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Introduction by Robert Jervis, Columbia University

The relations between the disciplines of history and political science have always been both close and, partly for that reason, contested. Political science grew in part out of history, which led its practitioners to be both deeply imbued with historical knowledge and to need to differentiate themselves from the study of history. Until about fifty years ago, the overlap between the disciplines was especially great in the international area, and the first issues of *World Politics*, the founding journal of international relations, had numerous articles by historians. For a variety of reasons, the gap widened, but in the sub-field of security studies contact never disappeared, in part because, as Stephen Schuker notes, scholars interested in this subject were marginalized in both disciplines. From my vantage point as a political scientist, it has seemed that the relationship has been less than fully balanced, with our interest in history not being fully reciprocated by our historian colleagues. I remember going to see Raymond Sontag (with whom, Schuker notes, Marc Trachtenberg studied) when I was a graduate student at Berkley to talk to him about my attempt to use history. He was too gracious to visibly wince at the idea of history being used in this way and did make clear that he was glad to see political scientists being interested in history, but it was also clear that he didn't think we had much to contribute.

Over the past decade, the intensity of the exchanges between historians and political scientists has increased, especially in the security area.¹ All IR students are, or at least should be, familiar with the works of the historians Paul Schroeder, Michael Howard, and Ernest May, to take just three examples. But the author of the book that is the subject of this Roundtable, Marc Trachtenberg, is unique in our era of having moved to a political science department (UCLA) after first establishing himself as a historian. As Richard Betts notes, Trachtenberg has "dual disciplinary citizenship."

This characteristic of Trachtenberg is appreciated by all three of our reviewers, who also see the virtues of Trachtenberg's bringing a third leg to his stool, which is a consideration of current policy. Schuker asks whether "Trachtenberg's insights derive importantly from his mastery and integration of two fields, or simply from the exercise of a powerful historical imagination and the courage to go where the evidence leads," but the other reviewers, like Trachtenberg himself, believe that his reading and teaching of IR theory has led him to bring sharper, if not different, questions to the historical material. Perhaps the main one is the relationship between perceptions of the military balance and the state's foreign policy, which Trachtenberg sees as central throughout history. This is linked to his argument that the impulse toward preventive war was much stronger during the Cold War than many scholars realized, and is a thread that runs through international politics from World War I to the Iraq War. Betts and Dülffer find Trachtenberg a bit too enthusiastic on this score, and all three reviewers note Trachtenberg's relegation of international law to a very minor status, something that Schuker and Betts endorse, but Dülffer rejects. Trachtenberg also borrows from political science a sense that leaders and states are quite

¹ See, for example, Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

consistent. Indeed his method of linking disparate aspects of behavior and putting together the pieces to make a coherent picture is one that, while shared with some historians like A. J. P. Taylor, leaves others (and some IR scholars like me) with doubts that are based on the fact that leaders often react to the pressures of the moment, improvise, and follow confused and contradictory policies.

Betts notes that central to Trachtenberg's concerns is the question as to whether systems in which the actors focus on interests and power will be stable. Trachtenberg argues not only that this should be the case, but that most forms of Realism deny this. He sees most of the sources of trouble as lying within states, in their domestic politics or the peculiarities of individual leaders. But Betts notes that Trachtenberg's view of Realism misses many arguments that are similar to his. Indeed, recently Kenneth Waltz, the father of Neorealism, argued that the great increase in China's power should not prevent the U.S. and China from handling their disputes relatively easily.²

Schuker and Dülffer, while praising Trachtenberg's mining of the historical record, question whether enough documents are yet available to give us great confidence in many of the arguments, but they join Betts in agreeing that this is an extraordinarily rich collection of essays that can be read with profit and enjoyment by anyone interested in international history, a view that I am glad to endorse.

Participants:

Marc Trachtenberg, an historian by training, now teaches in the Political Science Department at UCLA. He is the author of a number of works dealing with twentieth century international politics. His book *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* was published by Princeton University Press in 2006.

Robert Jervis is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics at Columbia University. His most recent book is *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Cornell University Press, 2010). He was President of the American Political Science Association in 2000-01 and has received career achievement awards from the International Society of Political Psychology and ISA's Security Studies Section. In 2006 he received the National Academy of Science's tri-annual award for behavioral sciences contributions to avoiding nuclear war.

Richard K. Betts is Director of the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, was Director of National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, taught at Harvard and Johns Hopkins, served on the staffs of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and National Security Council, and has been a member of the National Commission on Terrorism and advisory

² Kenneth Waltz on "Why Iran Should Get the Bomb" (Q&A with Zachary Keck), *The Diplomat*, 8 July 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/07/08/kenneth-waltz-on-why-iran-should-get-the-bomb/>, accessed 2 September 2012.

panels for the Director of Central Intelligence and CIA. His books include *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises*; *Surprise Attack*; *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*; *Military Readiness*; *Enemies of Intelligence*; *American Force*; and as coauthor or editor, *The Irony of Vietnam* and others.

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Stephen A. Schuker is William W. Corcoran Professor of History at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *The End of French Predominance in Europe* (1976) and *American 'Reparations' to Germany, 1919-33* (1988), and the editor of *Deutschland und Frankreich vom Konflikt zur Aussöhnung: Die Gestaltung der westeuropäischen Sicherheit, 1914-1963* (2000). He is currently writing a book entitled *Watch on the Rhine: The Rhineland and Western Security, 1914-1950*.

TRACHTENBERG'S TRIAD

There should be a natural symbiosis between historians and political scientists. As a political scientist¹ I have always thought that we get to do the things that are fun but risky—discern generalizations that can give prescriptive utility to knowledge—while historians should keep us honest. Too often, however, we proceed independently. Too many political scientists mine history recklessly, superficially, tendentiously. Too many historians lose sight of the need to find truths that transcend particular cases; indeed, historians usually disparage the very concept of “cases.” Generalizations, however, are the only kind of truth that can provide utility: conclusions about situations that are not unique but similar enough to other situations that they can be expected to offer lessons for what policymakers should do.

Marc Trachtenberg occupies an important niche among analysts of the Cold War: dual disciplinary citizenship. He is a historian who understands how the purpose of political science is different from that of history, and why the difference is legitimate and useful. He applies this vital combination to understanding crucial phases of U.S. national security policy—how Washington maneuvered to confront and control adversaries and allies while avoiding (but risking) nuclear war, and how issues in this experience carried over into the period after that titanic struggle ended. He also honors the responsibility that too many academics in both disciplines ignore, by highlighting the relevance of what he learns for policy. In all this he conceives the field of international relations “as a kind of triad” in which history, theory, and policy inform each other (62).

Trachtenberg the historian focuses on detailed evidence rather than the fast and loose summaries on which too many political scientists rely. He also does not let his predispositions channel his search and assessment of evidence, as too many scholars of all persuasions unconsciously do. Admitting as he does that research convinced him he had been wrong about the prevalence of preventive war motives is an all too rare act of honesty (249-50). As a political scientist (given his position in UCLA’s political science department my discipline can claim him too) he realizes that facts do not speak for themselves and that understanding one snippet of past reality matters less than understanding patterns of cause and effect across more than one snippet—which means using theory. No other scholar of the Cold War exploits this combination of understandings better than Trachtenberg.

The Cold War and After does two main things brilliantly, but by the end seems less steady than I would like about the implications of it all for policy. First, the essays marshal evidence that revises prevalent assumptions about the nature and evolution of the NATO alliance and U.S. policy, deflating myths popular among liberal institutionalists about generous American multilateralism. Trachtenberg’s examples of brutal U.S. *diktaten* to the

¹ Not least because I believe my discipline is weak science, if it were up to me I would call it just “politics” rather than political science; after all, economists do not call their discipline “economic science.”

