Allied to Enemies: A Revisionist Account of the Origins of the Cold War

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Introduction

“"A War to End All Wars"-this was the phrase imparted to the suffering caused by the Great War. Yet, it would not be realized. It has become a matter of pure fact that World War II emerged from the previous war’s misdeeds, creating its own ruinous path, which led inevitably into the era of Cold War. Some may argue whether or not the Cold War was inevitable, the fact that it did occur may alone answer this question. One thing that cannot be argued is that the Cold War was indeed that which would put an end to all war—at least to a pattern of warfare that was worldwide and total in destruction. This is why, after all, it is deemed the Cold War for it failed to fire bullets and bombs—most notably even, the Atomic Bomb. For the first time, with the advent of this fatal invention, men truly realized that war was not romantic nor painless and man himself had the potential to destroy every form of life that existed upon the earth. Indeed, a fear of the nuclear age continues today, and numerous other effects ranging from political division to racial misconception and even, national supremacy and infiltration can still be felt decades after the official end of the Cold War in 1991. So then how had man come to this, such a dangerous and volatile point in human history?

It should be known that with the end of World War II there was produced in Europe a power vacuum as the once great powers, among them Britain, France, Germany and Italy, yielded to the intense pressures of war. Only the Soviet Union and the United States remained as
the only dominant forces able to reestablish a new world order both in and out of a devastated Europe. It was as a result of this, the desire to emerge supreme in the affairs of the world, which erupted into the Cold War. But why was it that these two countries who had worked together and oftentimes got along so well in order to defeat the Axis enemy during the war, that they could not now partner up in the rebuilding of Europe’s prewar structures? What had happened to make this once “Grand Alliance” crumble into adversaries? And more importantly, whose fault was it? Historians ever since the onset of the Cold War have tried to solve this question, though with uncertain luck. The group of Traditionalist historians who wrote immediately following the end of World War II through the 1950s placed blame solely on Russia; Plagued by bias and haunted by the recent horrors of war, men like Arthur Schlesinger and George Kennan were quick to portray the person of Joseph Stalin as a paranoid madman who by initiating an aggressive expansionist foreign policy for the Soviet Union to follow, was intent on stirring up a worldwide Communist takeover. America on the other hand, was hailed as the great defender of democracy and freedom and all its efforts should be seen as an attempt to spread such liberties throughout the world. With the social revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, new theories concerning the Origins of the Cold War emerged. William Appleman Williams’ *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* published in 1959 was the first of many Revisionist works of the Cold War which argued against traditional theory, insisting instead that America was as much or even more to blame than the Soviet Union in the start of the Cold War. In their unique interpretation of events, Revisionists place great emphasis upon the study of economics in hopes of proving that America’s “mission to defend and extend democracy” was nothing but mere rhetoric designed to conceal self-interest on the higher levels of government. It was then, the “needs [and interests] of American businessman” which exerted the greatest influence on American foreign policy,
leaving no room for negotiation with the Soviet Union. Finally, since there must always be criticism, the Post-Revisionist school began in 1972 so as to refute Revisionist claims that America was essentially an empire while at the same time widening the supposed narrow economic approach taken by their predecessors. John Lewis Gaddis is the father of the Post-Revisionist movement of Cold War theory. His book, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-1947*, serves as a well-researched synthesis of those events which precipitated the Cold War. In an attempt to step away from the economic standpoint held dear to by Revisionists, Gaddis instead focuses on “many other forces-domestic policies, bureaucratic inertia, quirks of personality, perceptions, accurate or inaccurate, of Soviet intentions-[that] also affected the actions of Washington officials.”¹ Although Gaddis’ research is worth referring to, the quality of later Post-Revisionists work has declined. The school is often criticized for simply synthesizing facts and therefore, lacking substance in the form of an opinion or argument.

Surely, there remains something to be hailed and criticized for each school of thought regarding the Origins of the Cold War. Nevertheless, in going forth to set down one’s own analysis, it is vital to keep these interpretations in mind. It was for this purpose that a brief reflection on prior supposition was given. The essay that will follow should be considered part of the Revisionist school of interpretation since it is, in the opinion of the author, the only theory that is both free from prejudice and modes of conventional thinking while at the same time, ample for further substantive development of Cold War theory. The essay itself will attempt to explore three major areas of concern in regards to Cold War origins. Each of the following areas holds not only significance in Revisionist thought but has also been considered to some degree,

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in each of the three aforementioned schools of historiography, thereby increasing its all-around relevance in the subject.

The first section of this survey will focus on U.S. conceptions of the Soviet Union, especially during the period of World War II from 1939-1945. It will take into account not only the making but the influence of public opinion on American foreign policy, ultimately hoping to shed light on the cynicism of government dominated by interest while at the same time perhaps, showing that the people are as much to blame in a country’s affairs as the ruling body. This chapter should bring the reader to a more limpid view of history which involves not only top officials but the viewpoints and actions of every man in the making of historical events. The second chapter will shift to a more Russian view of Cold War origins in analyzing the true person and motives of Joseph Stalin, in a way that is most free from bias. It will examine the Soviet Union’s capabilities and compare this to the perceived threat felt by American officials. Finally, it will attempt to reveal, in all fairness, Soviet attitudes of America. All of this, in hopes that the information that is to be revealed will stand alone, and incite an attitude of open-mindedness in the reader. And lastly, in what may be considered perhaps, full Revisionist style the third section will focus on economics. Here, a brief overview of U.S. and Russian trade relations will be explored, a survey which will range well before the start of World War II and into the early Cold War era. The evidence that will be referred to should again elicit an open response from all audiences as it is key that the objective relevance of such information be realized by the close of the chapter. Indeed, this seems a monumental task and one can only pray that such goals be attained in so short a survey. Keeping the brevity of the account in mind, may the reader excuse any omissions of which there are to be many, since even more narrowed accounts of Cold War Origins stretch into the hundreds of pages.
The twentieth century was a period marked by incessant warfare. Though most of the
secrets surrounding both World Wars have been realized, there still continues to be much debate
over the Origins of the Cold War. This essay attempts to resolve certain key matters by perhaps,
being one of the first American Revisionist studies to incorporate economics, public opinion, and
a fresh impression of Joseph Stalin that is lacking in a world which still feels the effects and
hostilities of those tumultuous Cold War years.

I. The Other

Ever since the dawn of time, men have viewed one another with a harrowing eye of
suspicion. It is perhaps, a weakness of human tendency to realize not what may be many
similarities but instead that one grave difference, contrived to erect an everlasting gap and
pattern of opposition among men. In this belief, America is no exception. Despite its rhetoric of
acceptance and freedom for all, the American people’s relationships with those of other countries
still contain an air of misgiving and superiority. Its relationship with Russia was, and continues
to be, a perfect example. This section is devoted to the exploration of American public opinion
from 1939 to 1945, as a means of determining exactly what went sour between these two
wartime allies who, no sooner than making peace, rocketed into the age of Cold War. This
chapter will revolve around three main points. First, defining the American perception of the
Soviet Union. Second, exploring the causes in the creation of such an attitude. And thirdly, the
overall effect of this attitude on American foreign policy.

Norman E. Saul, a professor of Russian history, once described the relationship between
the U.S. and Russia as being “distant friends.” See, as much as the respective histories of each
country were alike in that they both took on a policy of internal expansion or had developed an
economic system of captivity such as slavery or serfdom within their countries, or that they both
found themselves located at a pivotal geographical point which was indicative of individualism for example, there was always a greater source of tension that prevailed between the two. The greatest aperture between the U.S. and Russia always seemed to deal with country politics. From the start of international relations in 1809 with the United States’ receipt of Russian ambassador Andrei Dashkov, “the two systems of government were antipathetic in the highest degree”, one being a democracy and the other a hated form of monarchy. Such a political abyss only widened with time, when in 1917 the Bolshevik Revolution initiated a new and dangerous ideology, which for many Traditionalists, is taken as a harbinger to the hostilities which exploded during the Cold War. Leading Orthodox writer Arthur Schlesinger expresses this opinion when he states, “Leninism and totalitarianism created a structure of thought and behavior which made postwar collaboration between Russia and America…inherently impossible”-mostly, due to the undeniable fact that Marxist theory found its provenance in the existence and opposition to capitalist states. Schlesinger wasn’t the only one to express this attitude. George Kennan too, a U.S. diplomat and historian, also places Communist ideology at the root of conflict stating, “The political personality of Soviet power as we know it today is the product of ideology and circumstance.” In other words claiming that the only way to understand Soviet actions is to understand Leninist belief itself which pervaded every Soviet official-including Joseph Stalin and so, seeped its way into Soviet foreign policy. Now the question remains: What exactly did Americans know and understand about Communism? Well, it has been determined that

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“a majority of Americans regarded Fascism as less an evil than Communism…since they showed much more respect for private property, they did not enshrine atheism, they were not preaching world revolution, and they did not maintain a branch of the Comintern in our country for the sole purpose of fomenting dissension.”  

