

## Introduction

### The Limits of Vindicationist Scholarship

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The end of the Cold War should have been the occasion for sustained critical inquiry into its significance. For nearly half a century the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated world politics and gave a geopolitical focus to the broader conflict between capitalism and communism. It absorbed major portions of the budgets of both superpowers. It set priorities in science and technology. And, especially because of the threat of nuclear annihilation, it cast a shadow across politics and everyday life. The bipolar conflict so thoroughly shaped U.S. political culture and scholarship that there was little critical thought about its scope, origins, and consequences. The end of the Cold War, a historic moment itself resonant with multiple meanings, thus invited imaginative and open-ended historical and political analysis and numerous major questions: Who won? Who lost? What was won? At what cost for whom was victory attained? Could the Cold War have ended sooner? How? Under what circumstances and whose auspices? Could the United States have pursued a less costly arms race? How was the Cold War influenced by, and how in turn did it contribute to, the transformations of the global economy under way since the early 1970s? What are the lasting influences

of the Cold War? The questions could be extended to include many domestic features of the United States and other countries.

Unfortunately, narrow intellectual horizons formed during the Cold War have constrained analyses since its end, and too little intellectual inquiry has taken place. The dominant response assumes that since the United States won, critical research and reflection are unnecessary. It is understandable, if regrettable, that in the midst of the Cold War it was difficult to secure standpoints outside its paradigm of neatly aligned binary oppositions: United States/Soviet Union, West/East, capitalism/communism, freedom/tyranny, good/evil. Important features of domestic and international politics since World War II were thereby understood within a framework in which the East-West confrontation was not only all-encompassing but also heavily laden with a moralistic politics. To understand why we have not moved further away from those confining assumptions, it is useful to consider how the Cold War has been approached in the mainstream political culture.

### Vindicationism

In the fall of 1989, particularly once the Berlin Wall had been joyously smashed apart, many U.S. scholars, journalists, and politicians began to articulate an interpretation of the Cold War which portrayed the U.S. victory as vindicating earlier U.S. foreign policy. It is incontrovertible that the United States emerged the victor, but viewing victory as vindication claims more than mere triumph. Out of a narrative framed by an "us" versus "them" dichotomy, the "vindicationist" frame, as I call it, shapes an integrated reading of the entire Cold War era, not just its denouement.<sup>1</sup> Briefly: The United States prevailed because it was right; the Soviet Union lost because it was wrong and inefficient. As aggressor, the Soviet Union bears responsibility for initiating and perpetuating the Cold War, a war that could have been avoided only if the United States had evaded its moral obligation to defend freedom. The United States, however, did accept that obligation, responded appropriately to the Soviet threat, maintained vigilance against that hostile and dangerous enemy, and ultimately prevailed. The United States bears responsibility neither for initiating the Cold War nor for perpetuating the Cold War system. It had no reasonable alternative to participation in the struggle. Moreover, in the vindicationist interpretation the end of the Cold War demonstrates the superiority of the American political and economic system, not only because we won but because our former enemies now embrace our economic and political values. The world is better off because the United States met the challenge.

This vindicationist interpretation of Cold War history is the official national history. As President George Bush put it in his January 1990 State of the Union address, "For more than 40 years, America and its allies held communism in check and ensured that democracy would continue to exist."<sup>2</sup> In December 1992 Bush even more expansively proclaimed, "The Soviet Union did not simply lose the Cold War. The Western democracies won it. I say this not to gloat but to make a key point. The qualities that enabled us to triumph in that struggle—faith, strength, unity, and above all, American leadership are those we must call upon now to win the peace."<sup>3</sup>

I use the term "vindicationism" to denote this narrative of political, economic, moral, military, and foreign policy victory. It is the continuation of what diplomatic historians during the Cold War considered the orthodox or traditional account, which it develops and encompasses. The orthodox position held that U.S. foreign policy after World War II was a defensive response to the Soviet threat. Critics of orthodoxy, known as revisionists because they sought to revise that account, focused on the domestic sources of U.S. involvement.<sup>4</sup> The orthodox account of the origins of the Cold War was defined soon after it began, by diplomats and elite foreign policymakers turned authors such as Herbert Feis and Louis J. Halle, who, of course, supported U.S. foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> In historian Richard Melanson's succinct summary: "The orthodox account of the origins of the Cold War rested on three chief contentions: (1) that Soviet ambition and intransigence had by 1945 triggered the Cold War; (2) that the American reaction, though perhaps belated, was 'the essential response of free men to communist aggression'; and (3) that the United States committed no major avoidable foreign policy mistakes in meeting the Soviet challenge."<sup>6</sup>

Vindicationism presents itself both as a reprise of and a final conclusion to the debate about who was responsible for the Cold War, both a perspective on history and a commentary on historiography. It holds, first, that victory vindicates the U.S. role in the Cold War and, second, that scholars and politicians whose writings and actions supported the United States in the Cold War were right and the revisionists wrong. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., one of the original orthodox scholars, has been a leading critic of revisionism both during and after the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> Vindicationist authors—including William Hyländ, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, John Lewis Gaddis, and R. C. Raack—may seem a diverse lot, but they share a basic view about responsibility for the Cold War, even if they differ over particular interpretations and policies.<sup>8</sup>