Europeans convincingly puncture the arguments of political scientists who tout the importance of American acceptance of constraints and “binding” to principles of cooperation and joint policy development with allies.²

Second, the book considers how history confirms or confounds different strands of ‘realist’ international relations theory. He does this carefully, and with the complexity of a historian rather than the simplicity on which political scientists too often insist. As I read his ruminations, Trachtenberg starts out thinking that ‘offensive’ realism is mistaken in seeing international life as Hobbesian, and that the logic of balance of power makes realism properly conceived a theory of peace rather than inevitable conflict. In other words, he seems to fall roughly in the ‘defensive’ realist camp. Yet the evidence seems to him to challenge the logic. He writes, “This is what makes the Cold War so puzzling. If both America and Russia were willing to live with things as they were---if each accepted, and made it clear to the other that it accepted, a divided world---where was the problem?” (109).³

His answer is that it is not the *international system* (anarchy) that causes war, but forces at the unit level (ambitions or miscalculations of governments). This view, though, is quite compatible with Kenneth Waltz’s formulation that international anarchy is the *permissive* cause of war, but policies of particular states at particular times are the efficient cause.⁴ Whatever puzzlement there is here about whether realism should predict peace or war is old. It recalls the confusion some attribute to Hans Morgenthau over whether his version of realism was an empirical or normative theory. The answer is both. Realism prescribes prudent policies to promote national interest within a balance of power, because history allegedly shows that those who do not follow the prescription---who do not mobilize against threats or exercise restraint in pursuit of opportunities---usually suffer.

On the subject of the book, I find Trachtenberg’s unconventional interpretations of Eisenhower’s and Kennedy’s policies toward the European allies most valuable. The assumption that since the dawn of the Cold War the United States has always been unreservedly committed to shouldering the burden of European defense is widely shared, but Trachtenberg shows it to be false. Few today in the foreign policy elite, or even among scholars, appreciate Eisenhower’s attempt to ease the United States out of primary responsibility, or the extent to which he promoted nuclear proliferation in order to do so. Few appreciate how different Kennedy’s priorities were, and how his attempt to exert

² Confession: I was predisposed to like this aspect of the book, since it comports with my own arguments, for example in “Institutional Imperialism,” *The National Interest* No. 113 (May-June 2011).

³ Here Trachtenberg seems to flirt with rational choice theory. Historian Geoffrey Blainey and political scientist James Fearon have both argued that war requires a disagreement or misunderstanding about the balance of power, since correct understanding of reality by both sides would mean that the weaker knows it could not gain from war, hence should concede or compromise without a fight. Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3d edition (New York: Free Press, 1988), chapter 8; Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 4 (Summer 1995), 379-414.

⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 231-235; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 69-72.

American control of the alliance, to reduce strategic reliance on deliberate escalation, and to tighten control of nuclear weapons were all underwritten by institutionalization of a permanent U.S. conventional force in Europe.

I have only one unsatisfied reaction to the theoretical frame that drove Trachtenberg's examination of the reasons for instability in the Cold War, and one to his fascinating historical argument for Eisenhower's alleged scheme to make the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) an autonomous decision-maker in the event of crisis. On the first, his point of departure is that the postwar division of Europe should easily have lent itself to a stable *modus vivendi* between the superpowers. But why should we have expected such acceptance by either side? To Trachtenberg the answer is that balance of power made it clear that there could be no viable alternative, so mistaken "unit level" sources of instability were implicitly responsible. But this implies a vulgar form of realism that underestimates the motivating force of ideology on both sides. In real life nothing ordains that stability must trump other objectives, especially when the question of the ultimate social organization of the world is involved. Moreover, the existence of a geographically isolated West Berlin---what Khrushchev called a bone in his throat---created a structural time bomb bound to create a crisis, as it did three times in the first fifteen years of the Cold War.

On the second point, I do not fully get the argument that Eisenhower aimed to give SACEUR the decisive role in initiating war in the event of crisis, or at least why such a vision would limit U.S. control (149-150). Since SACEUR was also the U.S. CINCEUR (Commander in Chief, Europe), as an American military officer he could never escape his constitutional subordination to the top U.S. commander in chief (the president), so it is hard to envision a situation in which, even with little time, he would not bow to the word from the White House. What I am missing is why the Eisenhower scheme didn't envision the best of both worlds for the United States: disentanglement from the primary role in a ground war, but control over the prosecution of the war.

My reservations about the first seven chapters of *The Cold War and After* are minor. Trachtenberg's lengthy discussion of preventive war thinking in the last two chapters is also quite useful for the many liberals and realists who assume that U.S. strategists have always relied on deterrence and defense, or the leftists who see U.S. strategy as simply bald aggression. His assessment of international law may also not play well with liberals or foreigners who will bridle at the notion that they deploy it to constrain the United States because they have no other leverage. This goes well with the rest of his realism. In this late part of the book I have only three significant reservations.

The first and second reservations are general. First, I do not think Trachtenberg accords enough significance to the difference between preemptive and preventive war. Both are problematic, but the former is clearly more justifiable in both principle and practice than the latter. The Bush administration's elision of the difference in its rhetoric before attacking Iraq was a major corruption of strategic debate.

Second, after reading the last two chapters I have the nagging feeling that although Trachtenberg understands the logic of preventive war thinking well, he seems too a bit too sympathetic to it. He does not endorse preventive war, he does note drawbacks, and I may be mistaking empathy for sympathy. He does not, however, supplement his discussion of the reasons that make preventive war logically tempting with an equally resounding “but” that emphasizes why the downside strongly outweighs those reasons.⁵ I would have been happier if he was clearly critical of the Bush administration’s rationale for initiating war against Iraq in 2003. Here I may be in the realm beyond science and scholarship where uncertainty about strategic wisdom leaves intuition driving judgment.

The third reservation is particular. Trachtenberg’s argument that Roosevelt purposely provoked an unnecessary war with Japan (and he does explicitly call it unnecessary), because it was the only way to get the United States into a necessary war with Germany, is hard to take. This goes half-way toward the perennial right-wing conspiracy stories that FDR knew Pearl Harbor would be attacked and let it happen for just such reasons. If only out of sentimentality, I hope that Trachtenberg’s speculation about FDR’s maneuver is wrong. I am unhappy that, despite his usual habit of excellent judgment, he approves of it. Call me not enough of a realist, an idealist backslider, or whatever, but a democracy should not go to war if the people and congress cannot be convinced by the president on the merits of the case, and certainly not on the basis of blatant presidential deception.

This book does far better than most in developing strong arguments without kneading the evidence to fit them. Most of the arguments seem right to me, and none of the direct ones seem clearly wrong. If Trachtenberg had sounded less implicitly indulgent of preventive war in principle, or the worst interpretation of FDR’s strategy before Pearl Harbor, I would have put the book down with happiness on the same high level as my intellectual respect.

⁵ For reasons why preventive war is almost always a bad idea see chapter 6 of my *American Force* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), and for why it was a bad idea even if Saddam Hussein had in fact had weapons of mass destruction, my “Suicide for Fear of Death?” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 1 (January/February 2003).

Marc Trachtenberg, a learned historian who teaches political science at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) is a rare example of a scholar who bring the cultures of the two traditions together or better, one who who discusses historical evidence that is also informed by methodological questions and thus produces interdisciplinary scholarship. The second volume of collected essays by this author¹ in 1991 was followed by a methodological introduction to the field of international history [2].² These two approaches – historic case studies and methodological essays – are now combined in another volume of nine essays which have all been published before, some in a more condensed form between 1996 and 2012. Almost all of the extended versions are available on Trachtenberg’s website at UCLA.