Even if Communism had its supporters, it could be argued that most of them were again, due to the popularity of Fascism. Despite America being at odds with the notion of a dictatorship, in the 1920s while Mussolini was establishing his new regime he was regarded by those in America as a hero-singlehandedly attempting to restore order and stability to his country after the Great War. Evidence for this praise can be found in several articles of popular culture, such as Fortune and Life magazine, both of which devoted large portions to the “powerful icon.”  

As a result, some came to regard Stalin’s Soviet Union and his Five Year Plans, introduced in 1928, with a same sort of admiration; however, this was the minority. 

The majority’s opinion held. Of course, it had basis. Stalin’s implementation of a collective farming method as part of his Five Year Plan was just one example of the Socialist’s disdain for private property. The “closing of religious publishing houses and the forbidding of religious propaganda” throughout the Soviet Union gave further credence to the state’s stance on atheism. Truth behind the accusation of the Comintern creating conflict can be found in the many strikes and extremist attacks which characterized the Red Scare during the early 1920s. “Bombs sent through the mail to high officials and…talk about seizing power” even aroused fear

5 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 277.


in U.S. law enforcement officials. And as for belief in a worldwide Communist revolution, before tales of such a happening became exaggerated, there was reason to fear such a thing. Lenin stated it clearly in a speech delivered at a meeting of Activists of the The Moscow Organization of the R.C.P. (Revolutionary Communist Party) in December of 1920. Here he spoke of the day when “socialism finally triumphs all over the world.” He spoke with urgency of the “development of the revolution in capitalist countries” with the aid of supporters, “propaganda and preaching.” Indeed, this serves as just one of many speeches wherein Lenin created an atmosphere of war among his adherents with whose aid, he hoped to restructure the world. “While capitalism and socialism exist side by side they cannot live in peace: one or the other will ultimately triumph.”

Given this, it is no wonder that Orthodox historians like George Kennan warned of “a duel of infinite duration” that would take place between the Americans and the Russians in the years to come. And so much was his fear and concern that he felt the need to propose the infamous Containment policy as expressed in the Long Telegram in the year 1947, “United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.” The Soviet Union’s early history then, provided

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8 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 247.


10 Lenin, “Speech Delivered at a Meeting of Activists of The Moscow Organization of the R.C.P.,”

11 Lenin, “Speech Delivered at a Meeting of Activists of The Moscow Organization of the R.C.P.,”

12 Kennan, Sources of Soviet Conduct, 862.

13 Kennan, Sources of Soviet Conduct, 861.
a dark image of the state and what it would become, as it was a state dominated by Communism. Justifiable or not, this ideology had already aroused in many Americans a sense of unending fear and suspicion towards not only the Soviet Union but Communist sympathizers everywhere that would continue to have a great impact in the early years following the close of World War II.

“This animosity that the overwhelming majority of Americans felt towards…Communists between 1917 and 1944” is crucial in attempting to explain why the Cold War began “so swiftly after the wartime alliance with Russia ended.”14 From the rise of Lenin, the Soviet Union’s activity was always viewed through the shady lenses of Communism. Orthodox writers have often blamed Stalin as “[He] alone could have made a difference” in preventing the outbreak of Cold War. Yet, went on to pity him for never being anything more than “a deep and morbid man…who saw everything through the lenses of Marxism.”15 But the events leading up to the wartime alliance and even through the war tell a different tale. If Communism permeated Soviet activity, then the notion of liberty and freedom inundated that of Americans so much so that they were never able to realize an ounce of sincerity that may have been born from the intimate bonds of warfare. Though more will be said of Stalin the next section of this essay, let it at least be said that he was no Lenin. “The era of militant, world-revolutionary communism [that had gripped so many Americans in years before] had evidently passed” with Lenin’s death.16 As Joseph Stalin took on the helm, it seemed as if “some form of

16 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 267.
capitalism in Russia [was] on its way back”, although most Americans remained skeptical.\textsuperscript{17} When in 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the oath of office however, he was more optimistic. Roosevelt believed that a level of “amicability with the second superpower” could be achieved and should be achieved for a variety of reasons.\textsuperscript{18} First, economics; because Stalin increased the processes of industrialization in the Soviet Union, an opportunity for trade arose between the USSR and U.S. who would supply the former “with American technology…for a good price.”\textsuperscript{19} Second, both countries viewed Japan and Germany as rivals in the world sphere. Therefore, “in terms of foreign policy, recognition of the USSR seemed to be a real means of strengthening the American position in opposition to a greater evil.”\textsuperscript{20} For these, and other reasons that may be elaborated on in section three, Roosevelt fought for official recognition of the Soviet Union. Yet despite his claims, a host of “powerful Americans opposed official recognition…to the bitter end.”\textsuperscript{21} Their arguments were many, but the strongest cause being perhaps the simple fact that “Soviet propaganda still inspired fear.” Evidence for this can be found in several forms of American media. Refer to Image A in the appendix, taken from a Chicago Tribune newspaper in 1933.\textsuperscript{22} Notice that many Americans are preoccupied with domestic affairs. In this way, many believe that if America opens the door to the USSR then

\textsuperscript{17} Bailey, \textit{America Faces Russia}, 267.


\textsuperscript{19} Sogrin, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the USSR: An Interpretation”, 214.

\textsuperscript{20} Sogrin, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the USSR: An Interpretation”, 214.

\textsuperscript{21} Bailey, \textit{America Faces Russia}, 262.

\textsuperscript{22} Unknown. \textit{Aren’t We Having Enough Trouble With the Machinery Without Letting Somebody Throw a Wrench Into It?} 1933. Chicago Tribune Archives.
there arises a great risk that would indeed, compromise U.S. security. “The opening of an embassy would allow for further dissemination of their poisonous ideology.” 23 Moreover, “to lend her money would finance further subversive activity in the United States.” 24 The disheveled figure who represents the USSR appears rather treacherous as well, holding a wrench behind his back; a clear signal of suspicion confirming the stalwart stance of Americans to disregard any “avowal of world revolution which was merely designed to lull us into a false sense of security.” 25 Still, FDR “believed in the ability of a person to change the course of history” and he took it upon himself to try and change this fatal American mentality towards the Soviet Union. War proved the perfect opportunity to do so. 26

In the meantime, in the midst of those forgetful years before the outbreak of World War II, Stalin attempted to boost the reputation of the Soviet Union in world affairs. Stalin took on a nationalist agenda and became more active in what may considered, capitalist domains internationally. In September 1934 the USSR was admitted into the League of Nations; the organization initially adjudged to be “the holy alliance of the bourgeoisie for the suppression of the proletariat revolution” during those early years of Lenin’s reign. 27 The Kremlin “continued its ardent support of disarmament”; surprising the world when in 1935, Stalin condemned, more strongly than the rather weak League of Nations, Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia. Again, in 1936, the USSR “advocates for vigorous measures” to be taken against Adolf Hitler and his

23 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 264.
24 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 264.
25 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 264.
26 Sogrin, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the USSR: An Interpretation.”, 226.
27 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 276.
takeover of the Rhineland. So as it seemed that the Soviet Union was “emerging from her isolationist cocoon to espouse international cooperation”, the U.S. on the other hand, and in spite of the president’s earnestness in shaping a friendship, retreated deeper. Americans remained unsympathetic to the Russian people, unseeingly expressing the same old doubts and fears in regards to Soviet sincerity. 