The vindicationist narrative is, of course, not entirely homogeneous. Its several versions involve slightly different players and different arguments for why "we"

won, what the Cold War was, and what it was about. "We" refers, alternatively, to Republicans, conservatives, the United States, the West, defenders of freedom and democracy, proponents of capitalism; "they," variously, to Stalin, the USSR, the Eastern bloc, purveyors of totalitarianism, communists. Different sets of players created different (if obviously related) versions of the Cold War with different issues at the center, different chronologies, and different sources of "our" victory. Commentators credited different individuals, groups, or forces with the victory. Some credited Republicans, conservatives, or Reagan in particular;<sup>9</sup> others pointed to a bipartisan commitment to containment or to NATO.<sup>10</sup> Still others cited broader political and economic forces. For conservative political scientist and activist Jeane Kirkpatrick it was democratic capitalism. For *New York Times* writer Thomas Friedman the end of the Cold War "derived from a single fact: the triumph of capitalism over Communism."<sup>11</sup> For *New York Times* columnist A. M. Rosenthal the Cold War was a conflict not between "armed camps or even economic systems but between slavery and freedom."<sup>12</sup>

A number of vindicationism's claims appear obvious, commonsensical, or compelling, at least at first glance. Given that the end of the Cold War followed the tremendous 1980s arms buildup in the United States, it seems reasonable to conclude that the nuclear arms race spent the Soviets into the ground. The nuclear arms race (as the crucial element of the geostrategic conflict at the core of the Cold War) kept the peace by making hot war too horrific and thus creating the time and space necessary for other forces to erode Soviet aggressive intentions and capacities. Moreover, since the Cold War ended when Soviet policy decisively changed while U.S. policy remained broadly consistent, it is intuitively reasonable to assume that the Soviet Union's foreign policy had sustained the Cold War. Indeed, containment theory—first articulated in 1947 by George Kennan—appears to have been proved right: if the United States sustained a foreign policy that could stop or contain Soviet aggression long enough, then the expansionary tendencies fed by communist ideology would wane, and the Cold War could subside. And the Cold War did end when Mikhail Gorbachev instituted changes in those aspects of the Soviet regime which were viewed as most threatening to the United States. Internationally, he retreated from maintaining an empire and politico-military control over Eastern Europe: he withdrew troops from Afghanistan, and he made it clear that the Soviet Union would not use force to maintain friendly regimes in Eastern Europe. Domestically, he turned away from rigid authoritarianism and a command economy: he instituted *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which signaled the liberalization of Soviet economic and political systems. Today the Soviet Union no longer exists, and the new sovereignties formally embrace electoral democracy and

capitalism. Thus U.S. political and military strategy enabled not only a political and economic victory but a moral one as well.

Not all U.S. political commentary or scholarship about the Cold War fits within this vindicationist frame, but it has been the dominant American interpretation since 1989, even influencing critical interpretations by sustaining the position critics argue against.<sup>13</sup> Its influence reflects the fact that it was constructed not primarily in the academy but through networks linking some academics, policymakers and analysts, political commentators, and members of elite economic and political circles. Scholars who became part of these elite networks generally have come to view their own research and writing as valuable to existing policymakers, and this view in turn has encouraged them—at times perhaps unconsciously—to conform their work to specific and narrow policy questions. This approach has been reinforced through formal and informal networks that provide them with access to policy circles and thus an opportunity to become part of the conventional wisdom. As a result, the vindicationist scholars have been disproportionately likely to experience the rewards of foundation grants, publication or republication of their articles in policy journals, and access to the media. Those scholars who move between the worlds of scholarship, policymaking and analysis, and political commentary become the main bearers of scholarship into the public domain. Participation in these networks becomes intellectually formative, a consequence being that its members tend to ask questions useful to those in power.<sup>14</sup>

Although critics of U.S. foreign policy have had a considerable impact in the historical profession, and some of their particular findings have become the focus of public debate, they have not contributed much to debates in elite circles over fundamental interpretations of U.S. foreign policy. It is largely those authors with conventional views, such as John Lewis Gaddis and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., rather than critics such as Walter LaFeber or Richard J. Barnet, whose articles will appear in *Foreign Affairs*, who are called upon to contribute to elite policy discussions, and who are considered to produce opinions and knowledge relevant to pundits, even though many foreign policy critics are themselves articulate as well as prolific authors.<sup>15</sup> Critics have been less often silenced than marginalized and labeled as irrelevant to pressing policy questions. Consequently, their views are seldom the basis for far-reaching debates about future policy choices; they receive less foundation support, and their views are rarely elicited by the media. Uncomfortable facts about U.S. policies or U.S.-supported regimes are occasionally reported in the mainstream press and acknowledged in vindicationist discourse, but such facts are generally treated as exceptional, not characteristic of U.S. foreign policy. A mid-1980s review in the *New York Times Book Review* is paradigmatic of the

ideological assumptions that marginalize dissident voices. Alan Tonelson (at the time an associate editor of the liberal journal *Foreign Policy*) criticized Noam Chomsky's *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace*, for "debating points that are factually valid, but useless as guides to American policy."<sup>16</sup> His assumption—that criticism of U.S. policy is relevant only to the extent that it helps politicians decide how they should pursue the national interest—narrows the political or intellectual space available for approaches that do not assume the perspective of existing American interests. As a result those discussions of the Cold War which are most integrative and broad are marginal, whereas those which are more narrow and tightly focused on issues relevant to immediate policy questions are consolidated via repetition and resonance with the immediate concerns of politicians and pundits.<sup>17</sup>

Reasonable as the vindicationist account seems in some respects, there are both methodological and substantive problems with its arguments. Methodologically, it characteristically offers findings as conclusions that ought to be stated as hypotheses or, at best, interpretations. Such claims include the stabilizing role of nuclear weapons—a claim that Charles Kegley and Shannon Blanton critically dissect in their essay in this book—and the centrality of Stalin's commitment to expansion as the essential cause of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, a major problem with vindicationism is its readiness to take as conclusive those views that fit its presuppositions, and its manifest lack of interest in questions that challenge its narrow framework.

