The four reviewers of Christian Ostermann’s award winning book—the awards are the Organization of American Historians’ Richard W. Leopold Prize, the Harry S. Truman Book Prize, and Honorable Mention for the Michael H. Hunt Prize from the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations—are unanimous in their praise for his work. Gregory Mitrovich calls the book an “instant classic,” Stephan Kieninger labels it “a tremendous achievement,” Hope Harrison notes that it is “a fine example of international history,” and Konrad Jarausch describes it as “a major contribution to Cold War scholarship.” Ostermann, the Director of the History and Public Policy at the Woodrow Wilson Center, which supervises the Cold War International History Project, is a leader among scholars who are responsible for the extraordinary transformation of Cold War scholarship from its tendency toward political and partisan polemics based on English-language sources to genuine international history of the multi-archival and multinational variety. His own book, according to these reviewers and the respective prize committees, clearly lives up to the high standard he has done so much to shape.

As unanimous as they are in their praise for the book, the reviewers take slightly different tacks in approaching it, shaped in part by their own previous research as well as current interests. Kieninger, who has chronicled the efforts of American policymakers to pursue détente in Europe, is particularly interested in the soft power and ‘rollback’ policies undertaken toward East Germany, from General Lucius Clay’s early efforts at “rollback by cooperation,” to the more covert efforts in the early 1950s. Hope Harrison, whose first book looked at the existential crisis faced by the Walter Ulbricht government of East Germany before the building of the Berlin Wall, is fascinated with the extraordinary historical parallels between the history Ostermann chronicles in the early 1950s, and the subsequent collapse of East Germany in the peaceful revolution of 1989. Gregory Mitrovich highlights the way events in this early Cold War period often proceeded in an action-reaction sequence, particularly as the Soviets tried to respond to the success of Western broadcasting and psychological warfare. Konrad Jarausch praises the depth and nuance of Ostermann’s research and argues that the book demonstrates that “German division was therefore not the result of long-term superpower planning, but was rather due to the Allied inability, enhanced by German complicity, to prevail over the other side.”

The reviewers agree that one of the central contributions of the book is to highlight a more active “rollback” policy by the United States toward East Germany, compared with earlier historical treatments that emphasized a more defensive ‘containment’ approach to the communist state. Harrison talks particularly about Ostermann’s discussion of the American attempts to implement an economic embargo against East Germany, an approach that was ultimately frustrated by both the Western allies, Britain and France, and the West Germans themselves. All the reviewers highlight Ostermann’s argument that the West still harbored fears of future German revanchism that affected their policies as well. Most importantly, Ostermann demonstrates that the American hope to “keep the pot simmering” in East Germany went well beyond containment, although the 1953 uprising, and its violent suppression, proved sobering to US officials.

There is one interesting disagreement among the reviewers in their reading of the book. Jarausch laments that Ostermann’s book, while depicting the role of the East and West German leaders, does not “accord their


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populations much historical agency.” By contrast, Mitrovich stresses “the surprising agency with which East Germany operated,” and Kieninger praises Ostermann for successfully writing “the East Germans—leadership and populace—back into history, certainly as objects of American policy, at times even as historical agents of their own.” In his response, Ostermann acknowledges this difference in perspective and praises Jarausch for noting the role of ordinary Germans and the need to write a “narrative that gives agency to all of the actors.” This difference among the reviewers may also reflect a different valuation or assessment of agency between elites and the populace. It certainly reflects the richness of the research and evidence Ostermann provides, which are open to different interpretations and judgments.

Full disclosure requires me to mention my own assessment of the book, which I praised on its back jacket as “a model of outstanding historical research and argumentation, that rare work of scholarship that truly captures the contingency of events and circumstances leading to the division of Germany, as well as the different perspectives and motives that animated the United States and Soviet Union.” I agree fully with reviewer Mitrovich that the book is a “historical tour de force.”

Participants:

Christian F. Ostermann has directed the Wilson Center’s History & Public Policy Program and its Cold War International History Project since 1997/1998. Together with Leopoldo Nuti (Roma Tre) he co-directs the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project and co-edits the Cambridge History of the Nuclear Age. He is a proud member of the editorial board of Cold War History and is currently curating an international exhibition on “The Berlin Wall in the Cold War: Living in a Divided World.”