This sincerity would be called into question time and time again during those calamitous wartime years. The year 1939 in particular brought about two catastrophic events. First, the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact between German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Russian diplomat Vyacheslav Molotov. To many Americans, this treaty confirmed Soviet doubts since how could it be that “after having long and loudly proclaimed itself to be the leading opponent of Nazi Germany,[ the USSR should now] “…change course and become Hitler’s ally.” This was a stab in the back to the western powers who had conceded some of their trust to the USSR in the past years. Now it seemed as if Stalin was betraying them and forming friendly relations with Germany, instead. Moreover, in signing the pact, Stalin had allowed for Hitler’s war against Europe’s democracies to take place. The Chicago Tribune criticized FDR’s efforts friendly efforts toward Stalin, mockingly stating “Mr. Roosevelt’s great Russian…friend has turned despot.” While the New York Herald Tribune asserted the belief, “they [communists] have always been the tools of a dictator whose principles and objectives

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28 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 277.
29 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 276.
30 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 11.
31 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 12.
differ only in nomenclature to that of Hitler.”\textsuperscript{32} The more open-minded minority however, put forth claims to defend Stalin’s action. They contended that Stalin had “acted defensively so as to keep his enemy, Hitler, as far as possible; while at the same time recovering Russian territory.”\textsuperscript{33} The second major setback in Soviet opinion that occurred in 1939 was the USSR’s invasion of Finland. In what could be seen as another defensive measure taken against Germany, the attack on “poor little Finland” as it was advertised, outraged Americans.\textsuperscript{34} This time the U.S. took action: the people showed their support for Finland by participating in relief programs and even, Franklin Roosevelt condemned Soviet action by placing a “moral embargo on the shipment of aircraft to Russia”.\textsuperscript{35} At this point, the future looked even more fearful as Americans surmised, in thinking about the war in Europe, that the Russian “dictatorship” would join the war on the side of Hitler.

December 7, 1941—“A day that will live in infamy”—changed the course of the war in many ways. For one, the U.S. was now forced to enter World War II. In doing so, their position in world affairs was perfect in terms of reconciling with the Soviet Union for Roosevelt was now able to lend his open support to the USSR, most notably in terms of finance and technology, which were obviously enough to keep Stalin on the side of democracy. From here, the Grand Alliance begins. In its early phases, popular support remained cynical, indeed the \textit{New York Post} anxiously exclaimed “There are those who will now say we are allied with Communism.”\textsuperscript{36} But

\begin{footnotes}
\item[32] Ralph Levering et al., \textit{Debating the Origins of the Cold War}, 12.
\item[33] Bailey, \textit{America Faces Russia}, 281.
\item[34] Ralph Levering et al., \textit{Debating the Origins of the Cold War}, 12.
\item[35] Ralph Levering et al., \textit{Debating the Origins of the Cold War}, 12.
\end{footnotes}
it wouldn’t take long for Americans to at least warm-up to the idea of a partnership with Russia. As soon as July 1941, public opinion polls show that “in the present war between Germany and Russia” 72% of Americans wanted Russia to win.37 In October 1942 Fortune magazine performed its own survey asking “Regardless of how you feel toward Russia, which of these policies do you think we should pursue towards her now?” 51% replied in favor of working alongside Russia. As this last polling source may suggest, “Americans were changing their attitude towards Russia in response to the way their foreign policy-makers [within the realm of mass media] presented the circumstances.”38 Images B, C, and D in the Appendix may be used to further support this claim. These images depict magazine covers from the most widely read periodicals (Time, Life, and NewsWeek) through the years 1940-1943, which all place Joseph Stalin in a seemingly favorable limelight.39 No doubt, this certainly had an effect on opinion. Still, it seemed that such examples of praise were superficial at best. Despite desires for Russia to win the war, nearly half of Americans (47%) believed that Germany would have the ultimate victory.40 While there are surely many reasons for this response, it can definitely serve as a sign of skepticism in regards to Soviet sincerity in collaborating with the U.S. in order to achieve victory against the Nazi enemy. In another poll conducted in 1941, when asked “Should the U.S.


38 Levering, American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 60.


C: LIFE, Special Issue USSR. March 29, 1943.

D: NEWSWEEK The Magazine of News Significance, One Year Against Hitler, Stalin Proved His Name Meant Steel. June 22, 1942.

government supply Russia with arms, airplanes and other war materials on the same basis that we supply them with Great Britain”, a whopping 53% of Americans responded no (though of course, Roosevelt dismissed this survey in establishing his own rather generous Lend-Lease arrangement with the Soviet Union.)

As President Roosevelt paid much heed to such public opinion polls, he became ever more determined to create a pro-Soviet attitude among Americans. His famous fireside chats were perhaps the most ideal method of communicating a positive image of the Russian war effort. Polls show that a majority of his listeners, 86%, came from the upper classes, thus suggesting that “the better educated were considerably more sympathetic toward Soviet Russia.”

Perhaps, Roosevelt’s most infamous attempt at cultivating pro-Soviet attitudes was his sponsorship of a movie entitled Mission to Moscow. Released in 1943, the film “stirred a storm of criticism” among viewers. The image of the Soviet Union in the movie appeared rather soft, as the publicists who had a part in making the film, “generally avoided the sensitive issues of Socialism and Stalin” so as to shape a new and improved vision of the Soviet Union. Many were also “disturbed by the movie’s departure from the historical record”; as it attempted to “rationalize aspects of past Soviet behavior (such as that of the purges)” that had long ago been denounced by Americans. Roosevelt pushed to convey an image of the Soviet Union that could be comparable to that of the U.S.; One review claiming that the film “presents the Russian

people most sympathetically…that Russians and Americans aren’t so different after all.”46 And above all things, he wished to portray the Russians as heroes in their wartime effort to secure liberty alongside the United States.

Despite such great aspirations, Roosevelt’s *Mission to Moscow* was, at least for Americans, a great failure. Life magazine, which had just recently placed Stalin on the cover of one of its latest issues, now wrote scathingly about the film, “U.S.S.R., its leaders and its foreign policies are whitewashed.”47 Clearly, America’s relationship teetered with the Soviet Union during these years. Opinions shifted rapidly, and often due not to the efforts of President Roosevelt but through the influence of the media, in all its forms ranging from radio news to the press. “All successful politicians seem to realize that the media form the very heart of the system through which opinions are circulated…to the public.”48 Although a majority of Americans had warmed up to a partnership with the Soviet Union during those wartime years, past perceptions still prevented a genuine alliance from forming, in both the American public and even on the higher levels of government. There was nothing Roosevelt could do to reverse that. Still, his efforts should warrant praise. Roosevelt’s open-minded optimism in dealing with the Soviet Union surely aided in a successful collaboration that led to ultimate victory. Though he would never realize it, he was regarded as the Russian people’s “greatest foreign friend.”49 The Truman administration that would succeed him, rolled back all of Roosevelt’s advancements in foreign policy toward Russia. And if President Roosevelt’s efforts aided even in the slightest degree to a


49 Sogrin, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the USSR: An Interpretation”, 226.
more sympathetic stance toward the Russians, Truman’s distrust of Stalin and the Soviet Union leaked its way through the media into the minds of the American people. Images E and F in the Appendix serve as just a couple examples of the increased tensions and retreat of positive perceptions that took place in those years immediately following World War II, which no doubt reawakened a sense of pre-war animosity. 50

The first cartoon published in 1947 is entitled “Rival Buses”. As can be gained from the title, this clearly conveys a message of hostile rivalry not only between the United States and the USSR but between Joseph Stalin and Harry Truman in particular. Truman of course, is drawn pleasantly welcoming the countries of Europe towards liberty and democracy, a lifestyle of “comfortable accommodations.” While Stalin is portrayed as aggressively pushing his satellites onto another bus, offering no room for accommodation or freedom just “inclusive terms”. The next image entitled “Believe it or Knout”, printed sometime in the early 1950s, offers an image of Stalin’s brutality. He is the disheveled schoolmaster, holding a Knout in his hand, which is essentially a whip used to inflict punishment in imperial Russia. He is shown trying to brainwash his fellow Communist satellites (depicted as school children), teaching them that “Truman is a warmonger.”

