of material available in the Russian archives that demonstrate the initiative on policy on the German

¹³ *Istochnik*, no.3, 2003 pp.122, 125. A translation of this document may be found on the Cold War International History Project website.

¹⁴ RGASP F.82, Op.2, D.1171, Ll.104-106.

¹⁵ Zubok refers specifically (p.89) to the contrast between foreign ministry drafts on the German question and Presidium resolution of 2 June 1953 "On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR". This resolution, together with a number of the foreign ministry documents are reproduced in C.F. Ostermann (ed), *Uprising in East Germany 1953*, Central European University Press 2001.

question rested with Molotov and his foreign ministry.¹⁶ Molotov was far from being the conservative hardliner depicted by Zubok. On the contrary, he was the architect of a new foreign policy strategy that attempted to trade a deal with the west on Germany in exchange for the creation of pan-European collective security structures that would lead to the dissolution of the cold war blocs. The main opponent of this radical policy was Khrushchev, who was certainly not the great advocate of détente depicted in some accounts. The rivalry between Molotov and Khrushchev came to a head at the time of the Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference in November 1955. At stake was an offer from the western powers for an agreement on European collective security in exchange for a deal on all-German elections. Molotov, who had been pursuing such a deal since the previous Foreign Ministers Conference in January 1954, wanted to negotiate the terms of such a bargain with the west but when the Presidium met to discuss his proposal he was blocked by Khrushchev, whose priority was holding on to the GDR.

In his treatment of this episode Zubok says that Molotov made his proposal knowing that the west would not accept Soviet demands for the neutralization of Germany. (p.108) Certainly, Molotov argued at the Presidium that his position represented good tactics and propaganda but the content of the foreign ministry resolution submitted to the Soviet leadership makes it clear that he and his diplomats expected substantive negotiations with the west not simply political games.¹⁷ It is evident, too, that Khrushchev saw through Molotov's presentation that the issue was a matter of tactics:

“A year ago we raised the question of elections. Then they did not accept. Now the position has changed. Now from a position of power they want to talk about elections. It is necessary to confront them with our arguments. You [Molotov] say ‘if the FRG leaves NATO’; don’t get involved in this discussion. Better to pass this question to the Germans. The question of European security is a general question and it can be resolved with two Germanies. We want to preserve the system formed in the GDR – this should be said”.¹⁸

Khrushchev's intervention at the Presidium meeting signaled that the Soviets were irrevocably committed to communist control of East Germany, even if that meant a continuation of the cold war.

I have no doubt that *A Failed Empire* will be one of the key texts shaping future debate about the history of the cold war – and deservedly so. But while the book is a major

¹⁶ I have written a detailed paper utilizing this material: “A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955” (forthcoming from the Cold War International History Project).

¹⁷ A.A. Fursenko (ed), *Prezidium TsK KPSS, 1954-1964: Postanovleniya, 1954-1958* (Rosspen: Moscow, 2006), pp.104-107.

¹⁸ A.A. Fursenko (ed), *Prezidium TsK KPSS, 1954-1964: Chernovye Protokol'nye Zapisi Zasedanii Stenogrammy*, Rosspen: Moscow 2004 pp.58-60. Troyanovskii's recollection of this episode (op.cit p.190) is as follows: “Molotov and Gromyko went to Khrushchev, who was on holiday in the Crimea. They took me with them, I don't know why. On the journey and from their conversations I found out that they had the text of an important proposal which could lead to the success of the conference. However, after talking to Khrushchev they came back depressed and angry. The [Foreign] Ministers Conference turned out to be fruitless.”

contribution to our understanding of the Soviet side of the cold war – particularly its coverage of Moscow’s policy from the 1960s onwards – I fear that Zubok’s treatment of the origins and early years of the conflict will fuel the prejudices of western cold warriors wanting to re-fight the old ideological battles.