Hope M. Harrison is Professor of History & International Affairs at The George Washington University. She is the author of Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-61 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) and After the Berlin Wall: Memory and the Making of the New Germany, 1989 to the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), as well a variety of articles on the Cold War, Germany, and Russia. In October 2021, Audible and The Great Courses/Wondrium published her nine-part lecture series, The Berlin Wall: A World Divided. Her current research interests are focused on life and death along East Germany’s Baltic coast.

Konrad H. Jarausch is the Lurcy Professor of European Civilization at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. He has written or edited about fifty books in English and German on modern German and European history. His latest work, “Embattled Europe: A Progressive Alternative” is a defense of the European model against rightwing US populism, and will appear with Princeton University Press in August.

Stephan Kieninger is a Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center and the author of two books: The Diplomacy of Détente: Cooperative Security Policies from Helmut Schmidt to George Shultz (2018) and Dynamic Détente: The United States and Europe, 1964–1975 (2016). His current research looks into Strobe Talbott’s NATO-Russia diplomacy and the Clinton administration’s search for the post-Cold War order. He received his PhD from
Mannheim University. Formerly, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Johns Hopkins SAIS, a fellow at the Berlin Center for Cold War Studies, and a senior researcher at the Federal German Archives.

**Gregory Mitrovich**, PhD, is the author of *Undermining the Kremlin: America’s Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1956* (Cornell University Press, 2009) winner of the Stuart L. Bernath Book Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. He has held research appointments at the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University; the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School; the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University; and the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University.
For anyone seeking to understand the challenges faced by the United States at the dawn of the Cold War, there are few better places to start than by reading Christian Ostermann’s *Between Containment and Rollback*. With a focus on developments in Germany, this book considers key questions US policymakers were faced with at the end of World War II: Could the US cooperate with Soviet leaders? Was the Soviet Union a threat? If so, what kind of threat: military, political, psychological? What was the best way to respond? As Ostermann demonstrates, answers to these questions were rarely stable or unanimous, within the US or among the key powers in the Western alliance: the US, Great Britain, France, and, ultimately, West Germany. US officials in D.C. and Berlin vacillated between seeing the Soviet role in East Germany as a threat to Western interests versus seeing it as a liability that could be taken advantage of. They vacillated also about which means they favored to counter the Communist threat.

In Ostermann’s book, the reader watches US decisionmakers (as well as Allied, Soviet, and East German decisionmakers) grappling with these issues while developments on the ground in Germany and around the world, especially with the start of the Korean War in 1950, did not stay the same. Through its interweaving of documents (some of which were only declassified due to the author’s Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] requests) from Washington, West Berlin, Bonn, East Berlin, Moscow, Paris, London and elsewhere, Ostermann’s work is a fine example of international history. In the historiography of postwar Allied policy toward Germany, this book, which focuses on US policy toward Eastern Germany, is a fine complement and addition to Carolyn Eisenberg’s book on US policy toward Western Germany and Norman Naimark’s book on Soviet policy toward Eastern Germany. Ostermann draws on a broader range of sources than Eisenberg and Naimark, and adds significantly to the historiography of this period.

He masterfully deploys US and Russian documents to elucidate the intensive interactions and cooperation in 1946-1947 between the US Military Governor in Germany, Lucius D. Clay, and his Soviet counterpart, Vasily Sokolovsky. Ostermann illustrates that they were both more optimistic about Allied cooperation in Germany than their bosses in Washington and Moscow. Indeed, the author finds that Clay not only supported, but also unilaterally implemented—until pulled back by officials in Washington—a more cooperative approach with the Soviet Union than was favored in Washington (75-76). Clay believed that the superior Western system would triumph anyway, so he was less worried initially about Communists gaining ground in the western part of the country. For longer than others, Clay did not see the Soviet zone of Germany or the other countries behind the Iron Curtain as lost causes in the fight for democracy against Communism (51). Indeed, he was so confident that the Western system would roll back Communism in Germany that he allowed the three top Eastern German Communists, Walter Ulbricht, Wilhelm Pieck, and Otto Grotewohl, to go on speaking tours in the US zone of Germany before the fall 1946 elections (70).