50 E: Punch Magazine. *Rival Buses*. 1947. Punch Archives. http://punch.photoshelter.com/image/?_bqG=4&_bqH=eJxti19LwzAUxT_NiKEqUsphtTkxye12Z5tL_kz6FGY3dKMoTGVf39wytDyvw83vJnCtdVzJf9wJw_zcXq5mtVvC5fs1DV_bmc50V5x2bl7SxViVE5ybv3fic9b0_TDKNTwsOELZpmwhQGqRodTtalORSWey4W8UrqPwf1Sib4PfBoTSBOOt21EZ0ga6DTDIo5iS5aqEE4UBf5ONb0WM.t0A_ZsF8UWvHPxMGJah4oN2P6.OB2ece3HI_SalPWB1FhsQrW7qURbnfmb500OuQH7TVLzaEOqr.sd.eutdsM6SXQ5fUvwGdijHGU&GI_ID=

F: Punch Magazine. *Believe It or Knout*. 1950. Punch Archives. http://punch.photoshelter.com/image/?_bqG=2&_bqH=eJxti09rwzAMxT9Nc27KzGDgg2urRUtjZ7bTk11EV0r_UHpx379LNC2i2HeTie_Kz0XPlQL73j_0TKNrv_eclbV5abUtWvm3uRi7y1WmRT1MVSCT610qseeu39M1QwpG RZileVvNHtEjwVg2BIzBSo2.Uw2_J73Cyi89YU2.GzmMYM2jU2.pYoWjboI9g0Q2dZYiAPK1AbzEPWYx2c j9IrW2bDcqSskX3iJoAnLHx8v55Pw79cLHUojT42akVqCVa3fCkjPSdMD6foA5tv9IsfrBiVjvK233a77Y0e0su hu.5fmA5yWA--&GI_ID=
Depictions such as these, emerging so soon after the bonds of a wartime alliance have been broken, offer more evidence that points to the shaky American perspective towards Russians. The wartime collaboration could do nothing to free from the minds of American citizens the Bolshevik stereotypes which characterized the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

“Numerous [other] opinion polls during the war years revealed that the bulk of our citizens still entertained mistaken ideas about their new ally…They were unaware, that Russia was Communists who had long ceased [to be so]”. 51 In moving forward, the next section will attempt to investigate just how much truth stood behind such perceptions, mistaken as they often were. It will also consider the impact of this perception on fueling the events of the Cold War. As this first chapter comes to close, it is worth most remembering perhaps, best said in the words of writer Eugene Lyons, that “The original ideals of the Russian revolution are in the stream of human thought: not a million Stalin’s and G.P.U.’s can change that…What happened in Russia twenty years ago will remain…” 52 And so it would seem, in an ironic twist of events, that America’s (often denied) sense of prejudice erected a barrier between the two nations that is inextricably linked to the start of the Cold War.

II. The True Stalin

Nearly a hundred years has passed, and yet the image of Joseph Stalin as that obscure and evil dictator, rivaling only Adolf Hitler and Mao ZeDong, continues to persist. An explanation for this can most definitely be found in those lethal preconceptions held by Westerners, and in

51 Bailey, America Faces Russia, 290.

52 Levering, American Opinion and the Russian Alliance, 18.
particular Americans, that was discussed in the previous chapter. For since the close of World War II, Stalin’s image as a paranoid man, “of deep and morbid obsessions and compulsions” has been memorialized by Traditionalist writers whose influence on the study of Cold War history for generations, cannot be denied. Yet, with the collapse of the Soviet Union there has been a great bundle of information slowly released to the public. This material, previously held to be confidential, has aided in the creation of a new outlook on Cold War Origins, and especially, on the person of Joseph Stalin, who played such a critical and often misunderstood role in such affairs. It is the aim of this section to rethink Stalin’s conventional image as it appears at this time, utilizing both new and old sources, which together may reveal a much different man. While at the same time, it seems pertinent to also evaluate anew the status of Russia during the early years of the Cold War, in terms of Soviet capabilities which ultimately relied upon the skillfulness of Stalin himself.

First, let something be said in accordance with the biography of Stalin. He was born in Gori, Georgia as Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili on December 6, 1878. He was born into the peasant estate; his father was a cobbler and his mother held “menial jobs as house cleaning and sewing to support her family” but they still remained poor.53 It is also noted that both his parents were abusive, often beating their son, which perhaps led to his “defiant attitude towards his superiors” and a hatred for authority which would reveal itself in his later years.54 Yet, as a young man he was still rather calm. The young Stalin proved to be very smart and aimed at being a monk. He had also developed political attitudes at a young age, expressing his Georgian nationalism (and at times paranoia) in a number of poems such as this one, already translated:

54 Kuromiya, Stalin, 2.
“The mob set before the outcast, a vessel filled with poison…and they said to him ‘Drink this, o accursed, this is your appointed lot! We do not want your truth nor these heavenly tunes of yours!’ where one can notice “a paranoiac conviction that great prophets could only expect conspiracy.”

Stalin may have developed his notions about rulers through his love of Russian history which was to influence him the rest of his life. It was in 1898 when Joseph truly got involved in politics and so, joined the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party. No one knows for sure what initially attracted him to the Party, though it has been argued by at least biographer that in a rather peculiar way, the principles of socialism complemented his own strong sense of nationalism. If “nationalism [meant] salvation through a particular group called a ‘nation’,…then Marxism with its universal salvation for all mankind proved more attractive than nationalism.”

Though Stalin would never lose the nationalist fervor that he had developed as a child, his experiences after joining the Party mark a critical moment in the forming of Stalin’s unique and often perplexing mindset. For one, the various encounters with other “cosmopolitan Marxists” would open his mind to a much richer Russian culture, which he soon came to adopt with great zeal. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, his political viewpoints became, from this point forward, a unique amalgamation of Marxist and Nationalist sentiment; a rather risky paradox which would often cause much conflict between himself and Lenin.

It was for these reasons primarily, which produced a life-changing effect on Stalin that he decided to leave the seminary in 1899 and instead follow the course of a revolutionary. In 1900, Stalin was arrested for the first time and it wouldn't be long until he was arrested and exiled to

55 Kuromiya, Stalin, 5.
56 Kuromiya, Stalin, 6.
57 Kuromiya, Stalin, 6.
Siberia in 1902. The pattern of being arrested, exiled and escaped was one he would continue to follow for several years. By 1912, Iosif Dzhugashvili would take on the pseudonym by which he would be made known to history—“Stalin” or “man of steel” became the infamous pen name used to publish his many works. By now, Stalin had spent years as a revolutionary, collaborating with some of the most notable names in Marxist history, especially Vladimir Lenin. In 1917, Lenin appointed Stalin the Peoples Commissar of Nationalities. It was while occupying this position, that Stalin’s original ideology was able to manifest itself, “due to the great chagrin of Lenin.”

In essence, Stalin’s role was to serve as a “unifier of nationalities” for various groups of non-Russians within Russia. “Like Lenin, Stalin acknowledged the right of nations to self-determination…and that nations were also obsolete, ultimately absorbed into a ‘larger universality’ but like a true Nationalist and in support of Lenin’s opponents, Stalin also argued that it was right for “nations to possess cultural identities.” Despite these differences, in 1922, Stalin was elected General Secretary of the Party and so, seemed to secure the “first critical step towards a dictatorship.” At this time, another crucial aspect of Stalin emerged: His staunch belief that “both internal and external peace were imperative for the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union.” In a speech delivered in January 1925, Stalin makes it apparent that the “peasantry is the only ally that can be of direct assistance to our revolution at this very

58 Kuromiya, Stalin, 20.
59 Kuromiya, Stalin, 20.
60 Kuromiya, Stalin, 50.
61 Kuromiya, Stalin, 57.
moment.”62 In so doing, he not only lays the groundwork for his Five Year Plan which was to commence in 1928 and so, “improve to the utmost the condition of the peasant economy”, but such a conviction would set the tone for any future policy actions adopted by Stalin, and ultimately used to benefit Russia, for the rest of his reign. 63

At this point, it would be appropriate to end any biographical points about Joseph Stalin, who of course, succeeded in becoming one of the world’s most notorious leaders. And though partial, the information provided should prove adequate enough in the making of Joseph Stalin’s image as it will appear in this chapter. Joseph Stalin “regarded himself [not only] as the founder of the new Soviet empire but [also] as the heir to the traditional Russian empire.”64 Surely, like other Marxists, he believed in the power and intent of worldwide revolution but the impetus behind such a revolution depended primarily, on the strength and security of the Soviet state. For Stalin, “who identified himself more with the czars than Lenin”, his chief goal was to “regain the territories lost to [Imperial] Russia”. 65 Not only would the “imperial acquisition” of these lands fulfill what Stalin perceived as “eternal Russian dreams” for greatness but they would also serve as protective buffers against the West, from which direction Russia had developed a terrifying history of invasion, both concrete and ideological. As for the strength needed to build up the Soviet state, this did not imply merely economic improvements on which Stalin placed a great


63 Stalin, Concerning the Question of the Proletariat and the Peasantry.


65 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, 16.
emphasis but more importantly, on the concept of a national identity. Russia was a multiethnic nation that lacked a “universal system of public schooling.”  

As a result, regional differences prevailed over a “common heritage and [collective] awareness of a glorious past.” With so much division, the Socialist Party found it increasingly difficult to gather the popular support needed in order to put the wheels of the revolution in motion. Stalin’s former position as the Peoples Commissar of Nationalities couldn’t be more helpful in attempting to resolve this dilemma. “Realizing that such [socialist] concepts were too abstract and bloodless to effectively rally the USSR’s poorly educated population, Stalin began to look for a more pragmatic, populist alternative…that would focus on the questionable notion of a Marxist fatherland.”