Response by Vladislav Zubok, Temple University

I should begin by expressing my thanks to all the reviewers for the effort they took to evaluate my book, for high professional marks they gave me, and, of course, for thought-provoking and enlightening criticism. After Constantin Pleshakov and I had published *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* in 1996, I could immediately see that the opinions about that book tended to split along the old "orthodox vs revisionist" divide. I recalled about it when I read Geoffrey Roberts' remarks that, in contrast to *Inside the Kremlin* where the tone was "measured," in my new book the tone became "highly critical - and sometimes censorious." Also, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa mentioned that my "interpretation will please neo-Orthodox historians like Gaddis and most recently Wilson Miscamble." Frankly, I do not see myself evolving in this one-dimensional space between one position/camp and another. In my opinion, this division, caused by the past political and ideological disagreements, should be buried in the past. Of all the factors that affected my judgments on the Soviet Union and the cold war the most important one was much fuller, diverse, and transnational evidence that became available since 1996. I could not possibly procure all this evidence by myself, and I am in debt to all those who published and shared numerous valuable documents with the international community. I also tend to believe that the greater historical distance (including the evolving international affairs, with its problems and tragedies) from the drama of Soviet collapse enabled me to look at this evidence in calmer and more dispassionate fashion than ten years ago. Yet, as I stressed in the preface of the book, my conceptual framework for explaining Soviet motives and behavior remains the same, as well as my basic judgments, and my tone.

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The devil is always in details and their interpretation, especially in history. This is why in this book I went beyond my initial focus on Soviet leaders, their ideological and security motives, and sought to reconstruct and analyze domestic, social, and (to a limited extent) the economic and cultural environment in which Soviet leaders and elites waged their cold war. Without this broader milieu, I believe, it would have been impossible to understand and explain to the reader why the "socialist empire" managed to last for so long, and finally collapsed so quickly and peacefully. At the same time the same old questions and, above all, Soviet motives and decisions merit continuous attention. Above all the elusive subject of ideology. Hasegawa is right in pointing out to the need to be more specific in what way exactly and by what tenets Marxist-Leninist ideology affected Soviet international behavior. I quite agree with him that "throughout the Cold War, there is little evidence to show that

the Marxist-Leninist ideology served as the springboard” for Soviet actions. In *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, Pleshakov and I concluded that since the discussion on the treaty of Brest-Litovsk (and one should add, after Zinoviev and the Comintern “internationalist” cadres ceased to play a prominent role in Soviet decision-making), there was no intention of promoting a world revolution at the risk of jeopardizing Soviet security interests. For Stalin and his successors Marxist-Leninism remained a means of justification and a framework for his actions. In fact, I do indicate in the book the transformation of the ideological factor from belief (or “springboard” if you like) into the ritualized ideological language and framework for actions. Yet, there were more aspects to Soviet ideology than Hasegawa suggests. Without going into semiotics and post-modernist theories of “discourse,” one can say that it was a bubble from which the Soviet leaders could not fully escape almost until the end of the USSR. Indeed, state elites and society became for decades permeated by the “scientific teaching” of Marx and Lenin, and even cynics or would-be realists among them remained prisoners of the ideological bubble. Even Stalin who studied and practiced *Realpolitik* in the most cynical and ruthless forms and ways, also continued to understand the world through the prism of Marxist-Leninist “scientific theory” and acted as a “revolutionary practitioner.” The transformation of Marxist-Leninist ideology within the Soviet Union from the internationalist and revolutionary to Russo-centric and imperialist should not be taken as a proof (as many observers mistakenly concluded) that Marxism-Leninism became just a fig leaf for the traditional Russian great power chauvinism. Soviet leaders and elites, from Stalin until Brezhnev, did not see any contradiction between the elements of traditional Russian great power chauvinism and the Marxist-Leninist framework. Ideologies, such as communism or liberalism can hardly exist in “pure” form. They mix with nationalism and mutate, and remain a potent factor affecting state international behavior.