At the core of Ostermann’s book is his argument, backed up by many examples, that US officials in Berlin and in Washington, such as at the CIA’s Berlin Operations Base or the Psychological Strategy Board in Washington, backed a much more active policy toward Eastern Germany in the late 1940s and early 1950s than has previously been understood. Yet the author also demonstrates that for every time US officials developed plans to promote resistance to the Communist regime in the East, or to put Western military, economic, or political pressure on the regime, there were always strong voices in the West against this policy—whether in the US (including Clay at first), France, Great Britain, or in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)—with the result that aggressive rollback policies were themselves rolled back, sometimes very quickly, sometimes after a few months. When American political, military, or intelligence officials urged

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that the West take advantage of the obvious dissatisfaction many felt in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) by bankrolling opposition groups, planning abductions of officials, sponsoring acts of sabotage, or encouraging strikes, the British and the French were often wary of doing anything that might risk more open conflict, and FRG Chancellor Konrad Adenauer usually favored caution as well.

Ostermann uses intra-Allied conflicts in 1950-1951 over US-proposed embargoes of iron and steel to the GDR as a case in point. At the time, some US officials felt that Western economic power could be used to force changes in the East, ideally stimulating the collapse of the regime that was then led by Walter Ulbricht. In the face of large numbers of people fleeing the GDR for the West and Ulbricht’s need for Western goods to fuel his industrialization policy, withholding iron, steel and other key goods could be just the straw to break the camel’s back. In addition, the US was frustrated that in East-West German negotiations about a trade agreement, the GDR refused to guarantee free access for goods to West Berlin. At a minimum, the US hoped a trade embargo would force Ulbricht to give in on access to West Berlin, and, at a maximum, the US hoped that an embargo would doom Ulbricht’s plans and his regime. A further US motivation for backing an embargo was a desire to prevent the Soviet Union and China from getting the iron and steel the GDR acquired from the West and using them to help the Communist side of the Korean War (220). The US obviously did not want Marshall Plan aid for the FRG to make it into the hands of the GDR, the Soviet Union, or China.

When the US (with sometime reluctant British and French backing) insisted on an embargo, twice, in 1950 and 1951, rampant smuggling was the response as the West German states and their industries eager for trade with the East found ways around the embargos. The US deployed military police in an effort to tighten border controls, but even that did not solve the problem. (220) Eventually, strong lobbying by the British, French, and West Germans, as well as the experience of widespread West German violations of the embargo, forced the US to back down. This is laid out in fascinating detail in Ostermann’s Chapter 8 on “Economic Cold War.” Adenauer’s vocal dislike of aggressive US Cold War strategy toward the GDR, such as the embargo or various psychological warfare plans, is reminiscent of the cool reception West German leaders and the West Berliners gave to President Ronald Reagan in June 1987, when the American president stood at the Brandenburg Gate and forcefully called on Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall and open the Gate. The West Germans rarely trusted the US when it came to carrying out an effective policy toward the East that would not risk alienating the Communists more than was absolutely necessary.

Although Ostermann’s main focus is on decisionmakers, he also uses documents to great effect to display the impact of decisions on regular people, particularly East Germans, giving the reader a feel for the atmosphere on the ground. One particularly vivid example of this is the author’s use of East German documents to tell the stories of people who responded to the US food aid program, which delivered ‘Eisenhower packages’ in the wake of the June 1953 East German uprising which had been put down by Soviet tanks and troops. With East Germans feeling deserted by the Western Allies (and West Germans wondering whether they could count on the US to defend them from a Communist attack), the Eisenhower administration felt it had to do something to show US support for Germans. That support took the form of food aid; ultimately 5.5 million food packages were distributed to East Germans between July and October 1953 (260).

Ostermann describes the ‘throngs’ of people at the package distribution centers in West Berlin, many of whom brought not only bought their own ID cards but also those of others, such as family, friends, or neighbors, to get packages for them too. He recounts how trains to Berlin were packed with people coming and going with their packages, and quotes an East German observer noting that the large numbers of people exiting the trains “gave the impression of a demonstration” (261). In one case, 150 factory workers went together to get their packages from West Berlin (261). In response, the GDR stopped selling train tickets to Berlin, ramped up propaganda against the ‘Amipackages,’ and even confiscated some of the packages and the IDs of those carrying them. In the face of mounting pressure on East Germans who picked up the packages,
the US stopped the program in October. The repressive power of the Communist state trumped Western economic strength.