This alternative emerged during the 1930s and took on several forms. “A wave of books and artwork began rolling off the presses…assembling a new pantheon of Soviet heroes, socialist myths and modern-day fables”. Films promoted new images of Soviet heroism while poems too sought to hail “this country of heroes.” Even magazines like Pravda popularized in the Russian people a general feeling of “Soviet patriotism as a burning feeling of boundless love, selfless devotion to one’s motherland and a profound responsibility for her fate and defense.”

But perhaps the most notable effort in establishing a national identity was the work performed by Joseph Stalin and the Commissariat of Education whereby the history of the USSR was rewritten

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67 Brandenberger, National Bolshevism, 11.

68 Brandenberger, National Bolshevism, 28.

69 Brandenberger, National Bolshevism, 29.

70 Brandenberger, National Bolshevism, 30.

71 Brandenberger, National Bolshevism, 28.
in a way that often blurred Russian and Soviet histories respectively; The combination of Bolshevik imagery with Russian nationalism sentiment created in the minds of each Russian citizen an imperial-revolutionary paradigm similar to that of Stalin. It was in this context, that Stalin began to exert his state-building power on the international arena, in “pursuit of achieving a balance of power [between the USSR and the Western states] that would allow for a means of fulfilling his most central aim-territorial security.”72 When in 1939 representatives of both Germany and the USSR signed the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, Stalin saw it as yet another means of extending Soviet influence-this time into eastern Poland-while recapturing those prized lost territories of the old regime. And while Americans perceived this agreement as one which harbored a suspicious friendship between the two forces of Nazism and Communism, Stalin instead viewed his “action [as a means to] prevent Germany from aligning itself with the Western democracies against the USSR.”73 Similarly, in that same year, Russia’s attack on “poor little Finland” which produced a great outcry in America was actually considered an act of national defense. Prior to the invasion, “…on November 1939, Finland rejected Soviet demands for bases and territory”; Stalin’s only option it seemed was to use force as the only means to secure his nationalist aspirations.74 Taking all of this change into account it would seem that by the end of the 1930s, the Soviet Union had embarked on a truly nationalist policy. War would serve to further stall the momentum of the revolution; after all it was Soviet nationalism that would serve as the rallying cry to victory.

72 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, 18.
73 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, 18.
74 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 12.
Indeed, the tone of this imperial and nationalistic attitude can be felt in many of Stalin’s public addresses. As early as July 3, 1941, in a radio broadcast addressing the nation’s current situation facing the Nazi invasion Stalin is able to provide a great sense of morale by basing the conflict as none other than a “patriotic war.”\(^{75}\) He urges the “Soviet people to rise…in defense of their native land.”\(^{76}\) By 1942, as Soviet armies begin to overcome the Nazi war machine, the flame of nationalism burns even brighter as he declares this fight necessary in order “to…safeguard the honor and independence of our Motherland.”\(^{77}\) In comparing the rhetoric used here to that of other imperialist nations throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there can be no doubt that at least under the reign of Stalin, “Marxist ideology had been overshadowed by Russian nationalism”.\(^{78}\) The notion of the Motherland, of honor and defense clearly prevail in order to bolster the Soviet war effort and in doing so, achieve Stalin’s own war aims. There is a sense of superiority that emerges among the Russians with “their fighting spirit, staunchness and discipline” to reinforce their determination in overcoming adversity.\(^{79}\) And perhaps, most reminiscent of all is the Soviet appeal to a glorious past to which Stalin alluded when he exclaimed, “The people of our country…will keep the sacred memory of their heroes who fell in the battles for their Motherland.”\(^{80}\) Nary does a reference seem to be appear during this time, in


\(^{76}\) Stalin, Radio Broadcast.


\(^{78}\) Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 87.


his messages to the public, that deal with the spread of Communism; but Bolshevik imagery is always compounded with symbols of Russian nationalism. It was in this way, that Stalin rallied his people against the Nazi enemy during the war. And perhaps, it was even his sense of nationalism that allowed for relatively easy relations as he sought to be a part of the Allied Grand Alliance, alongside Churchill and Roosevelt.

This section will not deal much with wartime relations since the concept itself is too extensive a survey to accomplish at this time. However, countless sources reveal that despite suspicion and even downright hatred toward the Soviets as expressed by Winton Churchill’s famous declaration “If Hitler invaded hell, I would make a favorable reference to the devil…” before allying with Stalin, the Grand Alliance was a most successful collaboration of leaders. Though each kept a somewhat different goal in mind to achieve by the war’s end, they got on as “equals.”81 So much so, that Stalin even sent birthday wishes to Roosevelt.82 It seemed as long as the Alliance held together, “there remained the chance for an international regime of cooperation” after the war.83 With Roosevelt’s death (and Churchill’s defeat in the reelection), came a “turning point in Soviet-American relations”.84 Stalin had “lost his two equals” and indeed, his greatest foreign friend on which he learned to rely. For the Soviets, it was the end of the war which wrought enough opposition to spur on the Cold War.85

81 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, 39.
83 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, 39.
84 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, 39.
85 Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, 39.
If anyone were to be cynical, it was Joseph Stalin and the Russian people, not the Americans. By the war’s end, and even though “red banners flew victoriously over the entire Soviet land”, the Soviet Union was exhausted. Unlike the United States, which emerged as the world’s wealthiest superpower, the Soviet Union “lost about 25% of all its reproducible wealth”, not to mention the deaths of approximately “11,000,000 soldiers and somewhere between 7,000,000 and 20,000,000 civilians”. Its infrastructure was totally destroyed, since the “German invasion left in ruins the most populous and developed parts of the country.” America, on the other hand, could claim only 400,000 military deaths with barely any statistics on civilian losses. And though they had faithfully supplied the Soviet Union with a very generous “$9 1/2 billion of Lend-Lease materials” during the war, there remained much resentment in Russia over the failure of an Allied promise to open a second front in Europe; one that could’ve reduced the horrendous amount of Soviet losses. Now, “the Soviet people longed for nothing more than peace and security” and in trying to grasp both of these wishes, Joseph Stalin yearned for something more—“compensation for wartime losses.”

In an Order of Day speech in 1946, Stalin announced “we have to heal the wounds inflicted on our country by the enemy… and raise the economic and military ability of the Soviet

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86 Stalin, Order of the Day No. 55.
87 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 86.
89 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 86.
91 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 86.
His hopes for rebuilding the Soviet Union, laid in the consistent generosity of American economic aid, which came in the form of Lend-Lease. Lend-Lease had been crucial in sustaining the Soviet war effort and it was also considered essential to the rebuilding of the Soviet Union in the postwar world; so much so that reports were drafted by American advisors suggesting that the Soviets were feigning their need for assistance in order to stockpile supplies that would be needed for postwar reconstruction. Rumors also came about that “they were giving or selling to other countries, American supplies…in order to boost their own political influence in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.”

Former President Roosevelt had refused to acknowledge these reports, but President Truman was quick to act on them. “After the German surrender in May, President Truman abruptly cut off Lend-Lease aid.” Three months later, Stalin requested a one billion dollar loan as well as “$400 million credit to buy Lend-Lease goods for Russia still in the United States but cut off as a result of Truman’s abrupt termination of Lend-Lease shipments.”

This request apparently was lost in the State Department, and when the issue resurfaced again the U.S. government agreed to “discuss the loan only if Soviets would pledge ‘nondiscrimination in international commerce’”. It was then clear that the U.S. was trying to use “Lend-Lease aid as a bargaining lever to protect American interests.”

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94 La Feber, America, Russia and the Cold War, 22.