Trachtenberg insists that the three pillars of his work are theory, history and politics. The two essays at the beginning of this volume are grouped as “theory,” five in the second section contain “history,” and the third part is titled “politics” and also includes two essays. I would argue that the dividing line between history and politics is so thin: politics means that Trachtenberg starts from a contemporary problem from which he goes back to historical parallels and differences. In general the author opines: “Historical study can serve as a sort of laboratory” (280), an insight which all the historical essays also provide. On the other side, Trachtenberg argues about theory mostly with historical examples. The most important of these theories is “realism” in political science. He develops a profound knowledge of methodological positions from Hans Morgenthau via Kenneth Waltz to John Mearsheimer, but quarrels with the realists in two regards: the first is that states under this assumption compete towards war-like behavior, the second is that states behave rationally in the sense of the maintenance of an overall system. Thus he does not accept the notion that only anarchy prevails: “the idea that anarchy generates conflict is thus very much open to question” (22). On the contrary, “a world in which everyone behaves ‘realistically’ [...] is thus a stable world” (27), and instability comes in only when “other factors come into play” (ibid.). Examples come from French theorists of the eighteenth century and Otto von Bismarck via Woodrow Wilson to Joseph Stalin in 1945. There has always been a certain kind of international system which is in the mind of politicians. A spontaneous balance of power mechanism “is not particularly strong” (38), but balancing as such makes sense. Thus “realism” may be an explanation which aims at “moderation and restraint” and is “at its heart a theory of peace” – not war (42/43). In the second piece on theory, Trachtenberg argues that there can be no real theory in international relations due to the complexity of the field. He confirms an anarchical character but “to understand power [...] is to understand why other states’ interests normally need to be respected” (52). “The anarchic realm [...] is a political realm *par excellence*” (57).

¹ Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

² Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, the five case studies serve this purpose. Sophisticated arguments are rendered here somewhat simplified: in 1945 the United States became more and more ready to accept a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. “There was a guiding philosophy here” (107), but Secretary of State Byrnes could not speak openly about it. The decision for West German rearmament in the second half of 1950 was not forced upon Secretary of State Dean Acheson, but he himself accepted the package deal that American troops would remain stationed in Europe and that German soldiers would be rearmed. Thus a “myth” of U.S. historiography should be destroyed: It was not till MC 48, the new NATO military defense strategy of 1954, when France was forced to accept the reality of armed West German soldiers.

The “structure of great power politics, 1963-1975” has the widest scope and is an extended version of Trachtenberg’s essay in the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*.³ In this many-faceted article, he discusses the importance of U.S. relations with China which opened the opportunity for playing on a trilateral basis with the Soviet Union, but offers also insights into transatlantic relations, especially the view of a West German “Finlandization” and its problem with building a nuclear deterrent of its own. As Trachtenberg himself concedes, “it is ultimately just a brushstroke” (x). Some differentiation of this overview comes in the last article in this section which, in great length (60 pages) and with profound knowledge of the sources, takes a view of France under Georges Pompidou compared with that of the U.S. under Richard Nixon. Surprisingly, barely taking West German *Ostpolitik* into account, this article offers a lot of minor corrections to conventional wisdom. Nevertheless, there is at times a tendency to confound a French view with a general (Western) European one. Great Britain, conceptually included in Trachtenberg’s Europe, also gets only scarce attention.

The “political articles” offer an insight into George W. Bush’s *National Security Strategy* which claimed the right for “preemptive wars”. This rather strange defense of the doctrine argues that not only had Bill Clinton held the same view, but also that U.S. foreign policy basically left such an opportunity of preemption towards the Soviet Union open. The Cuban missile crisis is also seen in this light as an attempt by John F. Kennedy in great power politics. Trachtenberg argues that Bush differed from his predecessors only because preemption “has been embraced so overtly and so directly” (277).

I would argue that before Bush's presidency the question of preemption was only a secondary option, even against the Soviet Union, which did not materialize and that this was more specific than Bush’s general “war on terror” which claimed not only to intervene almost everywhere in the world, with the power of the strongest military state, but also to create a new world order on the basis of a coalition of the willing. Interestingly Trachtenberg stops his run through history between 1963 and 1995 despite the real Soviet fears about a U.S. option of preemption circa 1980. Did this fear of preemption side with a real U.S. strategy of preemption? At least this perception contributed considerably to the

³ Marc Trachtenberg, “The structure of great power politics. 1963-1975”, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Volume 2, eds. Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010), 482-502; in this book the chapter runs from 154-182.

second cold war,' as this period is called by some scholars who prefer to name the whole period better as East-West Conflict. The second piece in the last section tries to positively argue against European critiques of the American war against Saddam Hussein in 2003 with a great concern for the future of NATO. One of the arguments will be taken up immediately.

Trachtenberg has an amazing ability to reconstruct political constellations. This can be done before a background of not only broad knowledge of scholarly literature, but in some cases with the knowledge of archival sources. This mostly concerns U.S. documents, but he has also visited French archives and seen German published documents. Thus Trachtenberg is one of the rare American historians who can do justice also to scholarship in French and German. Nevertheless, regarding his piece about the year 1945, there is a broad (not only German language) literature which doubts that Stalin was prone to a division of Germany in 1945 which may have modified some statements.

Trachtenberg's arguments against historical myth, his assertion that others had got it wrong so far, that the standard view had to be modified, the idea that precaution is necessary before judgments: all this kind of discussion shows an international historian at his best. Everyone can learn from him and mostly this reviewer is convinced and has learned something new.

But there also seem to be limits in this realist way of thinking. What does power constitute? On the one hand, Trachtenberg speaks about economic motives (and discusses them elaborately in the Pompidou article), but on the other hand, also international law. In general, he accepts limits on power when "other factors come into play" (27). This seems to him to be an aberration from what really should happen. International law or the idea of a rule of law does not seem to be one of them. He is very skeptical about Woodrow Wilson's design of a new international order. In the article on the Iraq war Trachtenberg argues that the U.S. did not resign its power to wage war independently through the UN charter. International law is made by states and thus no great power would confine its right to wage war only for self-defense. With the notion "International law is a law not above but between states", he sides with Lassa Oppenheim (originally from 1908⁴ –here quoted 297). Governments which speak otherwise may be cynical or hypocritical, but only "a world based on power, in fact, has a certain stability" (303). A world only based on law would not really be desired. Trachtenberg accepts that not only the intentions of (some of the) U.S. negotiators in 1945, who thought in categories of great powers, mattered, but also that subsequent state behavior was important. But, as he has answered a critique to the original publication of this article: "I am just talking about the way the international system works. I am simply assuming that power and interest still play fundamental roles in shaping the

⁴ Lassa Oppenheim: "The Science of International Law: Its Task and Method", *American Journal of International Law* 2, no.2 (April 1908), 322.

course of events”,⁵ could it not be that the relationship between pure power and international law or norms changed in the course of history, that this relation has to be historicized as such?⁶ There may be a peace-bringing capacity of pure power politics, but did pure power ever exist – the examples of Klemens von Metternich, Bismarck or others are not convincing in the real world.

In my opinion, interests only in combination with cultural perceptions, emotions, national, regional traditions, domestic dependencies -- and not only in democracies -- matter. And all these factors should be added to this kind of “realist” interpretation which Trachtenberg handles so masterfully. “Emotions are what they are”, writes Trachtenberg somewhat pejoratively (242). But all these factors matter – realist international history still has its great merits, but it should expand and also take into consideration other permanently changing factors in the historical development of power in the last two hundred or so years: international law should be one of them, and cultural factors in a very broad sense should be another set of additions which form an innovative international history. Marc Trachtenberg’s scholarship informs all of these approaches.