The substantive errors that result from these limited assumptions and biases remain largely unanswered in popular discourse, even though the collapse of the Soviet Union means there is less need on the part of political elites to maintain ideological unity on Cold War issues. First among these substantive errors is the notion that the USSR was always primarily responsible for initiating and perpetuating the Cold War, and the U.S. always reacting to manifest threats.<sup>19</sup> It is as if narratives and causal questions about who did what first could not be separated from moral and ideological questions, making any suggestion of U.S. initiative or Soviet nonaggression a sign of disloyalty.<sup>20</sup>

Another widespread vindicationist approach, fitting all U.S. foreign policy and the actions of smaller states and national liberation movements aspiring to statehood into the bipolar Cold War frame, originally grew out of anticommunism. Anticommunism routinely condensed all forms of dissent from "our way of life" into a powerfully unified "other." The belief that bipolarity defined the Cold War still contributes to blurring important distinctions between the nuclear arms race, the larger East-West politico-military conflict, and political economic dimensions

of that conflict. Foregrounding the nuclear arms race suggests a much greater degree of equivalence between the two superpowers than does consideration of military forces and political economic power overall; it obscures the larger imbalance in strength and capacity of the Soviet Union and the United States.<sup>21</sup> Autonomous United States interests or nationalist interests in other parts of the world fade from view, and the behavior of all states and of dissenters within states is constructed as either pro- or anti-American, pro- or anti-Soviet. Nor does vindicationism invite questions about social and political forces that escaped containment or definition within this bipolar frame. As Cary Fraser argues in this volume, the lack of attention to these other dynamics means that crucial post-World War II developments such as decolonization (as in South Asia and much of Africa), revolution (as in China and Cuba), nationalism (as in Vietnam) were accorded less historical autonomy than some analysts feel they deserve.<sup>22</sup> Thus, for example, nationalist anticolonial revolutionary movements, as in Vietnam or Angola, were viewed as part of the East-West, communism-capitalism struggle; viewing them in that manner helped legitimate policies which, in turn, generally forced proponents of such movements to choose between those two sides. Belief in bipolarity also meant that forces such as nationalism, which came to the fore in the process of, and contributed to, the dissolution of the Soviet empire, received inadequate scholarly or policy attention.

By exaggerating the extent to which the superpower geopolitical conflict defined the Cold War and the Cold War constituted the whole post-World War II international order, the vindicationist frame cuts the Cold War off from history and marginalizes attention to continuities in U.S. foreign policy not part of a narrowly defined Cold War. Failure to attend to long-term trends in the U.S. pursuit of political and economic objectives, in turn, sustains the image of the Cold War as a fixed bipolar system. This imagery encourages overlooking those ways in which the end of the Cold War was not a decisive watershed for all global developments, a point made by Ronen Palan's essay in this volume.<sup>23</sup>

Vindicationism assumes that the USSR, not the United States, was responsible for driving the arms race; that options for lessening the danger of war always lay with the Soviet Union; that its systematic intransigence, not similar patterns on the part of the United States, prolonged the Cold War.<sup>24</sup> Presenting the arms race in this way contributes to the view that deterrence worked, that nuclear weapons were crucial in keeping the peace, and that nothing the United States could have done would have ended the Cold War earlier—or at least that the dangers of appeasement far outweighed any potential benefits. Placing responsibility for perpetuating the arms race on the other side, of course, helped legitimate military spending.

It also enables politicians and political commentators to apply lessons from the Cold War through the use of historical analogies. In the vindicationist view Munich is the appropriate analogy, with its lesson that the U.S. should never be militarily unprepared or psychologically or politically unwilling to meet force with force (the arms buildup before World War I is not invoked as a counter-example).<sup>25</sup> Vindicationists ignore evidence that the arms race did little to preserve the peace between the superpowers but, rather, led to continued nuclear proliferation, increased the potential for terrorists to gain access to weapons-grade nuclear materials, and created vast amounts of nuclear waste that remains difficult to dispose of.

Above all, vindicationism has failed to explore variations in political systems within the Eastern and Western blocs and has rejected without examination alternatives to those blocs. The vindicationist frame downplays the extent to which both superpowers suppressed such alternatives domestically, within their spheres of interest, and globally.<sup>26</sup> Vindicationists have been less likely than others to entertain the hypothesis that Soviet and Eastern European dissidents were attracted not just to the United States but to European social democratic welfare states.<sup>27</sup> And, being inattentive to various possible alternatives to communism, they assume that the best and only alternative for the former Soviet Union and the rest of the world is to adopt American models of free market capitalism and a two-party electoral system as rapidly as possible; there is no third way.<sup>28</sup>

## Revisionism

In the 1960s a body of revisionist scholarship sharply criticized the orthodox position, stressing that dynamics within the United States—not just or primarily an external military threat—set the terms of U.S. foreign policy both before and during the Cold War. Although some of this work presented a mirror image of orthodoxy by portraying the Soviet Union as the innocent party, merely responding to threats from the United States and its allies, that was not a main feature of revisionism. In fact, one of the best and most widely read revisionist texts, Walter LaFeber's *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, argues that there were domestic roots to the foreign policies of both countries.<sup>29</sup> Revisionism is more open to the criticism of having been inattentive to the realist view that the nature of the interstate system, more than domestic imperatives, determines foreign policies of nation-states.<sup>30</sup> But the vindicationist frame makes it difficult to understand Cold War revisionist scholarship correctly. Three problems with vindicationist dismissals of revisionism



stand out: (a) assuming that revisionism is only about blaming the United States and defending the Soviet Union (b) missing revisionism's call for critical, independent inquiry; and (c) failing to acknowledge the revisionist identification of continuities in U.S. foreign policy.