Also, in real history all facets of ideology, as Hasegawa mentions, mix. They also tend to resurface even after the post-mortem seems to be pronounced on them. In chapter 6 I wrote that Khrushchev’s years “produced a new cohort of social, cultural, and political leaders,” the “men, and women of the sixties,” who aspired to lead the Soviet Union down the path toward “socialism with a human face.” Their patriotic energy and identity were based on Communist ideology and the selective idealized perceptions of the revolution and the leftist culture of the 1920s.” While this energy was ignored and wasted by Brezhnev and his cohort of Stalin-trained careerists, the revived Marxist-Leninist beliefs continued to live on in some of Gorbachev’s speechwriters and advisers, and, as it turned out, in Gorbachev himself.

On specifics, I agree with Hasegawa that the International Department (there were two since 1957) in the Central Committee viewed the world in more ideological terms, and the Foreign Ministry – in realist terms. It was related to their traditional “functional” differences since the 1920s and the struggle between Chicherin and Zinoviev. The leaders of both Departments, Boris Ponomarev and Yuri Andropov, were products of the Comintern milieu of politicians and “theoreticians,” while Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko was Stalin’s and Molotov’s disciple. Yet, this distinction between “realism and ideology” fails, in my view, when one applies it to the KGB, a giant and multi-faceted organization with many functions. And we simply cannot apply mechanistic “either-or” or

“one plus another” approach when we deal with the minds and specific actions of human actors, such as Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov and others.

Another big question is the origins of the Cold War. Here both Hasegawa and Roberts imply that I become too much of a determinist, and do not see contingency, mutual misperceptions, multiplicity of actors, and perhaps even missed opportunities. Hasegawa asks: What about Czechoslovakia until 1948? And what about Finland? Could there have been the mutual acceptance of “spheres of influence,” advocated by James Byrnes? Let me state that I never implied that the outbreak of the cold war could be blamed on Stalin and on the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm” **only**. As I write, “since the fall of 1945, the United States, not the Soviet Union, had acted as the defining factor in global international relations. And by 1946 the Truman administration decided to contain the Soviet Union, dramatically changing the outlines of international relations. The Americans were already moving toward confrontation, not cooperation, with the Soviet Union.” I also write about “American global expansionism” that Stalin misunderstood. In my opinion, the weight of evidence, not only on the nature of Stalin and his policy-making, but also on the American politics and policy-making (which was not the subject of my book, but was explored by numerous excellent studies) in the Truman Administration made a long-term East-West partnership an unlikely contingency, to the point of implausibility.

My book’s focus is on Stalin and the USSR, not on Truman and the U.S.A. I understand that Stalin was not Hitler who did not give much of a choice to his partners in the West or in the East to establish mutually accepted spheres of influence with the Nazi regime in Germany. Stalin did want to talk about division of spheres of influence. Yet on whose terms? There was, as many theorists beginning with Robert Jervis would say, complete incompatibility of Soviet and American identities and expectations. For Stalin and the Soviet elites with their “zero-sum” mentality, any division was a temporary historic contingency, related to the shifting correlation of forces. Had the Soviet Union been much stronger in 1945, had not lost twenty seven million people, and had nuclear weapons, - how would then Stalin have acted? Some would say: in the way Brezhnev acted during the 1970s. But perhaps he would have been even more aggressive. We will never know. Yet, we do know that the United States had a huge preponderance (see Melvyn Leffler’s *Predominance of Power* and his more recent *For the Soul of Mankind*) and the Soviet Union was terribly weakened. In this situation Stalin preferred the construction of his empire to an inherently unequal partnership with the West. Stalin and his elites were prepared to deal with the US only on their own terms; they believed any other option would be unacceptable. And, looking at the world through Marxist-Leninist lenses, they could reasonably expect the inter-imperialist contradictions and American egotistic isolationism would give them more chances to scrape through. The Marshall Plan disabused Stalin of the expectations of the latter notions, and he began to act in the only way he believed he could. It was the Marshall Plan – that triggered the open declaration of the cold war by both sides, Stalin and Washington. I am prepared to contemplate any contingency and missed opportunities after Stalin, but at the same time stick to my conclusions that the origins of the cold war cannot be explained without Stalin’s miscalculations and without Soviet “socialist imperialism” (even though the USSR had acted from the position of weakness, not superior strength!).