⁵ In *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Book Reviews and Responses, John Dumbrell, Online Publication Date: 01 March 2006, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09557570500501960> (27 June,2012).

⁶ See my article Jost Dülffer, „Recht, Normen und Macht“, in Jost Dülffer/Wilfried Loth (eds.), *Dimensionen internationaler Geschichte* (Munich: Oldenbourg 2012), 169-187 (forthcoming).

Marc Trachtenberg trained as a diplomatic historian under the renowned Raymond Sontag and spent the first half of his career in a history department. He subsequently accepted a position on a political science faculty and has labored indefatigably to knit the disciplines of international history and international politics together. He has shown both theoretically and in a series of research-driven studies how greatly the adepts of each field can profit by mastering the techniques of the other. Historians can reach a wider audience if they frame their findings in ways that address the systemic concerns of those on the other side of the line. International relations scholars can write with more specificity if they keep up with the discoveries of those familiar with the archives. As a matter of academic politics, moreover, both subfields need to justify their existence, historians owing to the contemporary preference for social and cultural approaches, international relations experts because of the vogue for quantification. Trachtenberg's steady outpouring of books and articles has thus evoked enthusiasm across the twin disciplines. His 2006 work, *The Craft of International History*, quickly emerged as a foundational text for Ph.D. candidates embarking upon dissertation work.¹

In the current collection, Trachtenberg brings together nine articles making explicit the connections that he discerns among theory, history, and policy. He has published all these pieces previously in one form or another, but he recasts some of them to illustrate heuristically how conceptual and empirical issues fit together. Trachtenberg has toiled for more than a decade on a sequel to his prize-winning volume covering the first stage of the Cold War—a period that he maintains ran from a seemingly amicable superpower divorce at the 1945 Potsdam Conference to a partial resolution of their conflicts over Central Europe in 1963.² The follow-up volume should prove a formidable undertaking. Why did a fully stable balance of power not come into being over the next decade or so, as his model might predict, notwithstanding the establishment of a rough nuclear parity between the USSR and the United States and the lessening of control by each of those powers over their respective client states?

Trachtenberg chips away at the larger enterprise from various angles in this compilation. Such a segmented strategy has much to commend it when addressing the last third of the century. A simple but accurate narrative line becomes hard to sustain as more national players (and NGOs) claim to have “agency” and as political, military, and financial developments take place within an intricate feedback loop. No wonder that many American foreign-policy specialists sidestep the impediments by focusing on “the world according to Washington.”³ With his roots in multi-archival European diplomatic history, Trachtenberg seeks to do more.

¹ *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

² *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

³ Sally Marks, “The World According to Washington,” *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 3 (1987), 265-82.

Yet the challenge of obtaining systematic evidence rather than disjointed partial releases from non-American repositories remains. Indeed, it becomes ever more formidable as one approaches the present. Trachtenberg demonstrates how one can surmount the difficulties in part through the deft use of web-based resources and disciplined inductive reasoning. He sets forth a template for doing just that. Despite his resourcefulness, however, he cannot always solve the interpretive problems that arise when one lacks access to a balanced documentary record. In the craft of contemporary history as now practiced, it seems, one must sometimes tolerate uncertainties and ambiguities.

Trachtenberg uses the first part of the book to address the role of the balance of power in international politics. Adherents of the American idealist tradition from the era of Woodrow Wilson onward have claimed that the competition of states within an anarchic system is destabilizing. Ignoring the failures of the League of Nations and the United Nations, they continue to promote supranational organizations and contend that extension of the rule of law in interstate relations should diminish the place of force in settling disputes. Curiously, as Trachtenberg makes clear through exegesis of the works of John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz, both ‘offensive realists’ and neo-realists likewise hold that power politics pushes nations into conflict with one another. The political theorists conjure up a so-called security dilemma. According to their model, even states without expansionist aims must increase their military strength in order to survive. Since no state in a multi-polar system can achieve absolute security, each nation has a reason to exaggerate threats and arm against potential rivals.

In the real world that historians study empirically, this model breaks down more often than not. That is why Trachtenberg adjures political scientists to pay close attention to the facts—in other words, to approach theoretical issues with an eye to what the empirical evidence shows. When statesmen accept the realities of power and carefully calibrate the national interest, they generally proceed rationally. They are likely to practice moderation and restraint rather than plunge into unessential conflict. The royal mentor François Fénelon, as Trachtenberg recalls, elaborated this argument at the beginning of the eighteenth century. If all players in the international system behave realistically, the outcome may not prove morally edifying, but will tend to promote equilibrium. That is why Klemens von Metternich and Otto von Bismarck, the nineteenth-century masters of *Realpolitik*, could sustain relatively stable systems in their day. Henry Kissinger, a latter-day practitioner of the balance of power, similarly professed to aim at “an outcome compatible with the self-respect and needs of the other side,” in his view “the only politically viable result.”⁴

Why, then, do so many wars take place? Why do nations so often privilege other values—ideology, religion, nationalist aspirations, imperial dreams, cultural preferences, moral convictions, the irrational impulses of the voting public—above the sober calculations of power and interest? Without touching on the deeper wellsprings of human nature,

⁴ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), 960.

Trachtenberg offers an answer that underscores the complexity of these problems. The balance of power turns out to be a fragile mechanism, often misperceived when the distribution of military and economic strength changes rapidly. Sometimes, as in the first stages of the Cold War, the logic of the security dilemma may indeed explain state behavior. The possibilities of asymmetric warfare render the calculation of power and interest uncertain. For that matter, reasonable observers can differ in judging particular situations. This reviewer, for example, doubts that in 1914 France and Britain could have built up sufficient armed strength to withstand a German attack without Russian assistance or that Britain could have deterred hostilities by holding back from war (62-63). Still, Trachtenberg's provocative insights invariably oblige the reader to reconsider old assumptions. He questions whether international organizations that limit the free play of political forces always play a stabilizing role. He wonders whether the United States, the unrivaled hegemon since 1991, might have benefitted in certain situations by acting as if constrained by a balance of power.

Trachtenberg devotes the central portion of the book to five historical case studies. He first tackles the issue of why the Cold War broke out in Europe when it seemed in 1945 that both sides sought to reach a deal. He makes a convincing case that Secretary of State James Byrnes worked assiduously to frame a spheres-of-influence agreement acknowledging Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria as part of the Soviet sphere. Threading his way through the documentary minefield, he infers that Stalin, as a supreme realist, likewise accepted the fact that "the western powers would dominate the part of Europe that lay on their side of the demarcation line" (97). Trachtenberg's forensic firepower almost overwhelms the reader. But is it certain that, when the Kremlin potentate shifted his line, he did so only for bargaining purposes? And can one properly conflate Byrnes's inclinations with American policy? Yes, Truman opined at Potsdam that a Slav Europe wouldn't be so bad (82). But the president, a high-school graduate who knew very little about foreign affairs at the time, shifted with every wind. Averell Harriman, James Forrestal, and Admiral William Leahy, among others, fought with Byrnes for the president's mind like contenders for the soul of Faust. Moreover, Roosevelt had veiled the concessions he had made at Tehran and Yalta, and a public reaction was bound to come. The descent into Cold War may not prove so "puzzling" (109) after all.