Ostermann’s narrative illustrates much symmetry in how Americans and Soviets viewed each other, and how East and West Germans responded to events. Both sides were worried about and fearful of the other. The impact of the Korean War on East and West Germans is one such example. Using documents from the GDR and the US, Ostermann describes how the East Germans worried that “the Korean War was . . . a practice run for an American attack on central Europe” (138), and the West Germans worried about an East German/Soviet attack and requested “200 automatic pistols to defend the Palais Schaumburg, the government seat, against a potential communist uprising” (137). Similar to Senator Joseph McCarthy’s Red Scare in the US, in the early 1950s, the FRG’s Ministry for All-German Questions supported loyalty tests for public servants and worried not only about Communists, but also about “proponents of neutralism and dialogue with the GDR.” The ministry even went so far as to promote extreme right-wing groups, since they were anti-Communist. (170-71) The US was constantly balancing its desired policy toward the GDR with the necessity of reassuring the FRG.

One cannot help but read Ostermann’s book from the vantage point of contemporary developments since the collapse of the GDR in 1989-90. There are two particular examples I will highlight. First, when Ostermann describes the August 1951 World Youth Festival in East Berlin and discusses how, to the chagrin of GDR leaders, 500,000-680,000 East German youth took the chance to travel to West Berlin, mobbing the Zoo train station and the main street, the KuDamm (180), this reader had to think of the millions of East Germans who did the same thing in November 1989 after the opening of the Berlin Wall.2 The attraction of West Berlin never changed.

Another aspect of Ostermann’s account of the East German youth in 1951 also reminded this reader of the post-Wall period, yet in a different way. In the wake of German unification in 1990, many observers noted the prevalence of a “wall in the mind” between East and West Germans.3 The differences between the two groups, as the writer Peter Schneider had anticipated in a novel published seven years before the Berlin Wall fell, have proven harder to eliminate than the actual Wall.4 This phenomenon was brought to mind by the following observation of a US official who met some of the Communist youth visiting West Berlin in August 1951: “many East German youth reflected in their reactions to certain ideas, in their modes of expression, and in their mental images the effects of communist propaganda” (182). If in 1951, the thinking of young East Germans was already significantly influenced by Communism, it is no surprise that nearly four decades later and beyond, that would be even more the case.5

The second example concerns the East German refugees who flooded into West Berlin and West Germany in the early 1950s. Encouraging defections was one of the more activist rollback policies some US officials in

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the Eisenhower administration favored to try to weaken the GDR. Yet in the spring of 1953, Adenauer was staunchly against this, arguing that the FRG was already overwhelmed with tens of thousands of East German refugees in addition to the millions of expellees forced to leave lands to the east after World War II (193-94). Ostermann points out that since August 1952, around 10,000 refugees had been coming to the FRG each month, and a mini-airlift flew 1,000 of them from West Berlin to West Germany each day (239). Especially because the US refused to help much financially with settling refugees, Adenauer “called on East Germans to stay in the GDR” (193). Decades later, when the opening of the Berlin Wall precipitated another mass movement of refugees to the West, Chancellor Helmut Kohl also told East Germans to stay home. When that did not work, he moved up the date for the currency union to occur three months before unification, on the theory that bringing the Deutschmark to the East Germans would prevent them from coming west for it.

Just as US High Commissioner in Germany, James B. Conant, worried in 1953 that the large numbers of East German refugees would hurt Adenauer’s election chances that September (194), so a contemporary reader must think of Chancellor Angela Merkel and the fallout after her open door approach to the 2015 refugee crisis (even if these refugees were not from eastern Germany but from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere). Merkel faced increasing pressure from inside and outside of her own party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) after that, leading her to step down as CDU party leader in 2018 and to decide not to run for the chancellorship again in 2021.

In sum, Ostermann’s book does a wonderful job of pulling the curtain back on US decision-making regarding Germany in the early Cold War and also touches on themes that resonate to this day. It is also worth noting that the few photographs accompanying the text augment the author’s narrative nicely, as with the picture (Figure 2) of dismantled railroad tracks in Potsdam to show the Soviet extractive approach to its occupation zone of Germany (12) and the picture (Figure 11) of East Germans covering their faces from the photographer as they picked up their ‘Eisenhower packages’ in West Berlin (260).
Christian Ostermann’s new book on American policy towards East Germany during the post-war decade is a major contribution to Cold War scholarship. To begin with, the author is exceedingly well qualified. Born in West Germany, he obtained his PhD from the University of Cologne. After starting out as a research fellow at the Commission for the History of Parliament and Political Parties in Bonn, he worked at the George Washington University’s National Security Archive. In 1997, he joined the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, where he is now director of the History and Public Policy Program. In that capacity he has also overseen the Cold War International History Program (CWIHP), and served as a co-editor of Cold War History and editor of the CWIHP Bulletin and the Digital Archive. Having participated in numerous lectures, conferences and publications, Ostermann is therefore well versed in the history of the Cold War in Europe as well as in Asia.