96 La Feber, America, Russia and the Cold War, 22.

only be attributed to Truman-who was himself always distrustful of the Soviets-but perhaps more so to his advisors such as Ambassador Averell Harriman and Major General John H. Deane. Both of these men convinced Truman of the belief that the Soviet Union regarded Roosevelt’s Lend-Lease policy of “unconditional aid” to Russia as a sign of weakness, and a measure obviously taken for granted. Instead, “a policy of cooperation with Russia could not work unless it was based on mutual respect.” 98 That sort of respect would not be gained in this fashion. For Stalin, such behavior evoked sentiments of capitalist suspicion, which had otherwise been suppressed by Roosevelt’s acts of goodwill and a greater sense of nationalism. In response to the State Department’s request to negotiate, Stalin “bluntly refused the American offer.” 99 Opting instead for yet another Five Year Plan that would speak to the “technical and economic independence of the Soviet Union.” 100

In the months that followed the close of World War II, Truman’s skepticism toward the Soviet Union shown ever more clear. The Potsdam Conference which took place in the summer of 1945, was surrounded by much controversy. It is believed that Truman, in attempting to create another source of bargaining power, urged the dropping of the Atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima-not out of necessity to end the war, since there had already been talk of a Japanese surrender before the bombs were dropped-but simply to threaten the Soviet Union. Stalin however, seemed to remain unfazed by the United States’ possession of the Atomic bomb. Indeed, Stalin’s own intelligence network had succeeded in secretly obtaining nuclear

99 La Feber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 22.
100 La Feber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 22.
information from “the famous physicist Niels Bohr…[upon] his return to Denmark from the USA.”101 Therefore, he felt as confident as Truman in putting forth his demands for a postwar Europe. The weightiest demands discussed in the Conference dealt with the division and remaking of Europe. For the Soviets, the issue of security was particularly paramount; their ideology-a combination of Marxist rhetoric and nationalism derived from the tales of an Imperial Russia-fostered a deep sense of insecurity and danger. Even before the start of the war, Stalin proved eager to regain lost territory. Their “maximum spheres of security included Finland, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the…Balkans, as well as Turkey.”102 As for Germany, it was to remain economically weak and neutral. For Americans, Soviet designs for a postwar Europe seemed just too expansive; the Soviet Union came to be viewed as a rival in the domination over world affairs. “Whether in private meetings or in public…Truman could not conceal his strong antipathy toward Soviet policy.”103 Truman was determined to make “the world depend on us (United States).”104 Perhaps sensing the sourness of Soviet-American relations, Stalin is said to have remarked, “Whoever occupies a territory also imposes in it his own social system.”105 Force, by way of military presence, it seemed would be the determining factor. And so, as the Red Army set out in defense of Russia’s strategic aspirations, an “iron curtain” seemed to fall over Eastern Europe. Every attempt by the United States to penetrate it, would signal a conflict in the new era of Cold War.


102 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 96.

103 Kolko, The Limits of Power, 42.

104 Kolko, The Limits of Power, 42.

105 Ralph Levering et al., Debating the Origins of the Cold War, 97.
This was by no means the outcome Stalin desired. The establishment of the Grand Alliance proved extremely promising for postwar peace. Indeed as is seen in the last chapter, it was through the efforts of President Roosevelt, whom Stalin had come to regard as his only true friend and partner, that Soviet-American relations improved dramatically. The death of Franklin D. Roosevelt reversed such gains in international relations. Some may argue that Roosevelt “failed to prepare the American people for the realities of the rapidly approaching postwar world.”106 And though Roosevelt’s strategies during the war were undoubtedly idealistic at times, the fact of the matter is that he planned according to the moment; his untimely death prevented any real attempts at postwar preparation. Rather, what should appear evident is that Truman’s sudden and aggressive foreign policy designs took the Soviet Union by surprise. And though Joseph Stalin may have reacted coolly to some of his tactics, for instance in regards to the dropping of the A-bombs, one can be sure that those old Soviet fears reemerged. This “new pattern in American behavior” erased the “perception of the United States as a remote and harmless giant” to a nation that posed a real and urgent threat to Soviet security.107 Stalin had truly “lost his two equals”; there was no hope in negotiating.108 He perceived America’s policy changes as “the first offensive” in what would be a Cold War. Truman’s policies not only affected relations between America and the Soviet Union, but perhaps more importantly his actions influenced American public opinion.109 In the spring of 1945, “American goodwill


107 Ralph Levering et al., *Debating the Origins of the Cold War*, 106.


toward Russia declined sharply.”\textsuperscript{110} Gallup polls show that “trust in Russia’s willingness to cooperate after the war dropped from 54\%-45\%”.\textsuperscript{111} In comparing Roosevelt’s presidency to that of Truman’s one fact for certain is shockingly similar: “The only American who had the power and prestige to alter these…attitudes” was the President of the United States.\textsuperscript{112} Roosevelt may have failed to prepare the people for peace, but Truman by “refusing to accept Russian predominance” in parts of the world, instead rallied the people for more war.\textsuperscript{113}

Despite Truman’s twisted preconceptions about the Soviet Union, Stalin was not ready for war nor did he want it. In a number of interviews taken by U.S. diplomats, Joseph Stalin repeatedly expressed his desire for a continued cooperation with the United States. As early as December 1946, in an interview between Stalin and Elliot Roosevelt (the son of former President Roosevelt), Roosevelt asked straightforwardly, “Do you consider it possible that a democracy like the U.S. can live peacefully side-by-side with a communist form of government?” Stalin’s response:

“Yes, of course. This is not only possible. This is reasonable and entirely feasible. During the tensest times of the war the differences in the forms of government did not hinder the two countries in allying and defeating our enemies. Preserving these relations is possible to an even greater extent during peacetime.”\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{110} Levering, \textit{American Opinion and the Russian Alliance}, 202.
\textsuperscript{111} Levering, \textit{American Opinion and the Russian Alliance}, 197.
\textsuperscript{112} Levering, \textit{American Opinion and the Russian Alliance}, 207.
\textsuperscript{113} Levering, \textit{American Opinion and the Russian Alliance}, 209.
A similar interview done in 1947 shows consistency in Stalin’s outlook when he states, “I want to bear testimony to the fact that Russia wants to cooperate.”115 Moreover, when asked if he “looked forward to a greater exchange of ideas, news, etc.” Stalin replied in the affirmative. “This will inevitably happen if cooperation is established. The exchange of goods will lead to the exchange of people.”116 This remark is especially significant since it proves that American fears over a Russian “closed door” policy were unfounded. More will be said of the economic situation in relation to the United States and the Soviet Union in the next chapter, but what is now pertinent to express is that the United States, without cause, reverted to an opinion which puts forth the notion of the Soviet Union’s intent to spread Communism worldwide. The views of the United States shine through perfectly in the National Security Council 68 report (NSC 68), when in describing the “fundamental design of the Kremlin” it is written that “Soviet efforts are now directed toward the domination of the Eurasian landmass.”117 Moreover, Washington viewed Stalin’s attempts to rebuild the Soviet Union as “not an end in itself but…to contribute to the war-making capacity of the Soviet system.” 118

In reality, Stalin’s desire to regain territory had its origins prior to the outbreak of the war. Though it might have at first meshed with revolutionary ideals, for Stalin its greater aim of


helping rebuild Russian strength and pride overpowered any other agenda. “Not that Stalin gave up on spreading Communism but he subordinated those interests to his larger strategic goals.”

In regards to economic superiority, though “Russians leaders talked of surpassing the United States…such promises remained in the realm of useful fantasy.” Stalin was most definitely aware of America’s “awesome military-industrial potential and global strategic reach”. He did “not want to make that world an enemy”. Besides, as the Lend-Lease incident made manifest, “the mighty and prosperous America was seen as a potential source of desperately needed economic assistance for the postwar reconstruction of the Soviet economy.” Clearly, the Soviet Union was in no position to face-off against the United States. Stalin needed the hope of a “continued cooperation with the West.” Sadly, this hope would never be fulfilled as America once again found itself in the pre-war frenzy against Communism, determined to protect “and defend its way of life.”

III. Economics

In full Revisionist style, a report concerning the origins of the Cold War could not be complete without some reference to the economic aspect which surely had a great impact on the breakdown of Soviet-American relations after the war. Though many may criticize the Revisionist school for being too reliant on economics in their interpretations, this section hopes

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119 Ralph Levering et al., *Debating the Origins of the Cold War*, 97.

120 Kolko, *The Limits of Power*, 52.

121 Ralph Levering et al., *Debating the Origins of the Cold War*, 96.

122 Ralph Levering et al., *Debating the Origins of the Cold War*, 96.

123 Ralph Levering et al., *Debating the Origins of the Cold War*, 96.
to discredit such a belief by instead elucidating the “long term economic considerations” that seemed to be always at the heart of American foreign policy relations.\textsuperscript{124} Granted much can be said concerning such a topic but since conciseness is the goal, the following should be considered a brief survey of Soviet-American economic relations, with more weight poured onto the American economic perspective designed to reinforce the notion that American self-interest in the private sector fueled expansionist efforts which prompted the outbreak of the Cold War.