In a brilliant piece of detective work, Trachtenberg explodes the myth that the Pentagon imposed a 'single package' requiring the West Europeans to accept controlled German rearmament in 1950 as the price of American leadership in NATO. Even though he denied it in his memoirs, Secretary of State Acheson forced the pace himself. Trachtenberg persuades us that, whatever his views before 1945, Acheson took a hard line in his later State Department years. He favored the actual rollback of the Soviet empire. The United States, Trachtenberg adds, did not always "pay due regard" to the interests of its European allies (132). True, but was this a case in point? The strategic balance in 1950 permitted no other outcome. The French could hardly create a serious army.⁵ Only German troops could

⁵ On the utterly derisory condition of the French army in autumn 1950, see the reports in FO 371/89174-75, 89248, The National Archives (PRO).

hold up a Russian advance on the Elbe. The political problem consisted of nudging the French along to accept the inevitable without provoking their retreat to neutralism. One could argue that the United States showed excessive patience by indulging the fantasy of a French-led European Defense Community for almost four years.

In any event, Trachtenberg draws on his mastery of evolving technology to explicate the vicissitudes of the Atlantic alliance over the following two decades. In the middle 1950s NATO strategists went beyond thinking of atomic weapons as a deterrent. They embraced the doctrine of a nuclear first strike—in other words, preemptive war—as the best method of defending Europe in the missile age. What’s more, the Eisenhower administration hoped to develop a scheme for sharing control over tactical nuclear weapons with the allies. But American leaders in the 1960s sharply reversed that policy. They sought détente with the U.S.S.R. and resolved to keep nuclear weapons out of German hands.

Once the Soviets caught up with the United States in intercontinental ballistic technology, it became clear that the American people would never countenance a nuclear confrontation in order to protect Europe. The doctrine of flexible response using tactical weapons no longer made sense. The idea of a NATO nuclear umbrella, as President Nixon said bluntly in 1970, was “a lot of crap” (167). The Europeans would have to stand on their own. Surprisingly, the Russians under Leonid Brezhnev did not fully exploit their strategic advantage. Between 1964 and 1982 the Soviets spent proportionately three times as much on their military as did the Western countries, notwithstanding a failing economy. Yet they also entered into American schemes for arms control. Why? Was Brezhnev, as Kissinger speculated, a “political idiot”? Did the Russians fear the Chinese? Or did they believe, given the vertiginous decline of American financial power after abandonment of the Bretton Woods monetary system, that they could Finlandize Central Europe without risk? Trachtenberg provides tantalizing insights, but does not fully dispel the conundrum.

In a meaty study of American relations with France during the Georges Pompidou era (1969-74), Trachtenberg probes the reasons for the Franco-American rapprochement and its ultimate failure. This essay makes particularly dexterous use of the Digital National Security Archive, Nixon Library records, and the usually inaccessible files of Pompidou at the *Archives Nationales*. Kissinger’s aspiration to anchor a reconfigured American connection with Europe around France made sense. Without careful handling an integrated Europe might turn into a “Frankenstein monster” (202). The old rapport with Britain and Germany had faded. Britain teetered on the precipice of economic decline, and the Tory ‘wet,’ Edward Heath, attached greater value to Continental ties than to a transatlantic special relationship. In Bonn, a thrusting Social Democratic regime did not share the elective affinities that had bound both Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard to Washington. In truth, Chancellor Willy Brandt had never cared for American capitalism. Ostensibly, Brandt designed his *Ostpolitik* to reduce tensions with Russia, enlarge commercial markets, and accept the reality of two German states. The weakened United States could hardly object to that. Yet Brandt’s devious adviser, Egon Bahr, dreamt of a modernized Rapallo—a united and neutral Germany that would mandate the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Central Europe and tilt ever so slightly to the Russian side. No wonder that, after the obsessively anti-American Charles de Gaulle left the Elysée, the

Nixon team hoped it could do business with the sophisticated Pompidou, who though not free of illusions about France's role in the world stood prepared to pursue his ambitions rationally. The Pentagon could provide assistance for the French nuclear program as a sweetener.

Why could Washington and Paris not sustain their embryonic rapprochement?

Trachtenberg seeks to distinguish his views from those of Pierre Mélandri,⁶ who insists that the two countries had fundamentally incompatible aims, : the United States desiring an updated Atlantic solidarity, France aiming at a distinct European identity under its own leadership (234). He does succeed in contributing some nuance. Kissinger tried to provide content for his 1973 "Year of Europe" by establishing a high-level working directorate of the Allies; the French saw this effort as an outrageous scheme to perpetuate American hegemony at a time when the United States could no longer assure Europe's defense and instead explored superpower détente at Europe's expense. Yet other issues also fanned conflict. The United States pursued a crudely nationalistic monetary policy after eliminating the gold peg in 1971. From 1973 onward it depreciated the dollar below purchasing-power parity, causing problems for trade partners in order to diminish its own current-account deficit. Some might consider this monetary manipulation incompatible with political leadership and deem Trachtenberg too indulgent of the U.S. Treasury's dirty float. On the other hand, the Europeans cynically supported Arab aggression in the 1973 Mideast War and even denied NATO airspace to the United States when Washington delivered enough arms to Israel to avoid destruction. Once Pompidou disappeared from the scene, Foreign Minister Michel Jobert, a Gaullist *pur et dur*, treated America frankly as an enemy. In retrospect, Kissinger blamed the "demonic" Jobert for the frustration of his grand design.⁷ Trachtenberg inclines to the view that a real opportunity to recast the alliance was missed (242). Too many loose ends remain to render a definitive judgment.

In the final segment of his book, Trachtenberg brings a historical sensibility to matters of present interest. Critics of the George W. Bush administration often assert that the 2003 "preemptive war" against Iraq marked a dangerous innovation in U.S. foreign policy. Trachtenberg marshals the evidence indicating that this claim is unhistorical. No doubt the fashionable phrase, "a balance of power that favors freedom," implied no balance at all.⁸ That much is new. But, as Donald Rumsfeld insisted in justification of the Iraq war, the idea of "anticipatory self-defense" has an honorable pedigree. In 1941 Franklin Roosevelt imposed the oil sanction on Japan knowing full well that it would probably lead to an attack. He also said in justification of his undeclared naval war against Germany, "When

⁶ Pierre Mélandri, "Une relation très spéciale: la France, les Etats-Unis, et l'année de l'Europe," in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe. Colloque, 25 et 26 novembre 1993* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1995), 124.

⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little Brown, 1982), 162-67, 727-35.

⁸ National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, "A Balance of Power that Favors Freedom," Wriston Lecture, Oct. 2002, officially issued as *U.S. National Security Strategy: A New Era*, <http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aarice.htm>

you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him” (275). In the early nuclear age many political and military figures discussed the advisability of a preventive attack on Russia. In the 1962 Missile Crisis, both Kennedy brothers contemplated a possible invasion of Cuba. Trachtenberg also cites non-American examples to show that, contrary to Just War theory, anticipatory self-defense has always played an acknowledged part in the international system. When national security is threatened no one takes the sovereignty of weaker nations with undue seriousness (as we have seen most recently with the deployment of predator drones). The legitimacy of anticipatory self-defense depends always on a rational assessment of the threat.

Trachtenberg closes with an essay on the Iraq war and the concomitant crisis in the Western alliance. This scintillating piece, composed in the early stages of that war, illustrates what a skilled observer with deep historical knowledge can deduce—even in the absence of archives—relying solely on the international press, congressional testimony, and attention to past precedents. Trachtenberg first disproves the canard that a small nuclear arsenal (or comparably frightening chemical or biological weapons) has no practical use. It can be used for coercion and to alter the power balance—precisely as the Soviet Union employed its modest nuclear capability in 1949-53. Moreover, an inspection regime never succeeds without permanent occupation of a country, and economic sanctions rarely produce the desired effect. Once again the historical precedents are overwhelming. We now know that Saddam Hussein did not have weapons of mass destruction in 2003, but consideration of the broader issues has equal application to Iran today.