The timing of this study of the controversial topics of containment and rollback is also quite fortuitous. The passing of an entire generation of time since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 has created enough cognitive distance to reflect on the nature of the Cold War, rather than to argue within its partisan claims and counterclaims. Moreover, the laborious process of declassification has made enough progress to supplement the existing record with a considerable amount of new documentation on American policy debates, as well as on internal Soviet considerations and West German intelligence assessments, even if some important papers still remain inaccessible (167). On the whole, the temporal distance and novel source base have made it possible to take a fresh look at unresolved issues that have dominated earlier Cold War historiography.¹ What kind of corrections of existing accounts does the book offer, and which new interpretations does it suggest?

One of the revelations of the study is the revised image of General Lucius Clay, the military governor of the U.S. occupation zone. According to Ostermann, he “did not abide by the Potsdam zonal solution to running Germany,” but instead “went further in pursuit of an all-German solution than previously known.” Intent on working with the Soviets, “Clay had more far-reaching goals in mind as well.” In what Ostermann ingeniously calls “‘rollback by cooperation’,” [Clay] was hopeful that implementing all-German solutions would extend American influence into the Soviet zone, eventually undercutting Soviet-based Communist rule” (276). This policy required making concessions to the Soviets and working within a four-power framework, rather than emphasizing anti-Communist measures and building a separate West German state. Only when it became clear “that the conditions for cooperation with the Soviets were almost prohibitive” did Clay come around to supporting the foundation of the Federal Republic (277). In general, the book portrays US policy as more assertive than the notion of containment would suggest (xi).

In Ostermann’s narrative, the Soviets faced a similar dilemma. Determined to dismantle the military economic complex of the defeated Germany, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin initially sought reparations from all of Germany, therefore making some concessions to the West in order to render that possible. But at the same time, he began setting up his own state through the ‘communization’ of the Soviet zone, which in turn spurred the Western allies to proceed with merging their occupation zones. The Russian policy also wavered between the hope of at least neutralizing all of Germany, for which the restoration of unity would serve as attractive bait, or the setting-up of a ‘major satellite’ in its own occupation area. In general, Ostermann emphasizes the defensive character of Soviet decisions regarding the compulsory merger of the Social Democratic and Communist parties into the Socialist Unity Party (SED), or the Berlin blockade, inspired by “worries (however mistaken) about Western ‘preparations of a new war’ against the Soviet Union” (278). But


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even in this balanced presentation it remains puzzling how Moscow could have expected a dismembered, dismantled, raped, and plundered people to embrace Communism and become friends of the Soviet Union.

The book does an excellent job in showing that both sides of the Cold War continued to destabilize each other with measures short of a major war, after the maximalist strategies of ‘free elections’ or ‘national unity’ failed. The author details the interactive nature of the propaganda contest in which the East used international youth festivals to attract a following in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), while the West employed both its secret services and various German groups like the Eastern bureau of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Investigating Committee of Free Lawyers (UFJ), and the Fighting Group Against Inhumanity (KGU). Ostermann writes “In Germany, the American counteroffensive entailed a massive program of overt and covert measures that went well beyond inoculating the FRG politically against similar measures from the East” (279). While various US agencies like the Political and Economics Projects Committee and leaders like John McCloy disagreed on how far they should go, most eventually concurred on a wide array of efforts at ‘psychological warfare’ and economic pressure that were designed to keep the ‘spirit of resistance’ alive in the East. This evidence suggests that Communist charges of Western subversion were therefore not entirely fabricated.