As for Finland, Molotov put it best: “It escaped by pure chance.” A communist coup in Finland could not possibly succeed without Soviet military help, and Stalin (remembering the Soviet-Finnish wars) opted for the second best option – “Finlandization.” I believe if the Czechs had the same record of fighting for their independence as the Finns and had not voted freely in such great numbers for communists earlier, the non-communist government in Prague would have survived longer. But none of these preconditions existed.

Roberts advances the familiar thesis that Stalin was prepared to contemplate the neutralization of the whole of Germany, including communist controlled GDR. I would argue back with a well-known counterargument. The Soviet leadership was only ready to tolerate a neutral Germany if it were “democratic” in the way the Soviets, not the West understood it, i.e. only on Soviet terms and with Soviet troops present in the zone of occupation, and then in the GDR. The fact that the GDR leaders understood Soviet strategy only speaks about Stalin’s success in pulling the wool over the ears of all Germans, communists and anti-communists alike. Roberts cites a really interesting case: Molotov’s proposal in November 1955 to offer another version of a peace treaty on Germany that would include the withdrawal of troops by the occupying powers. When one reads the Kremlin discussion carefully, the main issue there is NOT how to reunify Germany (both Khrushchev and Molotov blamed Beria and Malenkov back in 1953-54 for trying to bargain out the GDR), but rather how to complicate NATO’s plans of West German integration, while avoiding the risk of being called by the Western powers on their bluff about holding general elections *after* the withdrawal of all foreign troops. Back in 1951 (before the March 1952 notes), Molotov assured Stalin that there would be no risk that the West would call a Soviet bluff. In 1955 Molotov failed to make the same assurances to Khrushchev. I am in agreement with Roberts on the role that Khrushchev-Molotov rivalry played in that episode. I just see their disagreements as tactical, not as the one having strategic implications for Germany’s division as Roberts believes. Molotov might have been more flexible than my book suggests (and this may be proven in the future by “Molotov revisionists”). But he was not prepared to risk losing the GDR for the sake of a nebulous “European collective security.”

On the evaluation of Brezhnev, my main point that seems to be overlooked by Hasegawa is that Brezhnev made *détente* his pet project *despite, not because* of his ideological orthodoxy. That is, he tried to make pragmatic policies without rejecting the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm.” Hasegawa’s alternative interpretation is that Brezhnev and his conservatives believed that the correlation of forces was inexorably moving in favor of the socialist camp because of the huge Soviet military buildup. The evidence that I collected and presented, however, suggests that Brezhnev was acutely aware (more than anybody else in the Kremlin leadership) of the cost and limitations of this buildup. So, despite the ideological clichés, he believed that the USSR would be better off reaching an agreement with the USA. His clashes with the military before the summit in 1972 and during the Vladivostok summit in 1974; his conversation with Gerald Ford on a train, etc., testify to his fears that, if US-Soviet arms race continues, the Soviet Union would suffer more and more from it. This is not to say, that Brezhnev acted only because of these fears

and material calculations. Why then did other Soviet leaders take a much harsher stand on the summit with Nixon in the spring of 1972? Did considerations of “balance of power” affect only Brezhnev and somehow failed to affect his comrades? The overwhelming evidence says that Brezhnev by his experience and character “loathed brinkmanship and the crisis-mongering that characterized Khrushchev’s foreign policy.” He preferred peace, compromise, and negotiations to war, confrontation, and violence. Even Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan took place after months of agonizing indecision and weighing all options. Even the treatment of dissidents, ruthless as it were, could have been harsher if Brezhnev had not restrained the KGB from time to time. Of course, everybody is welcome to test my thesis in the future, when archival evidence becomes more available. After all, it is the fate of all “revisionist” statements.