Trachtenberg turns finally to the Franco-German claim on the eve of the Iraq war that America had become a rogue superpower. Unilateral action, so said the Europeans, was impermissible under international law and the principle of respect for sovereign rights. The French and Germans, however, seem to have concocted this argument purely for political reasons. Trachtenberg makes clear through historical investigation that the officials who drew up the UN Charter never imagined that Article 51 ruled out preventive war or the unilateral use of force. Indeed, he goes further. Following Hans Morgenthau, he points out that the purported principles of international law are not binding unless states specifically accept them by treaty. Of course, scholars in the international law industry have a vested interest in elaborating juridical arguments to the contrary. But the international legal regime is fashioned by states, not by professors.⁹ Trachtenberg believes that a regime that excluded the use of force except in the case of armed aggression would tend to shield

⁹ International law enthusiasts wax indignant when historians venture to raise this “tired old question.” They underscore the limits of the “Modern State Conception” of law according to which some acknowledged body must ensure compliance with the rules. They seek to overcome the “sovereignist” challenge to international law by proposing enforcement through “outcasting.” One doesn’t require force if some undefined group of nations denies the benefits of social cooperation to the violator. See, e.g., Oona Hathaway and Scott Shapiro, “Outcasting: Enforcement in Domestic and International Law,” 121 Yale L.J. 252 (2011), <http://yalelawjournal.org/the-yale-law-journal/article/outcasting-enforcement-in-domestic-and-international-law/>. Note also the ensuing debate in the same journal on the so-called sociological transformation as we evolve from hunter-gatherer forms of life to an emergent sense of legal obligation.

the miscreant. A regime based on the actual distribution of power, he concludes, may offer some advantages over the paper world of the UN Charter.

Whether or not one agrees with any particular argument, every page in Trachtenberg's work deserves contemplation by students of diplomacy. A methodological puzzle remains. Do Trachtenberg's insights derive importantly from his mastery and integration of two fields, or simply from the exercise of a powerful historical imagination and the courage to go where the evidence leads?

Author's Response by Marc Trachtenberg, University of California, Los Angeles

The articles that appear in *The Cold War and After* are not new. In one form or another they had all already been published elsewhere. Why then did I want to publish these articles as a book?

Publishing them in a single volume, I thought, would allow me to make certain points about method—points about how, to my mind at least, work in our field needs to be done. And the main point I was trying to get across was that to do serious work in this field, you have to find some way to get the conceptual and the empirical issues to connect with each other. I thought it was important to show not just that historical work can shed light on fundamental issues of international relations theory, but also that theory can help bring the historical issues into focus. I also wanted to show how both history and theory can be brought to bear when you're dealing with major issues of policy. The basic idea was that it is important to try to pull together the three parts of field—history, theory, and policy—and these articles, I thought, could show in a variety of ways how in practice that kind of work could be done. By publishing them in a single volume, I could in effect highlight that basic point about method, since this was the common thread that tied this collection together and provided the only real rationale for republishing these articles as a book.

I was more interested, in other words, in showing how work in this area could be done than in presenting definitive answers to the questions I was dealing with. I wanted, in most of these papers, to give some feel for the fact that we don't have all the answers—that we're groping, that as scholars we're engaged in a kind of work-in-progress. What Stephen Schuker says about the "loose ends" I leave is certainly correct. I would like to know more about the "dirty float" of the dollar in the post-1973 period and about why that policy was pursued; I would like to know a lot more about whether Henry Kissinger was right when he referred to Leonid Brezhnev as a "political idiot." And I would like to know a good deal more about the extent to which the German Ostpolitik of the Brandt period really is to be understood as an example (and, indeed, as the prime example) of "Finlandization in action." The same point applies to the more general issues Richard Betts and Jost Dülffer refer to—to questions about international law, preventive war, the role of ideology, honesty in politics, and so on. But my main point here is not just that these are difficult issues—a lot more difficult, in fact, than many people think—but that we can get at them by doing serious historical work.

Let me give a small example of what I have in mind here, one that relates to what Betts said about what I had written about the predelegation to the NATO commander (SACEUR—the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe) in his capacity as U.S. commander in Europe of the authority to initiate hostilities during a crisis and in particular to order the use of nuclear weapons. I claimed that the predelegation arrangements would limit the "freedom of action of the American political authorities" in Washington (149), but SACEUR, Betts writes, was an American officer and could "never escape his constitutional subordination" to the president. Betts cannot see how, under those arrangements, the president would not retain "control over the prosecution of the war."

I dealt with this issue both in the article Betts was referring to, and also, at greater length, in my book on the Cold War. Basic NATO strategy at the time, I pointed out, placed “great emphasis on extremely rapid, and indeed on preemptive action.”¹ Because the decision had to be made so quickly, the key actor on the scene—the NATO commander—would play the central role “in deciding when the attack had to be ordered.”² It was for that reason that the predelegation arrangements were militarily and thus politically meaningful. President Eisenhower, a former SACEUR himself, certainly took those arrangements quite seriously. When asked “who would have the authority to decide on” the use of nuclear weapons by NATO forces, his answer was unambiguous. “Such authority,” he said, “should be vested in NATO and in particular in the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe.”³ At present, he pointed out, SACEUR was an American officer “and a decision, therefore, could be made under the present law.”⁴ But he thought the law, and perhaps even the Constitution, needed to be changed so that a European SACEUR—and he very much hoped a European general would be appointed to that position—would also have that authority.⁵ Those changes were of course never made, but the predelegation arrangements were an important part of the story. It was thought, for example, that those arrangements would have a major bearing on what might happen if fighting broke out around Berlin. Since the delegations could themselves be passed on down the chain of command, it appeared possible in 1961 (as an important Pentagon study later noted) that “a battle over Berlin could precipitate a nuclear reaction from NATO forces without authorization from the U.S. Government and even against its wishes.”⁶

¹ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 172.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 214.

⁴ Eisenhower-Spaak meeting, October 4, 1940, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* [FRUS], 1958-60, vol. 7, part 1, 641.

⁵ See Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 213-15, 224-25.

⁶ For the final quotation, see Ernest May, John Steinbruner and Thomas Wolfe, “History of the Strategic Arms Competition, 1945-1972,” part II (Office of the Secretary of Defense, Historical Office, 1981), 589 (http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/homeland_defense/missile_defense_agency/227.pdf). On the predelegation issue in general, see Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, 169-73, 191-92, 214-15, 298 n.46; “An Interview with Carl Kaysen,” prepared by Marc Trachtenberg on the basis on an interview with Kaysen conducted in 1988 by Marc Trachtenberg, Stephen Van Evera, and David Rosenberg, MIT Security Studies Program working paper, November 2010, 12-15, 18 (http://web.mit.edu/SSP/publications/working_papers/Kaysen%20working%20paper.pdf); National Security Archive, “First Documented Evidence that U.S. Presidents Predelegated Nuclear Weapons Release Authority to the Military,” March 1998 (with links to sixteen documents dealing with the issue, some heavily sanitized, and references to four important works that treat this subject) (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/19980319.htm>); and National Security Archive (William Burr), “Newly Declassified Documents on Advance Presidential Authorization of Nuclear Weapons Use,” August 1998 (with links to three additional documents) (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/predelegation2/predel2.htm>).