On classic flashpoints like the impact of the Korean War in 1950, the Stalin letter of 1952, and the 1953 uprising, Ostermann takes a nuanced middle line. Regarding the Korean conflict, he stresses the Western fear of a similar Soviet attack and the connection to West German rearmament. On the tempting Stalin letter, he emphasizes its popular effect in the West due to a longing for unification and uncertainty about how to respond. And he goes into considerable detail to establish the surprising nature of the 17 June 1953 revolt, both for the SED leadership and the Western intelligence services. While implying that psychological warfare had left a mark, he presents the popular demonstrations of the construction workers in East Berlin and their subsequent spread through the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as an indigenous wave of protest. Initially, even the popular Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) was hesitant, only reporting on the unrest, before later on actively supporting the uprising. Ultimately, even anti-Communist hotheads had to understand that a military intervention of the West risked World War Three, thereby obviating all rollback fantasies.

This is a well-researched and closely argued reconstruction of the Cold War struggle for East Germany between the U.S. and USSR. The book presents many new documents, such as the secret State Department report by Wallace Carroll and Hans Speier, that offer crucial information on American policies and Soviet responses, adding important insights on the conflicting agendas of important actors and significant organizations. Ostermann eschews long-term ideological premeditation and portrays the decisionmakers rather as pragmatic players in a political game in which both sides tried to outwit each other. The new documents reveal a range of opinions which evolved in response to changing circumstances, calling for a curious mixture of assertive risk-taking and defensive reaction to the presumed advantages of the other side. As a result, there were quite a few disagreements about how to act or respond. A few new gems, such as the discussion of the ineffectiveness of the embargos or the presentation of the food program after the June uprising, will please even the specialist.

Since the basic outline of the superpower competition is already well known, the major contribution of this book is the addition of nuance and detail to the story. Ostermann shows that the struggle over Germany revolved less around the creation of the Federal Republic in the West, than the establishment of a Soviet satellite in the Communist East. Once Moscow realized that the SED would lose an open electoral competition, it concentrated on the transformation of its own zone into a Communist dictatorship which became the cornerstone of its empire in Eastern Europe. The author demonstrates that Western policymakers in Washington and Berlin agreed on the significance of this bastion and therefore devoted an enormous amount of energy to overt and covert actions of its own services and German civil society groups in order to undermine it. The thrust of the documentation shows that the West not only sought to contain Soviet influence, but to actually roll back the Soviet bloc. But when push came to shove in the June 17, 1953
uprising, the martial rhetoric turned out to be hollow, since the risk of World War Three was too great for military intervention.

Ostermann therefore suggests that in the medium run the German question remained unresolved due to several countervailing tendencies. To begin with, the remnants of the Grand Alliance and of joined four power control were only invoked by both sides when they hoped to profit from an all-German approach. In practice, therefore, the emphasis shifted to the consolidation of the respective satellite states, with the Soviet Union unable to prevent the Western integration of the FRG and the US also failing to hinder the creation of the German Democratic Republic. Encouraged by their respective superpower protectors, both of these client states then engaged in a fierce competition for ‘a better Germany,’ with the East initially ahead due to its anti-fascist credentials, but the West eventually overtaking it through political freedom and economic prosperity. In spite of much ingenuity in the policies attempted, money spent, and propaganda launched, neither side succeeded in undermining the other, which eventually lead to a tacit agreement on respecting each other’s sphere of influence. German division was therefore not the result of long-term superpower planning but rather was due to the Allied inability, enhanced by German complicity, to prevail over the other side.

Perhaps a post-script might have speculated a bit more about the long-term effects of the post-war failures on the success of the ‘peaceful revolution’ of 1989/90. The star-wars arms buildup that recalled the anti-Communist ‘roll-back’ rhetoric only contributed in a minor way by raising the costs of the arms race for the Soviet economy. Instead, it was Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s repudiation of the Brezhnev doctrine, in order to open the door to economic reforms, that kept the tanks from rolling when the mass exodus began to threaten the orthodox East German regime of Erich Honecker. More effective in creating the pro-democracy demonstrations were the soft Western appeals to human rights that echoed the free election slogans as well as the superiority of market-induced prosperity over the constraints of the planned economy. Though considered increasingly illusory by public opinion in West Germany, the unification mandate of the Basic Law opened the door to the accession of the five reconstituted Eastern states to the Federal Republic via paragraph 23. And in the diplomatic Two-Plus-Four negotiations about embedding united Germany in the international order, it was the joint initiative of the GDR and FRG which pushed the World War Two victors to allow self-determination and reunification. By showing what failed initially, the book suggests that scholars should think about what succeeded four decades later.