Vindicationists argue as though anything that damns the USSR refutes revisionism. But in fact the revisionist critique of orthodoxy grew not out of a defense of the Soviet Union but out of analyses of the domestic sources of a U.S. foreign policy that had promoted the open-door policy and expansion since the late nineteenth century. For instance, new evidence confirming yet again the horrors of Stalin and Stalinism—based on autobiographies and memoirs of former Soviet officials as well as new archival findings—is presented (prematurely at best) as incontestable evidence against revisionist claims that Stalin was responding to projections of U.S. economic and political power.<sup>31</sup> The vindicationist perspective consistently downplays the greater structural power of the United States in the world in order to present the Soviet Union as the Cold War's prime mover. By focusing only on specific political actions rather than larger strategic anxieties, and by suggesting that the U.S. vision of world order was not only self-interested but broadly beneficial, vindicationists can acknowledge that the United States pursued a global open-door policy after World War II without reckoning with the significance of that policy for the origins of the Cold War.<sup>32</sup> The vindicationist focus on Soviet actions advances the attitude that to investigate U.S. actions other than as responses to the USSR is to minimize the Soviet threat. The United States, seeking open doors for economic ventures and believing that its own economy in particular and the world economy as a whole would best be served by free trade and investment in an open capitalist world economy, would have found Soviet control over its closed Eastern European bloc a threat, whether or not it took an expansionist stance toward Western Europe. Yet as Carolyn Eisenberg, Mary Kaldor, and Harriet Friedmann all show in their essays in this volume, a measured and balanced analysis of relevant political and economic forces in constructing and sustaining the Cold War need not rest on apologetics for Stalin or the Soviet Union.

These misreadings of revisionism follow as much from the political standpoint of vindicationism as from its historical findings. Its political standpoint is aligned with the U.S. foreign policy establishment. During the Cold War the focus on the Soviet threat within a bipolar system meshed with anticommunism to lead many defenders of the United States to attack its critics for favoring the Soviet Union. They missed the extent to which many criticisms of the United States sought to escape the binary oppositions that the Cold War enforced. Whereas revisionists—especially William Appleman Williams, as Paul Buhle explains in his essay in this

volume—analyzed U.S. history in their search for alternative futures, vindicationist commentators tended to view their efforts as evidence that they were soft on communism.<sup>33</sup> Other commentators critical of the Cold War as a system but with impeccable anticommunist credentials were also misinterpreted—as Jeffrey Isaac argues here in his essay on Hannah Arendt. Although some revisionists—and some antiwar activists who drew on revisionist scholarship—were uncritical of U.S. enemies (primarily Vietnamese communists, China, and the Soviet Union), revisionism was always more animated by a search for alternatives *within* America than for alternatives *to* America. Recently, that critical spirit has led scholars such as Thomas McCormick to shift from a focus on the internal sources of U.S. foreign policy to a focus on the way those forces in the U.S. economy contribute to the construction of a world system, and Bruce Cumings to engage in a thorough study of the domestic sources of the Korean war, itself set in a comprehensive context.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, as part of their general lack of interest in the domestic sources of U.S. foreign policy, vindicationists have not confronted revisionist accounts of the Cold War as part of long-term patterns of U.S. foreign policy. Revisionism's ur-text, William Appleman William's *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959), was only partly about the Cold War; it was offered less as an explanation of U.S. Cold War diplomacy than as a sweeping historical analysis of the sources of U.S. expansion. The vindicationist claim that the end of the Cold War eroded any legitimacy for revisionism is answered by Walter LaFeber in his contribution in this volume. Similarly, Ronen Palan's essay—based in the subfield of International Relations theory known as International Political Economy, not revisionist diplomatic history—highlights continuities of U.S. economic power during and after the Cold War.

Both the vindicationist emphasis on Soviet aggression and the early revisionist focus on inexorable U.S. expansionary tendencies overlook the power and historical agency of other actors, whether other nation-states or national or transnational social movements, which have affected foreign policy. Essays in this collection by Cary Fraser, Brenda Gayle Plummer, and Ian Roxborough explore and demonstrate the power of analytic frames that escape both bipolarity and a singular emphasis on the U.S. as an imperial power. By sustaining a limited debate that most revisionists have abandoned, vindicationists narrow the range of questions considered worth studying.

Moreover, the vindicationists have erroneously assumed that the end of the Cold War *ipso facto* undermines revisionist claims. True, the Cold War ended when the Soviet Union gave up its (purported) dreams of expansion, ceased

controlling Eastern Europe, entered into serious arms control negotiations with the United States, and softened its authoritarian rule at home. Clearly the West won. But systemic triumph does not necessarily mean, as vindicationism assumes, that the victorious side deserves credit for all the steps that led from nuclear stalemate to the collapse of one of the parties. Indeed, it takes nothing from the victory of capitalism over communism to consider the possibility that it was Soviet rather than U.S. initiatives that broke out of the confines of nuclear deterrence.<sup>35</sup> None of these differing interpretations are incompatible with the revisionist emphasis on the causal force of dynamics within the United States.