This issue is typical of the kind of problem you have to think about when you're dealing with fundamental historical and theoretical problems. Many people claim, for example, that nuclear weapons kept the peace during the Cold War period—that they are good only for deterrence, but that their deterrent effect is close to absolute. Dealing with problems like the meaning of the predelegation arrangements adopted during the Eisenhower period helps you see that things were just not that simple—that the problem of how to defend western Europe had no easy or obvious solution, and that some quite extraordinary arrangements were put in place during a key period in the history of the Cold War. And trying to sort out this kind of issue helps you reach certain conclusions about how risky a major crisis would have been. It can thus help shape your basic understanding of how international politics works in the nuclear age.

So historical analysis plays a fundamental, perhaps even an essential, role when you're dealing with these kinds of problems. As you work on historical issues like the meaning of the predelegation arrangements, you almost automatically develop the sort of conceptual framework you need in order to think about the problems people in our field are interested in. And I have to confess that for me the historical work I have done over the years has shaped a particular way of thinking about these issues. As the commentators note, I am very much of a realist in terms of my basic approach to international issues.

But do I tend to push that realist framework too far? Betts thinks that I underestimate “the motivating force of ideology on both sides” during the Cold War, and he points out, quite properly, that “in real life nothing ordains that stability must trump other objectives.” Dülffer thinks that a realist approach can only take you so far—that there are all kinds of factors other than power that come into play in international political life—and there is certainly no arguing with him on this point.

But how far a realist approach can get you is an empirical question, and it is important to ask, for example, how important ideological factors really were during the Cold War, and to make sure that the way you answer that question turns on what the evidence shows. When I first started to study these issues many years ago, I took it for granted that the Cold War was to be understood in mainly ideological terms, and I was amazed when it first began to dawn on me that ideology counted for a lot less, and power considerations for a lot more, than I had originally thought. The records of the Potsdam conference were particularly revealing, and the basic conclusions I reached when I worked with those documents were confirmed by the study I did of U.S. policy on eastern Europe in late 1945 (republished as the third chapter of the *Cold War and After* book). But I was also struck by John Kennedy's willingness, at the Vienna summit conference in 1961 and after, to work out a deal with the Soviets that would stabilize the status quo; I was struck, in particular, by his willingness to recognize the USSR's special position in eastern Europe.⁷ I was struck, in fact, by a whole

⁷ “We do not wish,” Kennedy told Nikita Khrushchev, “to act in a way that would deprive the Soviet Union of its ties in Eastern Europe.” Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting, June 4, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, vol. 14, doc. 32 (<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v14/d32>) (p. 95). The importance of this sentence is reflected in the fact that it was sanitized out of the version of this document released following a mandatory declassification review appeal in September 1990 (NLK-86-138APPEAL). This was one of only two short passages deleted from this version of the document.

series of findings of this sort, and not just from the Cold War period—findings that were surprising, unexpected, and therefore of fundamental importance. Findings of that sort force you to think about fundamental issues—that is, to think about why it was that power political considerations counted for so much in international political life. It is in that way that a basic conceptual framework takes shape, or at least that was the way this process worked in my case.

But as powerful as it is, there are limits to how far the realist approach can take you. Dülffer is certainly right on this point. There are all sorts of episodes in the history of great power politics in the last two centuries that cannot be understood in purely realist terms. Interests—and again, this is one of Dülffer’s key points—are not defined in simple power political terms. In practice, all kinds of factors come into play. But that does not mean that the realist framework is of value only to the extent that it can explain what actually happens. Even in cases where it falls short—or perhaps especially in those cases—it can serve as a powerful instrument of analysis. It helps you see what is puzzling. It can help give you some sense for the particular questions you need to concentrate on. The research you do can thus be highly targeted: you can focus on those specific empirical issues that can shed the most light on basic problems of historical interpretation.

The origins of the Cold War is for me the best case in point. Betts quotes a passage in which I was talking about what I saw as the central puzzle of the Cold War. The realist framework, in its pure form, suggested that U.S. power and Soviet power balanced each other so completely in 1945 that both sides should have been locked into the status quo—that each side had no choice but to accept the division of Europe. Both sides were under enormous pressure to adjust to basic political realities and accept the post-war status quo. But in such circumstances, how could there be any risk of war? “If both America and Russia,” I asked, “were willing to live with things as they were—if each accepted, and made clear to the other that it accepted, a divided world—where was the problem?”(109). The realist framework thus does not provide us with an answer to the problem of what caused the Cold War, but it helps us see that what happened is puzzling—something you would not see if you simply assumed that the Cold War was a natural product of ideological differences.

In itself, this point does not prove that ideological factors were not of major importance; the idea that the ideological conflict played a fundamental role is certainly a candidate explanation which one has to consider with some care. But the conclusion I reached in the work I did on the Cold War was that ideology was not a key factor. It’s not that I came to question the idea that the Americans, at the end of World War II, would have loved to see liberal democratic regimes come into being throughout Europe. A strong ideological preference was certainly there; the key point, however, is that it played a very limited role in shaping effective policy. The Americans, it was clear, would not go to war, or even risk war, in order to democratize eastern Europe. And the same sort of point applied to the Soviet side. The Soviets would probably have been delighted to see Communist regimes come to power in both parts of Europe, but they were obviously not willing to risk war with America to achieve that goal. And these conclusions were not based on my having opted for a particular theoretical view. They were based on a study of what policy actually was in

the immediate post-World War II period. It was quite clear, both from the Potsdam documents and from material relating to the immediate post-Potsdam period in late 1945, that both Secretary of State James F. Byrnes—the real maker of American policy at this time—and Joseph Stalin as well were willing to accommodate to basic power realities and in effect to accept the post-war status quo of a divided Europe.⁸

But that historical finding did not provide an answer to the basic question here. Quite the contrary: it served instead to underscore how puzzling the outbreak of the Cold War in 1946 was. If both sides were willing to live with a divided Europe, how could that conflict possibly develop? To find the answer, the events of early 1946 obviously had to be examined with some care. The key to the puzzle would have to lie there. The answer I gave in my book on the Cold War is that Soviet aggressiveness toward Iran and Turkey at that time played a crucial role here—an aggressiveness, by the way, which I did not interpret in ideological terms, since even Tsarist Russia had been interested in extending its control over those areas, and Stalin clearly viewed himself as heir to those Tsarist policies. My claim was that the Turkish and Iranian affairs led to a fundamental shift in U.S. policy. Those episodes showed that a more or less friendly division of Europe was not in the cards, that one was dealing with a country which, in the final analysis, only respected force, and that therefore American power had to be committed to the defense of western Europe—and indeed that the west Europeans, and especially the west Germans, had to be brought into a bloc that could generate enough military power to hold the Soviets at bay.

But to do that both American and west European opinion had to be mobilized. The finger had to be pointed at the Soviets; the claim had to be that they had not lived up to their commitments, and especially that they were reneging on their supposed commitment to work with the western countries in running Germany as a unit. This, to be sure, was a somewhat dishonest policy on Byrnes's part, since the records of the Potsdam Conference make it abundantly clear that the U.S. government had by August 1945 given up on the idea of running Germany on a unified, quadripartite basis. But given political realities at home—given the American tendency to approach international affairs in moral terms—this was the only way power could be mobilized and a counterweight to Soviet power in Europe brought into being.

Is this an argument to the effect that “mistaken ‘unit level’ sources of instability” were responsible for the Cold War, to use Betts's phrase? I don't think the calculation was mistaken, but in a sense the problem did lie at the unit level. The problem was that, given the nature of American political culture, even a rational political leadership might have felt that it had little choice but to go this route.