Though it contains few surprises, Ostermann’s account impresses with the depth of its documentation and the nuanced fashion of its presentation. Essentially, it offers a detailed reconstruction of American and Soviet policy debates on what to do with defeated Germany, beginning with punishment cum reparations and gradually progressing towards rebuilding. Ultimately, the four power approach of treating Germany as a whole lost out when it became apparent that neither the East nor West would be able to dominate the entire defeated enemy. While Stalin still hoped for socialist success in the West, Truman and Eisenhower were not ready to abandon the Eastern zone, using all manner of actions to destabilize what was becoming a crucial Soviet satellite. In the end, these mutual subversion efforts failed to prevent the emergence of separate and opposed successor states to the Third Reich. While the outcome of a divided Germany served to calm fears of renewed aggression, it contributed to the descent of an Iron Curtain and the division of postwar Europe into competing ideological blocks.

What remains somewhat in the shadow is the involvement of the German people in East and West in the polarization of the postwar continent. To be true, East German leaders Walter Ulbricht and Otto Grotewohl on the one side, and Konrad Adenauer as well as Kurt Schumacher on the other, make some appearance, but this study does not accord their respective populations much historical agency. Clearly the assumption of sovereignty by the victorious allies meant that the Germans were initially unable to chart their post-fascist destiny, reacting more or less enthusiastically to the victors’ dictates. But the US and USSR quickly realized that they needed German support to gain control of Central Europe, pitching their propaganda to the
defeated populace. In contrast to the recent scholarly tendency to focus on the German leaders, Ostermann
reminds the reader that the Allies ultimately controlled German destiny. But a more complete analysis might
have given the discouraged survivors of the bombing and fighting more space in their struggle for survival.
Ultimately it was the interaction between the victors and defeated which set the course for decades of division
as well as ultimate reunification.
Based on a broad range of materials from American, West German, East German, and Russian archives, Christian Ostermann’s book is a tremendous achievement and a real tour de force investigating US policy toward East Germany in the early Cold War. Following in the footsteps of Melvyn Leffler, Norman Naimark, Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, and Gregory Mitrovich, among others, Ostermann also seeks to “write the East Germans—leadership and populace—back into history, certainly as objects of American policy, at times even as historical agents of their own” (x). Ostermann investigates the breadth of American policies “between containment and rollback” entailing status-quo oriented US efforts and offensive themes such as psychological warfare and covert operations aimed at undermining and rolling back Soviet and German Communist control in East Germany. The book is a must-read for those who are interested in the early Cold War. It greatly benefits from the newly available materials that Ostermann managed to get declassified as a leader of international efforts to gain access to the archives of former Communist countries.

The book depicts the US decision to divide Germany as a complex and multifaceted process. The formal establishment of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1949 did not relieve tensions. Quite the opposite: as Ostermann argues, the two Germanies waged a fierce war of words using massive psychological warfare apparatuses and large youth rallies in Berlin to exploit each other’s vulnerabilities. Who would undermine whom? How much confidence did both sides have in their own abilities and strengths? How did they perceive their weak spots? One key achievement is that the book covers the whole spectrum of newly emerging combinations between containment and rollback. A case in point is High Commissioner John McCloy’s magnetic approach envisaging a politically and economically vibrant West Germany and its magnetic attraction for the East German populace as a way both for rollback and as means to prevent “being rolled up” by Communist propaganda (279). “The Truman administration embarked on a strategy to compel the Soviet Union to abandon its international ambitions in sync with its containment policy,” as Ostermann emphasizes (xii). Oftentimes, rollback and containment were pursued in parallel and stood in competition. Sometimes, both could be combined: Between 1945 and the summer of 1947, for instance, McCloy’s predecessor, General Lucius D. Clay, pursued a policy of “rollback by cooperation,” trying to implement all-German solutions aimed at extending American influence into the Soviet zone and eventually eroding Soviet-backed Communist rule in East Germany (Chapter 2).