Both Hasegawa and Roberts takes me to task for trusting Soviet memoirists too much. I would very much prefer working with documents from the Presidential Archive (unfortunately, the published selections on Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev in *Istochnik* are more intriguing than revelatory). On the Molotov-Truman episode of April 1945 I find my version at least as plausible as Roberts’ version, and I stand by it. As far as Brezhnev’s role in détente is concerned, I could have just ignored the memoir evidence until the corroborating evidence comes out. I do admit that most of memoirists had a personal stake in presenting détente, and Brezhnev’s (and by extension their own) role in an excessively positive light. Yet, what convinced me more than the memoirs was the study of the “backchannel” volume (negotiations between Nixon and Kissinger, on one hand, and Dobrynin and Brezhnev on the other). In these documents Brezhnev looks like a capable, quick-reacting negotiator, a highly motivated statesman. In my numerous conversations with G.M.Kornienko, A.F.Dobrynin, A.F.Chernyaev, G.Kh.Shakhnazarov and also from oral statements of Sukhodrev I could see that they did not try (at least consciously) to varnish Brezhnev’s record, but all stressed how important his personal commitment to détente was, while he was still in good health.

In response to Kevin O’Connor I admit that I could have done more to deal with the “tail wagging the dog” thesis. It has been wonderfully explored by other historians, especially by Hope Harrison with regard to the Berlin Wall. At the same time I do bring the role of Eastern European allies (and also the Chinese and Vietnamese allies) in several episodes in the book. For instance, I cite the evidence that the North Vietnamese had often more leverage on the Kremlin than the other way round, because the Politburo felt emotional (and ideological) solidarity with the junior Vietnamese “brothers” – something not reciprocated on the other side. In 1972, the North Vietnamese offensive almost botched the US-Soviet summit. Also, I discuss that in 1980, during the Polish crisis, the Soviet allies in Eastern Europe played “tyranny of the weak” barring Moscow’s attempt to reduce the cheap oil supplies to them. At the same time, I do not believe one should search and exaggerate the role of the “tail” in every instance. The decision to built Berlin Wall (as new materials obtained by Alexander Fursenko demonstrate) was as much Khrushchev’s decision as it was Ulbricht. At critical moments, when Soviet interests were badly at stake, the Kremlin leadership unceremoniously dismissed the allies’ objections. This was the case with Cuba’s Castro at the peak of the Cuban missile crisis, and with General Jaruzelski in December 1981, when the Polish leader demanded Soviet military-back up for his coup.

On the collapse of the Soviet Union, I did not deal much with the overanalyzed (and sometimes exaggerated) role of the nationalities problem on the Soviet periphery and focused on the reasons why the “center could not hold,” especially on the poorly understood role of Gorbachev’s reforms and his personal impact. I have to disagree with Hasegawa’s (flattering, I admit) assessment of “semidesyatniki” like myself. We were too young to have any serious influence on the tumultuous events that unfolded during Gorbachev’s perestroika. The lion share of advice, professional opinion, and actual support of the reforms came from the ranks of the previous generation of “men and women of the Sixties” to whom I devoted one chapter in the book. In fact, my major thesis is that it was not growing cynicism (implying complete disillusionment in the ideology and the system), but the residual idealism of the people like Gorbachev, Chernyaev, and others from that generation that ensured the quick, if unwitting collapse of the Soviet empire. For all the importance of professionalization of Soviet elites (which began before the 1970s), I would ascribe a greater role to the illusions and misperceptions of the Gorbachev’s entourage: their inability to come up with any realistic economic and political outlook on reforms, their misunderstanding of the anti-communist and separatist movements in Eastern-Central Europe, the Baltics, and South Caucasus, and fatal underestimation of the role of “Russian nationalism” harnessed by Boris Yeltsin. My point is that Gorbachev did not dismantle the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm” for the sake of cautious, consistent, inward-oriented policy. He dismantled it in favor of another messianic, ideological, and ultimately illusory vision (i.e. as “Common European Home” and “perestroika for the whole world”). While the origins of this vision are historically understandable (fears of nuclear annihilation, residual beliefs in a socialism with a human face, etc.), its practical implementations ended in a complete chaos and ruin for the existing Soviet state.

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