It is rather ironic to view the United States as an empire. For years, heeding the words of first President George Washington, the nation advocated an isolationist policy. The mighty belief in the principles of freedom and self-determination for all stood as the true markers of government. And complementary to all of this, was the great disdain its citizens shown for monarchy or imperialist ventures. However, somewhere along the line, all of this changed and America became perhaps the most camouflaged form of a full-fledged empire. The turning point came about with the so-called Crisis of 1890. It was during this decade that two major events occurred which would forever alter the course of American history. The first was the closing of the frontier, since the census of 1890 revealed that all lands from east to west in the United States had been claimed. Without any more space on the continent to discover, what may be considered the most “rapid and effective [form of ] Americanization”-expansion-ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{125} The Turner thesis, given in 1893, is just one of countless debates addressing the anxiety which concerned the fate of American development without the frontier line. The Panic of 1893 became


\textsuperscript{125} Fredrick Jackson Turner, \textit{The Significance of the Frontier in American History}. 1893 University of Virginia. \url{http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TURNER/}
yet another watershed in the field of American industry, which “quickly developed in a severe and double-cycle depression which lasted until 1898.” Newspaper reports from across the country described the “sudden and striking cessation of industrial activity…mills, factories, furnaces and mines nearly everywhere shut down in large numbers.” Something had to be done in order to quell the feeling of “chaos and revolution” which threatened American society due to such privations. It wasn’t long before “conservatives and reformers came to share the same conviction that…an expansionist foreign policy would provide such relief”. Upon this consensus, the Open Door Policy of American relations was born which sought to enforce the equal privileges of free trade for all countries. And so it seemed that by the start of the twentieth century there had emerged, with the adoption of this new method of foreign policy, a rather “dogmatic belief that America’s domestic well-being depended upon such sustained, ever-increasing overseas economic expansion.” The result of so staunch a conviction would mean, “first…a neglect of internal developments which are nevertheless of primary importance. And second, this sort of externalizing evil [which occurs when] there is the tendency to externalize the sources of good.” The second outcome would prove especially disastrous for Soviet-American relations in the wake of World War II.

128 Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, 22.
129 Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, 22.
130 Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, 11.
131 Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, 11.
One cannot really begin to consider the magnitude of Soviet and American trade relations until the year 1933. Prior to World War I, “American trade with Russia had risen to only a little more than one percent of our total” and even after 1918, the gains in commercial trade were not very considerable.\(^{132}\) Doubtlessly the fears revolving around Communist strategies for a world revolution coupled with Soviet sentiments of extreme insecurity of the outside (capitalist) world amplified by Marxist doctrine, contributed to such a pattern. But with the onset of the Great Depression in October 1929 and the election of the optimistic Franklin D. Roosevelt to presidential office- a new and friendlier era in Soviet-American relations commenced. As discussed previously, Roosevelt’s monumental decision to offer official recognition to the Soviet Union, in spite of the hordes of opposition, contained both practical and idealized reasons. One of such reasons, which is most relevant to the conversation of economics, is Roosevelt’s hope in the “possibility of repairing U.S. economic hardships with the help of the U.S.S.R.”\(^{133}\) With Joseph Stalin at the helm, the Soviet Union was intent on following the path of industrialization in order to strengthen itself. In a note written by the Soviet ambassador to the United States A.A. Troianovskii regarding the reasons why the “U.S.S.R. should cultivate a friendship with the United States”, he writes that “The U.S. in the past few years as far as technology is concerned has taken major strides forward…we can get something…we need to make concerted efforts to keep up.” Realizing such interest “in acquiring American technology”, America welcomed the opportunity to sell “industrial goods for a good price” to the Soviet Union.\(^{134}\) Clearly, economics was at the basis of initiating a relationship that would form into a friendship.

\(^{132}\) Bailey, *America Faces Russia*, 265.


World War II and the formation of the Grand Alliance produced an even greater bond of friendship between the two nations. And once again at the heart of this partnership lay the concept of economics. By way of officially recognizing the Soviet Union in 1933, both the U.S.S.R. and the United States entered into a sort of alliance based on the hope of mutual economic assistance. Given this, it wasn’t a surprise that when America entered World War II in 1941 it quickly developed a “unique manner in which to aid Russia” throughout the war which of course, became known as Lend-Lease.\textsuperscript{135} The details of such an arrangement are as follows:

First, Roosevelt “assigned highest priority” to maintaining a steady and ever-increasing flow of supplies to the Soviets despite any shortages or issues in shipping that that may come about from factorial over-exertion.\textsuperscript{136} Secondly, Soviet requests for Lend-Lease aid “were accepted at face-value; no supporting evidence was required.”\textsuperscript{137} This arrangement was especially conspicuous since when in the process of distributing Lend-Lease aid to other nations such as Great Britain, each “recipient of aid was to file elaborate evidence which justified their need for and indicated their ability to use each item requested.”\textsuperscript{138} When the war began to subside in 1944, Lend-Lease aid was significantly reduced in other nations, but the program had already been renewed for the Soviet Union in 1943.

As has already been discussed to some extent in the previous chapter, Washington officials were infuriated by what they saw as Roosevelt’s policy of “unconditional aid”.\textsuperscript{139} They

\textsuperscript{135} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 95.
\textsuperscript{136} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 95.
\textsuperscript{137} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 95.
\textsuperscript{138} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 95.
\textsuperscript{139} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 96.
argued that the “Russian military position was no longer desperate and the Soviets seemed to be exploiting American generosity” which made the U.S. appear weak.\textsuperscript{140} Presidential advisors, such as Averell Harriman, begged Roosevelt to use the policy of Lend-Lease as an “instrument of pressure” in response to wild claims that the Soviets were actually wasting wartime supplies by hoarding them away for plans of Soviet postwar reconstruction.\textsuperscript{141} Despite such pleas, Roosevelt “vigorously resisted any efforts to modify” the program.\textsuperscript{142} One can easily assume why no modification was done during the war; the U.S.S.R. and the United States were allies. And in the event that efforts to open up a second front failed (which they did), Lend-Lease was considered the only other “means of support available.”\textsuperscript{143} But the renewal of Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union towards the end of the war can only be understood in terms of mutual economic assistance, which fixed the new path of Soviet-American relations that had begun in 1933. The most telling piece of evidence to support this notion is section 3c of the Lend-Lease Act to the U.S.S.R. in 1943. In this clause, is stated the “allowance of a steady flow of industrial equipment to Russia even if the equipment did not contribute directly to the war effort or could not be made operational before the end of the war.”\textsuperscript{144} In other words, this statement lends its support to the Soviet Union’s plans for postwar economic development. It is a clause that appeals to the continuation of the promise of mutual aid that came to be established with official recognition of the U.S.S.R. in 1933. No wonder Roosevelt felt “that he could not modify it without risking a

\textsuperscript{140} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 96.

\textsuperscript{141} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 97.

\textsuperscript{142} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 95.

\textsuperscript{143} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 94.

\textsuperscript{144} Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 98.
break in the relationship he had built with the Soviets” ever since.\(^{145}\) Roosevelt’s hope that economic assistance would “convince the Russian leaders of American good will” and wipe away any cause for Soviet suspicion may have been idealistic but it came to bear truth. Kept in this regard, the role of Lend-Lease takes on even greater significance since it seems that Truman’s abrupt cessation of economic aid did more than just terminate a wartime agreement, it rocked the very foundations of Soviet-American amity.

Truman’s decision to stop Lend-Lease was the first of many blatant acts of American aggression to follow in the wake of World War II. By the end of the war, America had emerged “by far as the strongest power on earth.”\(^{146}\) The pressures of war, it seemed, reinvigorated American industrial and economic power; and as the sole surviving power governed by the kind of Wilsonian ethics which constituted Europe’s prewar structure, America took it upon herself to rebuild and reform the world order. The only obstacle that stood in the way of such restoration was the Soviet Union. Now the condition of the Soviet Union has been already hinted at in this report, and so, it is safe to say that the Soviet Union—though it emerged as the world’s other leading superpower—was not nearly as strong as the United States since it had undergone horrendous losses of both man and machine power during the war, figures not nearly comparable to those of the U.S. The people of Russia were “war-weary” and “the emphasis in the Soviet press, was overwhelmingly domestic…economic…affairs.”\(^{147}\) Despite, long-lived desires for the Soviet Union to catch-up and overtake the United States, “the immense…lead of the United

\(^{145}\) Herring, “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of Cold War”, 98.


\(^{147}\) Kolko, *The Limits of Power*, 54.
States over Russia [as late as] 1949 was never in doubt.\textsuperscript{148} What is most surprising is that even the NSC 68 report drafted in 1950 reveals such incapabilities. Concerning the realm of economics, the report lists productions statistics between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., concluding that “even granting optimistic Soviet reports of production, the total economic strength of the U.S.S.R. compares with that of the U.S. as roughly one to four.”\textsuperscript{149} Such a statistic was given considering that the Soviet Union was “near maximum production basis.”\textsuperscript{150} The report also states that “in other field-general technological competence, labor resources, productivity of labor force-the gap corresponds to that of production.”\textsuperscript{151} Only in the realm of “scientific research…is the superiority of the United States unclear.”\textsuperscript{152} It seems that for Americans what certainly remained most fearful was the unsure trajectory of Soviet efforts.