The essays in this volume exemplify the critical spirit of revisionism without being bound by its substantive concerns. They invite a rethinking of what the Cold War was, how fully it defined the decades after World War II, what forces sustained it and led to its demise. The essays do not share a single analytic or political position; they derive from different disciplines and contrasting approaches within disciplines. Some work within the coordinates of U.S. diplomatic history (LaFeber, Lairson, Eisenberg), others in the nexus between social or intellectual history and foreign policy (Bernstein, Plummer, Isaac, Buhle). Some consider the Cold War as an aspect of the interstate system (Fraser, Kaldor); others approach their topic from the field of international political economy (Roxborough, Friedmann, Palan) or of strategic studies (Cox, Kegley and Blanton). They do not propose a single alternative perspective but offer interpretations of a range of core Cold War themes. In doing so they expand the range of topics and approaches relevant to evaluating the significance of the Cold War.

### **Creating the Cold War**

The essays in Part I provide three perspectives on the forces that created and sustained the Cold War. Walter LaFeber focuses on continuities in the domestic dynamics of U.S. foreign policy; Carolyn Eisenberg analyzes the role the division of Germany played in the U.S.-Soviet conflict; and Thomas Lairson dissects the relationship between bipolarity and globalism in U.S. Cold War foreign policy. They illustrate several of the themes just discussed: that the U.S. foreign policy did not simply respond to external threats, that pursuing its own goals, not just countering Soviet initiatives, led to its global strategy.

It is fitting that LaFeber's essay, which places the U.S. contribution to the Cold War in the context of a century of U.S. imperial expansion and military action, opens the volume. While setting his own scholarly agenda, he has maintained a

fidelity to the core historiographical and ethical concerns that animated William Appleman Williams, in whose memory the conference from which these papers derive was convened. Those concerns include the ideological and economic dynamics and political and cultural consequences of empire in American history. LaFaber adds new insights to twin themes in Williams's work: the continuity of the expansionist dynamic in U.S. history, and the attendant aggrandizement of presidential power.

Against those who conclude that the U.S. victory in the Cold War reveals the intellectual poverty of revisionism, LaFaber argues that U.S. expansion in pursuit of its economic interests remains a powerful explanation for U.S. foreign policy before, during, and after the Cold War.<sup>36</sup> Thus the end of the Cold War does not constitute a major fault line in redefining U.S. global purpose. Although he does not deny the repressiveness of the Soviet regime, LaFaber does not locate the main source of U.S. foreign relations after World War II in American response to Soviet behavior. He is an "internalist" who believes that U.S. policy was and is primarily driven by domestic forces that predated and now postdate any Soviet threat.<sup>37</sup> If there had been no Soviet Union or Cold War, the United States and Russia would still have had expansionist, imperial foreign policies, although what exact course each would have taken is obviously unknowable.<sup>38</sup> With the Cold War and the USSR gone, the U.S. global presence is changing, not disappearing.<sup>39</sup>

LaFaber argues that since McKinley's presidency a century ago, expansionism has contributed to the aggrandizement of the federal government, in particular the executive branch and the presidency. He confronts us with the irony that as suffrage and electoral democracy were legally extended to women early in the century and practically enabled for blacks with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the shift in control over the "ultimate question of using military force" from Congress to the president entailed a reduction of democratic control over the crucial life-and-death question of military engagement. The historic contribution of foreign policy in building the American state has been neglected. The same conservative politicians who attack liberals as statists for building the welfare state have been equally responsible for creating the warfare state by supporting the power and prominence of the executive branch of government via support for military spending and domestic surveillance operations. But conservatives have not been alone in neglecting the role of foreign policy in state-building. Most scholars who have analyzed the growth of the U.S. state, liberal and radical as well as conservative, have focused primarily on domestic sources. LaFaber thus contributes to theorizing the origins of the national security state. Whereas Richard J. Barnett and others locate the growth of the national security state in the Cold War era itself, LaFaber

traces its origins back to the turn of the century and explains its growth in terms of economic expansion, in contrast to Barnett and others who have stressed the state-centered interests and motivations of national security managers.<sup>40</sup>

Carolyn Eisenberg is critical of the conventional wisdom about the role the U.S. played in constructing the Cold War in Central Europe, its *locus classicus*. She focuses on the middle-to late 1940s to explain why the United States bears more responsibility than the Soviet Union for the division of Germany—an event militarily, economically, politically, and ideologically important in the early Cold War, yet one that has received little scholarly attention.<sup>41</sup> Eisenberg finds that its division was an American decision, supported by the British and opposed by the Soviets. At the end of World War II, U.S. policymakers with roots in New Deal liberalism sought dramatic reforms to denazify the polity, break the power of economic cartels, strengthen labor, and push through land reform; the more conservative officials, who won the debate, held that the general revival of European capitalist economies should take precedence. They sought reforms sufficient to break the power of those Nazi economic institutions that inhibited a free market but not so thorough as to “reduce the incentives of the German capitalist class.” They believed that the level of reparations the Soviets demanded would weaken Germany, whereas economic integration of the three Western zones in a divided Germany would give the United States the power to shape a growing, open economy.<sup>42</sup>