⁸ See Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, esp. chap. 1, and Marc Trachtenberg, “The United States and Eastern Europe in 1945,” chap. 3 in Marc Trachtenberg, *The Cold War and After: History, Theory, and the Logic of International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). Note the roundtable H-Diplo published in May 2009 after that article appeared in the Fall 2008 issue of the *Journal of Cold War Studies* (<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-X-12.pdf>).

And the same point applies to my interpretation of Franklin Roosevelt's policy in 1941. My claim was that given public attitudes at home—given the unwillingness of the public to declare war on Germany as a simple act of policy—the Roosevelt administration had an enormous incentive to “stage-manage things so that it would appear the United States was the victim of unprovoked attack” (276). I think FDR deliberately put the United States on a collision course with Japan; I think it is quite clear that he authorized the oil embargo at the end of July knowing full well what the implications were. I think, moreover (although this point is more speculative), that what he was doing vis-à-vis Japan needs to be understood in the context of his policy toward Germany—that is, in the context of his desire to take the United States into the European war as quickly as possible. And I said that if all this were true, “I for one would not criticize Roosevelt for managing things the way he did” (276). To my mind, it was not FDR, but rather the country as a whole, that had to be held responsible—that it was “America's unwillingness as a nation to use force for purely political purposes, as a deliberate act of policy, that lay at the heart of the problem” (276). That was a fundamental reality Roosevelt had to deal with. Given the extraordinary importance of taking the United States into the war with Nazi Germany before it was too late, my personal view is that he was fully justified in handling things the way he did.⁹

What is to be made of those arguments? People find it hard to discuss this particular subject in the usual way—that is, by arguing these issues out on the basis of the evidence. Part of the problem is that they associate the sort of argument I made with the crackpot idea that Roosevelt knew that Pearl Harbor was about to be attacked, but suppressed this information because he calculated a surprise attack would bring an enraged and united country into the war. Even Betts says that my argument about Roosevelt's policy in 1941 “goes half-way toward the perennial right-wing conspiracy stories that FDR knew Pearl Harbor would be attacked and let it happen for just such reasons”—that is, so he could take America into the European war. But I think it's a mistake to conflate, or even half-conflate, the argument I made with those absurd and baseless Pearl Harbor conspiracy theories and that that argument should instead be taken on its own terms. I don't think that the whole idea that the policy Roosevelt was pursuing toward Japan from late July 1941 on is to be understood in terms of his larger political purposes, and in particular in terms of his policy toward Germany, should be viewed as taboo—that is, as simply off-limits to serious

⁹ I dealt with these issues in a fairly cursory way in chap. 8 of the *Cold War and After* book, but in much greater detail in chap. 4 of my book *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) (http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s4_8200.pdf). I also dealt with this topic in a review of John Schuessler's article, “The Deception Dividend: FDR's Undeclared War,” which was published in the Spring 2010 issue of *International Security*; that review was published in the H-Diplo/ISSF series in April 2010 (<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-AR3.pdf>). In response to that piece, a number of messages dealing with this issue were posted in H-Diplo in April 2010; see especially Warren Kimball's post of April 13, 2010 (<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Diplo&month=1004&week=b&msg=VUnC7fK/BLRQ4%2b97dawcJg&user=&pw>) and my April 20 reply (<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Diplo&month=1004&week=c&msg=1I7k%2bKLkTUyil%2bWuPdKMnw&user=&pw>). I also recently came across some interesting material relating to this subject in the Canadian diplomatic documents for the period (*Documents on Canadian External Relations*, vol. 8, part 2); that evidence provides additional support for the view that the Roosevelt government was deliberately taking a very hard line on the question of oil deliveries to Japan.

scholars. And I think there is a lot more work (in Dutch sources, for example) that could be done on this subject.

But perhaps the key point here has to do not with whether my historical interpretation is correct, but rather—assuming for the moment that it is correct—with the judgment I attached to it. Betts, for example, is “unhappy” with the fact that I approve of the policy I claimed Roosevelt was pursuing. He thinks that “a democracy should not go to war if the people and congress cannot be convinced by the president on the merits of the case, and certainly not on the basis of blatant presidential deception.” He thinks I am “a bit too sympathetic” to preventive war thinking—and U.S. policy in 1941, as I interpret it, is certainly to be understood in preventive war terms. And my guess is that most people, especially in the academic world, would agree with him and not me on these issues.

Why then do I feel the way I do? I of course agree that honesty is important in political life, but to my mind other considerations can be even more important. I am glad that John F. Kennedy, for example, did not take the rhetoric of his inaugural address, about how America would “bear any burden” and “pay any price,” all that seriously, and in judging his policy I make allowances for the fact that, to a certain degree, he felt he needed to indulge in this kind of rhetoric for domestic political purposes.

And I think this issue is complicated by the fact that the public, by and large, might want its leaders to do what they have to do to protect the basic interests of the country, but not to articulate the real rationale too openly. Warren Kimball made this point in an H-Diplo post in 1999. He thought there was “a curious pact” in the United States “between presidents and the public.” Americans “expect and insist,” he wrote, “that their leaders make the hard decisions”: “Don't ask us to go to war, just do it and hope it comes out OK.” And he applied the point specifically to Roosevelt's policy before Pearl Harbor. It was hard, he thought, “to read U.S. newspapers and magazines during 1940-41 without concluding that the American public sensed, understood, was informed about, recognized, accepted (choose your favorite words) the general direction of FDR's policies.” But the attitude was: “just don't ask us to make the hard decision.” That, he thought, was what Americans “expect leaders to do.”¹⁰ But if this was the case—and I think Kimball was on to something here—then it's even more difficult than it would otherwise be to make hard-and-fast judgments about how acceptable a certain degree of dishonesty is when these extremely important issues are being dealt with.

I personally would very much like to live in a world where basic issues of foreign policy were argued out in public in a serious way, where the electorate was full of people like Dick Betts who could engage in that sort of intelligent discussion, and where the leadership could therefore be expected to deal with these issues honestly and openly. But that, unfortunately, is not the world we live in. I don't think academics can do all that much to

¹⁰ Warren Kimball H-Diplo post, 22 September 1999 (<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-diplo&month=9909&week=d&msg=8wGK%2bKQpjhHECtIW364%2bZg&user=&pw>). See also Warren Kimball, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and World War II,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34:1 (March 2004), 98-99.

change that situation, but I do think we can do more than zero. I think, in particular, we can do a lot more to bring out the complexity of the issues the world now has to deal with—to sensitize people to the fact that these are not easy issues, that they do not have simple answers, but that there are ways to get a handle on them, ways based on the methods we as historians have been trained to use.

The questions we've touched on in this roundtable—the problem of preventive war, issues relating to international law, questions about whether nuclear weapons can be used for purposes other than deterrence, and so on—are of course quite important, and I obviously do not accept the conventional wisdom on many of these points. I don't think preventive war policies should be ruled out as a matter of principle; I don't think that we should simply assume that international legal constraints make for a more peaceful world and that the more law we have in this area, the better. This is not to say, of course, that I think international norms should count for nothing and that countries should feel totally free to do whatever they want in world affairs. My basic point is simply that the usual pat answers people give to these kinds of questions will not do if we're serious about dealing with these issues. There are times when it makes sense to use force, without the sanction of the U.N. Security Council, for other than purely defensive purposes. There are times when the use of force in that way is politically, morally, and even legally justified (if we interpret international law in an intellectually defensible way). And I think historical analysis can help us get a handle on these very fundamental questions. It might not provide us with nice, neat answers, but it can give us insights into these issues that we can't get in any other way. And that was the real point of the book.

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