Despite such weakened conditions, Americans believed firmly that the Soviet Union was capable of extending military force throughout the world; it had already launched its Red Army into parts of Europe in response to American impediments on its territorial sphere of security thereby initiating the construction of an “iron curtain”. Like in those decades before the war, when Communist suspicious ran rampant, the greatest concern Washington expressed dealt with the means by which the Soviet Union could achieve world domination. In investigating their

\textsuperscript{148} Kolko, \textit{The Limits of Power}, 54.


military capacity, this fear is clearly stated, “The Soviet Union is developing the military capacity to support its design for world domination.” However, once again, an examination of Soviet strengths would prove that “armed forces are not yet sufficient to initiate a war with the United States.” Instead, what the Soviets did possess was a check on the United States’ envisioned monopoly of the atomic bomb. This is what proved most frightening to the Americans, so much so that it was believed that “the…strength [in armed forces] coupled with an atomic capability [could] provide the Soviet Union with great coercive power…in furtherance of its objectives.” Now, there of course remained questions concerning the accuracy of Soviet atomic capabilities. What is mentioned for certain in the report is the possession of Soviet aircraft that could deliver an atomic bomb overseas for an attack (though this is followed by a statement suggesting the Soviets are poor at target practice) along with estimates of Soviet atomic stockpiles, that are not to be exaggerated. As was discussed in the last chapter, Stalin’s aims in further developing nuclear technology were posed according to signs of American aggression. He didn’t plan on war with the United States even if it was a possibility, but he sure wanted to be prepared if a threat came from the United States.

In accordance with this security report, it seems as though for Americans the Soviet Union represented the unknown; a force clearly weaker but still capable of vying for the world power America so desperately desired on the pretext of reconstructing the former world order. But in taking into account what is perhaps the most important document, on behalf of Soviet


sentiments, in the early years of the Cold War one is quickly able to realize that what the United States only imagined, the Soviets actually witnessed in attempts to gain worldwide domination. The telegram of Soviet Ambassador to the United States- Nikolai Novikov- vividly describes the status of the U.S. in its attempts toward achieving a global takeover. Novikov explains that the “expectation of the U.S. during World War II…was that [the war] would crush its main rivals weaken them to such a degree…and that due to this circumstance the U.S. would be the most powerful factor in deciding the main issues of the postwar world.”

Seeing as though the Soviet Union, after the war, retained “independence from the outside world and is restoring its economy by its own means” America began to view the Soviets with contempt and fought ever harder in carving a prominent place for herself in the world system. Taking advantage of the “shattered European economy…America sent enormous deliveries of goods and the importation of capital to be introduced” into those broken countries which needed to rebuild. As in the case of Italy, and many other countries with a torn system of government, America injected herself into that nation’s politics-attempting to rid it entirely of any Communist influence-in the belief that politics formed the underpinning of an economic system. In addition, the “increase in peacetime military potential and the organization of a large number of naval and air bases in the U.S. and beyond its borders are clear indicators of the U.S. desire to establish world domination.”

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158 Novikov, *Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. to the Soviet Leadership.*

159 Novikov, *Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. to the Soviet Leadership.*
than 10 times those in the 1938 budget.”

There has also been seen with Great Britain a “partial division of the world”. The “U.S. is not interested in helping or supporting the British Empire but...in penetrating the Mediterranean...which attracts them with its natural resources, primarily oil.” This is the world in which the Soviet Union was forced to face-off against the United States. It was not a world formed by mere speculation, but by real threats.

The United States’ role in World War II-fighting against regimes that were considered hostile to true freedom—had allowed for a more “assertive and expansive tone” of America’s good old mission to protect and defend. But after the war had ended, it seems America was ill-prepared to live in a peaceful society. Its major attempts to infiltrate nearly all corners of the globe, reflected its own desire for security in wishing to set up governments based upon the American model which was sure to bring peace-and economic prosperity—to the United States. The Open Door Policy became more of a “Good Neighbor Policy...infused with the rhetoric of America’s mission to defend and extend democracy.” But in view of the origins of such a policy, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, the actual context of such a mission was “defined by the immediate and specific needs of American businessmen and by the long-range objective of a broad integration of the U.S. economy”—hence, the schemes put in place to control portions

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160 Novikov, *Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. to the Soviet Leadership.*

161 Novikov, *Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. to the Soviet Leadership.*

162 Novikov, *Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. to the Soviet Leadership.*


164 Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy,* 165-166.
of the Middle East rich in natural resources or the investment of American capital into Europe’s shattered societies. 165

So it was in this way, that those three basic concepts outlined in the beginning of this section were transformed to represent a new set of ideals, though a contradictory one. Since the close of World War II, American policy has been guided by three basic notions. “One, is the warm, generous, humanitarian impulse to help other people solve their problems.”166 Second, is the “principle of self-determination on the international level that asserts the right of every society in establishing its own goals or objectives.”167 And third, is the unwavering belief that “other people really cannot solve their problems and improve their lives unless they go about it in the same way as the United States.”168 And it is this third belief that really erases the sense of righteousness which accompanies this American mission. After all, the “insistence that other people ought to copy America contradicts the humanitarian urge to help them” and it also nullifies belief in the principles of self-determination which America was supposed to be upholding.169 To state it very clearly, “the American way of doing things simply does not work for other people.”170 Perhaps, this was the biggest problem in postwar relations with the Soviet Union. For no matter how much leverage America seemed to flaunt or the aggressive foreign policy measures carried out in order to mold the world’s countries into dare one say, American

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165 Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 166.
satellites, Stalin’s U.S.S.R. remained almost unperturbed and kept on following its own path to independence.

Conclusion

For now, our investigation into the origins of the Cold War must come to end. Looking back on the various sections of this paper, it is hoped that a clear and newfangled interpretation for the era has begun to take root. Section One, entitled *The Other*, explored the popular perception of Americans toward Russia (and then, the Soviet Union) in the period roughly stretching from 1809 to 1950. Throughout the course of Soviet-American relations, it seemed that popular attitude was quite teetering. Despite the great efforts of former President Roosevelt in trying to strengthen ties between the two countries and thereby aid in altering public opinion, the inauspicious impressions created by Lenin’s early regime could not be overcome. Section Two, *The True Stalin*, reexamined the role and mindset of Joseph Stalin as leader of the U.S.S.R. What should be obtained from this section is a grand image of Stalin as a nationalist. Though some of his strategies were originally founded in the hope of worldwide revolution, this desire to spread Communism no doubt subsided during the campaign to build up a sense of Russian nationalism in the 1930s and then, even further after his exploits during World War II and the partnership with Roosevelt and Churchill. Rather, Truman’s abrupt change of policy acted as a major cause for the breakdown of the Grand Alliance which was sure to have contracted peace for the postwar. Lastly Section Three, labeled *Economics*, unveiled the grave economic considerations that were very much at the heart of Soviet-American relations, and in some instances actually formed the basis of amity between the two countries. This section attempted to describe the transformation of American foreign policy objectives; a change that can again, most
decidedly can be seen in the abrupt foreign policy changes that took place after 1945. The overall image of both countries should be seen as strikingly unequal; America was an overly aggressive fanatical power dominated by self-interest and a contrived sense of righteousness in its attempt to set the whole world right. The Soviet Union on the other hand, was a broken and divided nation desperately seeking economic aid in order to achieve independence and so strengthen itself from the aggression of other nations, namely the U.S.

Again, the reader is asked to forgive any omissions made apparent throughout the work. The major themes of this piece, revolving around popular perception and economics as well as individual mindsets, are in themselves very complex areas of study that require extensive investigations. Still, it is hoped in reading that there has been a mark of originality surrounding the interpretation found in the preceding chapters. Finally the overall goal of this text should also be communicated in consideration of the work’s length. This goal was simply to elucidate, what seem to be, the most significant factors pertaining to the origins of the Cold War; and to present them in a somewhat different light than is often told so that future historians may be encouraged to break the status quo, and form their own opinions about yesterday’s events. With that said, this text summarizes the understandings of the author on what exactly launched the Cold War, the most dangerous and volatile point in human history, thus far.
AREN'T WE HAVING ENOUGH TROUBLE WITH THE MACHINERY WITHOUT LETTING SOMEBODY THROW A MONKEY WRENCH INTO IT?
One Year Against Hitler: Stalin Proved His Name Meant 'Steel'
THE RIVAL BUSES
The warmonger Truman has launched a brutal and unprovoked attack upon the defenseless peoples of North Korea.
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