Once in place, the division of Germany led to the consolidation of the geostrategic dimension of the Cold War, and many “offensive Soviet behaviors” in Western Europe were direct responses to Soviet exclusion from West Germany. Eisenberg shows in a concrete historic circumstance how the broad imperatives of U.S. policy led to conflict with the Soviet Union and contributed to constructing the terms of bipolarity. Support for her analysis comes from the fact that a similar shift took place in U.S. policy toward reform in Japan: an emphasis on democratization shifted to an emphasis on sustaining the economic growth the United States sought for Japan in Asia. The United States was intent on building strong economies in its recently defeated enemies, both Japan and Germany, even if that entailed forsaking thorough reforms of those societies.<sup>43</sup>

According to Thomas Lairson, post-World War II U.S. foreign policy was global in scope and not defined by participation in bipolar conflict. He argues this case by clarifying the significance of “credibility” for U.S. policy. For U.S. officials “credibility” was “an image of reliability” indicating that the United States had the political will to support its commitments as well as the military might to confront enemies and provide protection for (and some degree of control over) its allies.

Lairson argues that "credibility" derived from U.S. pursuit of global hegemony, not the bipolar conflict with the Soviet Union. Those with whom he takes issue, in particular John Lewis Gaddis, have argued that credibility helped erode the distinction between America's vital interest—containing its military equal, the Soviet Union—and its secondary interests. The erosion of that distinction in turn led the United States to overextend its global commitments because, with the distinction between primary and secondary concerns blurred, credibility became a global concern. Lairson responds that bipolarity is conceptually unable to deal with the significantly greater economic, political, and military power of the American-led Western bloc. Shifting the analytic frame from bipolarity to a structural analysis of the United States as a hegemonic power makes it possible to "specify the lines of causation between the structure of the international system and the perceptions, calculations, and actions of national leaders." Understood in this way, credibility can be shown to have become "the 'glue' holding the system together." Shifting from the conventional focus on bipolarity to dynamics internal to the U.S. political economy offers a better explanation for the generally acknowledged importance of "credibility" in strategic thought.

### Decentering the Cold War

Moving even further from the vindicationist frame, the essays in Part II argue that the Cold War was not uniquely defined by the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, or postwar history completely defined by the Cold War itself. For Ian Roxborough, phases of capitalist development were influenced but not determined by the Cold War; for Brenda Gayle Plummer, Cold War politics intersected with U.S. racial politics in a mutually determining fashion; Cary Fraser even more radically disrupts conventional views by arguing that bipolarity and hegemony are both analytic constructs that exaggerate the role of major powers in post-1945 international relations.

For Fraser even the broadest definitions of the Cold War do not encompass all the relevant actors. His line of inquiry challenges many assumptions of International Relations theory, especially as constructed in the context of the Cold War.<sup>44</sup> In particular, his essay lends historical substance to critiques of realism.<sup>45</sup> He argues that International Relations theory's stress on bipolarity, nations as unitary actors, and system stability all constrain explanations of the origins, course, and demise of the Cold War. The bipolar focus diminishes the importance of European states in creating the Cold War system. Bipolarity and the assumption of stability

have blinded much International Relations theory to the importance of Third World states since the end of World War II, both as sources of change in the international order and as powers exploiting the bipolar conflict for their own ends. The stress on stability and the assumption that nations are unitary actors make it harder to factor in the importance of political, cultural, and economic dynamics within East European civil societies in precipitating the crisis of the bipolar order. Significantly, for Fraser it also follows that nuclear weapons were less able to control events than most International Relations theorists anticipated.

Roxborough's essay complements Fraser's in arguing that the Cold War's influence on Latin America is best understood in terms of domestic developments there as well as U.S. pressure. Most critics of U.S. foreign policy focus on military intervention and show that the history of U.S. intervention long preceded the threat of communism. Most defenders of U.S. policy toward Latin America justify it by reference to the threat of Soviet-instigated communist subversion. In contrast, Roxborough looks at the interactions between domestic politics in Latin America and the U.S. role in shaping but not determining Latin American political economy. He agrees with other commentators that between the end of World War II and the late 1940s a shift in U.S. policy toward Latin America took place as the United States sought to reframe political conflict from democracy versus dictatorship to capitalism versus communism.<sup>46</sup> That shift shaped Latin American postwar economic strategies and political compromises by emphasizing economic growth and its requisites. Building on industrial development during World War II, Latin American countries adopted an economic growth strategy of import substitution industrialization (ISI): that is, industrializing by domestically manufacturing products that had been imported. At first the ISI strategy involved a class compromise in which organized labor and the left, including Communist Parties, collaborated with the national bourgeoisies with whom they shared a "common interest in industrialization." The outcome of U.S. involvement was not the destruction but the rightward reconstruction of the political coalitions that supported ISI. Shared hostility toward communism helped traditional Latin American elites and the United States forge anticommunist hemispheric security pacts, split radical unions, and strengthen unions' more conservative elements.<sup>47</sup>

These internal and external influences led to a shift toward conservatism in Latin America but not an embrace of the hard right. Labor was weakened but not completely suppressed. Ironically, the post-Cold War period, notwithstanding the pervasive rhetoric of democratization, is proving less friendly to labor than when it was contained under the sign of anticommunism. The triumph of the neoliberal economic model coinciding with the end of the Cold War and associated with the

rhetoric of constitutional democracy has not been favorable to labor. In the 1940s foreign and elite domestic forces combined within Cold War imperatives to split unions so that labor could be incorporated as a "responsible" junior partner in the ISI growth strategy; in the 1990s foreign and elite domestic forces are combining to shut labor out as a political force.

Plummer sees Fidel Castro's stay in Harlem in September 1960—when he visited New York to address the UN—as a dramatic moment that brings together "several strands of Cold War history." By focusing on connections between foreign policy and racial dynamics within the United States, she provides another example of the ways in which social forces other than bipolarity contributed to the Cold War system. Arguing that Castro's visit to Harlem "joined foreign and domestic policy considerations [and] helped keep U.S. race relations on the international docket," Plummer enriches our understanding of the Cuban Revolution as a "watershed" in Cold War history and of the influence of transnational racial dynamics on U.S. foreign policy and international relations more generally. Both U.S. policy elites and black civil rights leaders consciously linked the Cuban Revolution to U.S. racial politics; U.S. policymakers found that the Cuban Revolution focused their attention on decolonization and newly independent states in Africa and Latin America. It also restimulated interest in foreign affairs on the part of leading African Americans. Castro's presence in Harlem linked decolonization abroad to racism in the United States, a linkage that Cubans consciously sought. The linkage was not lost on American blacks or political elites, for the Cuban Revolution took place at a crucial moment in race relations in the U.S.: the civil rights movement had registered some successes, but segregation was still a major factor in the diplomatic corps, Congress, and many northern cities.

Theories that situated blacks as an internal colony in the United States aligned civil rights with antiimperialist struggles in the Third World, just as Castro, even as his ties to the USSR were growing, aligned Cuba with the Afro-Asian nonaligned bloc. Although not all black Americans were sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution, many welcomed Castro's presence in Harlem as he tacitly "colluded with black Americans" to focus political attention on the oppression of people of color in the United States and elsewhere. Plummer's essay complements Fraser's on the role smaller powers can play in defining the international political terrain and highlights the role of domestic politics in constructing the interactions between bipolarity and U.S. hegemonic practices. In doing so it contributes to two literatures: one that analyzes the mutual influences of Cold War foreign policy and the politics of civil rights,<sup>48</sup> and one that analyzes the role of domestic ethnic and racial influences on foreign policy.



## Explaining the End of the Cold War

The essays in Part III stress the inadequacies of Soviet and strategic studies to anticipate or explain the end of the Cold War; providing explanations at variance with conventional wisdom, they show how definitions of the Cold War and explanations of its demise are intimately connected. Michael Cox explores the failure of Western scholarship to predict the Soviet collapse. Charles W. Kegley Jr. and Shannon Lindsey Blanton provide an internal methodological critique of leading conventional explanations for the stability of the bipolar East-West confrontation. Mary Kaldor, Harriet Friedmann, and Ronen Palan expand outward to resituate the Cold War within an international political economy that helped define but was not confined by the structures of the Cold War.

Cox explains why the Soviet crisis was predicted by hardly anyone, especially in the field of Soviet Studies. He adduces several dimensions to the "collective failure" of the discipline. Academic knowledge stresses specialized research, and many academics are discouraged from asking big questions. It is a safer bet to predict the continuity of social systems than their fragility. Individual and collective interests as well as intellectual habits led many specialists to stress Soviet continuity; after all, Cox reminds us, reporting on the Soviet threat provided a livelihood for many Western academics, journalists, and intelligence officers. Soviet strength was exaggerated in part because maintaining support for military spending depended on assessments stressing Soviet strength, not weakness.

In particular, the thesis that totalitarian regimes were stable and unchangeable from within because all bases of internal dissent were suppressed helped legitimate high levels of defense spending and a militant U.S. foreign policy. In the 1980s some scholars of Soviet politics made just the opposite argument: Totalitarianism was brittle and unstable but was being replaced by modest amounts of political pluralism, which was increasingly the source of system stability. The conservative hard-line emphasis on the fragility of the Soviet Union, used to legitimate increasing military budgets as a fiscal weapon to spend the Soviets into the ground, Cox argues, turns out to have been more accurate than the liberal stress on system stability as a rationale for not engaging in an economically motivated arms race.

Just as insights are gained from analyzing the construction of intellectual frameworks in fields like Soviet Studies, so are there benefits from doing internal critiques of those frameworks, as Kegley and Blanton show. Political realists reject criticisms of state-centered strategies as utopian, and hard-line critics of the Soviet Union can reject as naive policy proposals that do not start with the

basic assumption that the Soviet Union was a threat. In response, Kegley and Blanton argue that prevalent explanations for the supposed "long peace" are internally flimsy. Through not alone in questioning orthodox views of deterrence, their essay provides a fine-grained internal critique of the logic of several leading explanations for the stability of bipolarity. Given the millions of people killed since World War II in conflicts precipitated or prolonged by Cold War imperatives, they argue that by any reasonable definition the Cold War was not a period of institutionalized stability. Nor are explanations of that purported stability consistent with each one another: Theories grounding "the long peace" in bipolarity are at odds with those finding that the U.S. used its strategic supremacy to maintain the peace.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, each explanation considered alone is logically faulty, has little or no evidence to support it, or is so abstract that it cannot readily be proved or disproved.

Since more stringent criteria can reasonably be applied in evaluating policies after the fact than in the heat of debate, their essay is less a criticism of policy rationales offered during the Cold War than a criticism of the way they have since been marshaled to bolster support for post-Cold War military strategies. By demystifying conventional explanations of the role of geostrategic conflict, their essay helps clear the ground for explanations of the end of the Cold War not founded on the "myths" they have identified.

The essays by Kaldor, Friedmann, and Palan pursue several explanatory routes. Kaldor and Friedmann identify changes in the political economy of the East-West bloc system as the source of the demise of the Cold War. For Kaldor the distinctive feature of the Cold War was the creation of ideologically and economically integrated blocs through which the United States and the Soviet Union each used threats of the "other" to legitimize itself. As the number of states proliferated after World War II (largely as a consequence of decolonization), Kaldor contends that nation-states were increasingly inadequate for integrating the international political order. She contrasts nation-states and blocs: Territoriality integrates states; ideology integrates blocs. A growing cultural homogeneity among bloc elites tended to override otherwise divisive national identities. In the West, unity was partially based on the shared language of nuclear strategy and macroeconomic management, in the East, on Marxism-Leninism. Through unified political and military command systems, blocs overcame the problems of coordination and collective action that characterize state alliances.

Kaldor finds that analyzing the Cold War as a bloc system helps explain both its persistence and its demise. Whereas most approaches to the international political economy focus on the complementarities and tensions between nation-

states and transnational economic flows, Kaldor argues that during the Cold War the bloc system, not the nation-state, was the crucial political institution. Less interested in explaining the origins than the persistence of the Cold War, she argues that it was an "imaginary war" used to fashion blocs in a period when the nation-state was becoming outmoded.<sup>50</sup> By removing some of the impediments to global economic organization posed by nation-states, the bloc system was functional for reproducing Fordist forms of mass production and mass consumption. But blocs proved to be inflexible as political systems. Kaldor finds that the decline of rapid economic growth and the emergence of new, post-Fordist forms of production created strains: They both sped up global economic integration in ways not easily contained within the bloc system and stimulated new forms of decentralization also inhibited by blocs. As they lost their function, blocs lost credibility, and imaginary war scenarios of nuclear deterrence became less compelling.

Friedmann provides a carefully reasoned account of how changing economic transactions between the blocs and within the Eastern bloc brought about resistance to Soviet domination over its bloc "allies," paving the way for *perestroika* and contributing to the end of the Cold War. Like Kaldor, she focuses on the historically specific forms that state socialism and Western capitalism assumed in the bloc system, attending more to the conjunctural economic and political dilemmas that state socialist systems confronted than to what might be termed fundamental, systemic contradictions in socialist regimes.

Friedmann and Kaldor agree that blocs do not replace nation-states but provide overarching political structures that more or less successfully subordinate national interests. Friedmann clarifies why the nation-bloc tension was more rigid and explosive in the East than the West. What she calls Warsaw Pact Socialism was created in the late 1940s to draw East European economies into a Soviet-led bloc as an alternative to the Marshall Plan. The USSR sought to break economic intercourse with Western Europe by creating Soviet-led industrialization in the East but was never able to do so successfully because bloc-wide versus national autarkic strategies were in tension. At first the Soviets imposed autarkic national economic growth. But they also sought to impose a bloc-wide "socialist division of labor" and treated as treasonous governments that sought their own national routes. Latent tension between bloc-wide policies and national autarky impeded central planning, and from 1970 on, that tension was increasingly constitutive of economic and political life in the Eastern bloc. East European countries following national routes to growth sought to strengthen ties with Western Europe, seeking especially loans and new technologies. Even before the 1982 Mexican default that "initiated the capitalist debt crisis," Western banks began to

tighten up their loans to Eastern Europe as they worried about the viability of those economies. The economic crises in Eastern Europe that followed the change in Western banking strategies created space for the "popular mobilizations that broke the chain of Party rule in the bloc," as increasing economic linkage with Western Europe eroded the bloc's formal political institutions.

Increased economic ties with the East also led some West European countries to seek eased East-West relations. Thus, Friedmann concludes that the "links across blocs" were "major sources of tension within blocs." Against the conventional wisdom that containment worked, Friedmann's essay suggests that it helped the solidity of the Warsaw bloc, and that more open economic and political relations with the East could have precipitated *perestroika*, or an equivalent, earlier.

Kaldor and Friedmann lead us onto the terrain of international political economy, Ronen Palan sustains that focus, but whereas they explain the Cold War system in terms of political economic dynamics, Palan decenters the Cold War. His work cuts against the tendency of most scholars, especially diplomatic historians and international relations theorists, who assume the central role of the Cold War in structuring the interstate system. He believes that the Cold War was not at the core of the post-World War II international system and that its end will not prove to have been a major watershed in the history of the international order. He argues that U.S. hegemony has been such a central feature of the world order that the restructuring of the U.S. domestic political economy, more than the loss of its external enemy, is propelling the restructuring of the global economy.

Given the role U.S. hegemony played in the past half-century, Palan recognizes the role of states in forging an interstate order but also stresses the roles of international organizations, transnational capital flows, and domestic dynamics in providing cohesion to and tension within the postwar Pax Americana. He identifies three levels in the Pax Americana: the world market, the interstate system, and U.S. military and economic power as the "hegemonic articulation of power that held together the other two levels." The interactions between these levels created "both centripetal and centrifugal tendencies." But he does not believe that the end of the Cold War itself will prove decisive in tilting the balance between these tendencies, because he locates the system's core dynamic in domestic U.S. political conflict. Palan does not believe that trilateralist coordination can dampen centripetal forces because "the more serious challenge to the Pax Americana emanates from the very core, from the American state." Neither of the two main groups in the United States—the protectionist or the unilateral globalist—is likely "to be impressed by the trilateral solution."