Throughout the book, Ostermann captures the contingencies of events, exploring the relevance of circumstances and key events leading to the division of Germany. Chapter 1, for instance, depicts the importance of the impressions that American leaders gained when they drove through the devastated, conquered, and depressed city of Berlin on their way to the Potsdam conference on the future of Germany in July 1945. President Truman’s direct witnessing of the enormous Soviet removals in Berlin were a key point for his decision to secure the Western occupation zones, rather than to envisage all-German solutions and cooperation with the Soviets. Whereas Truman and his advisers had come to Potsdam with the plan to treat Germany as one country, the outcome of the Potsdam conference “was a dramatic reversal of the plan to treat Germany as an economic unit and in good measure a result of their experience in the Soviet zone: an agreement that allowed each occupation power to serve its reparation needs from its own zone” (2). After spending time in surreal Berlin for two weeks, Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes sensed that US-Soviet cooperation in Germany was nearly impossible, given that the Soviets had used their two-month occupation of West Berlin for enormous plundering, including the dismantling or destruction of large amounts of industrial equipment. As Ostermann writes, “the dismantling frenzy during the eight weeks when

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western Berlin was under Soviet occupation resulted in the loss of its industrial capacity. It would amount to 8 per cent of the total Soviet removals from its occupation zone in Germany” (14). Truman and his advisers were appalled when the Soviet delegation in Potsdam wanted to consider all Soviet removals as war booty rather than reparations. This approach made it increasingly difficult to treat Germany as one economic unit.

Even after the partition of Germany had become the most feasible solution for both sides, the struggle for power and influence continued during these early Cold War days. Ostermann’s book transcends the former, traditional debates over the ‘blame’ for Germany’s division. His focus is on the interaction between US policy and Soviet and East Germany Communist activities in the Eastern zone, where the volatility and the weakness of the Communist “Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands” (SED) manifested itself in meager election results for the Communists. In September 1946, the conservative and liberal parties nearly outflanked the SED in local elections in Protestant Saxony, as well as in local elections in Thuringia and Sachsen-Anhalt (71). Ostermann investigates how General Clay pursued a “neutral attitude toward the transformation of the Soviet zone” (74) arguing that the merger between the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD) and the zonal elections were part of a strategy to maintain chances for Germany-wide solutions trying to extend Western influence. However, by late 1946, there was increasing fear in Washington that the Soviet Union could dominate a unified Germany. By the spring of 1947, the emergence of the Truman Doctrine and the escalation of the global Cold War stood in the way of a potential compromise solution in Germany. Again, the benefit of Ostermann’s work is the absence of ‘blame’ and ‘guilt’ questions, and his lucid analysis of the underlying motives and competitive rationales of both sides.

Moreover, the book provides an excellent account of US policy after the establishment of the GDR in 1949, which neither brought stabilization nor a Cold War settlement on the German question. Instead, as Ostermann shows, the GDR’s emergence set the course for renewed confrontation and the next phase of the struggle over Germany’s future. In May 1950, the SED’s large Communist youth rally, Deutschlandtreffen, was a major test case in this regard. Ostermann looks into the Truman Administration’s concern that the estimated 500,000 participants could be used as a way to overrun West Berlin (124). Whereas the US authorities viewed the Deutschlandtreffen of 1950 primarily in defensive terms, the August 1951 SED-sponsored World Youth Festival in Berlin was seen as a chance to influence East German youth due to its international appeal (176ff). This time, the Americans were no longer worried and “sought to induce the Eastern youth to transgress the sector borders” (179). Indeed, about 680,000 of the 1.4 million participants visited West Berlin to get a taste of “the forbidden fruits of capitalism” (180). American authorities saw the World Youth Capital as a “gain for the West” (181). In a nutshell, both rallies were test cases in the early Cold War.

Ostermann underlines the fact that that psychological warfare and rollback did not await successful containment. Similarly, containment also entailed ideas for an ideological offensive and the conviction that America had the capability to work for changes in the Soviet system. In his famous X article, George Kennan had argued that “it is entirely possible for the United States to influence by its actions the internal developments, both within Russia and throughout the international Communist movement, by which Russian policy is largely determined.”2 Indeed, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations were eager to bring about liberalizing changes in the Soviet system by trying to facilitate a mellowing of Soviet power. At the same time, they acknowledged the limits of rollback rhetoric. President Dwight Eisenhower’s reaction after the suppression of the uprising in the GDR in June 1953 revealed that his administration was not prepared to contest Soviet power in Eastern Europe by means of force. “The extent to which rollback in Germany could be pursued was severely circumscribed by the overall American strategy in Europe,” Ostermann writes; “That strategy centered on the integration of the Federal Republic of Germany into Western European economic, political, and military structures, believed to be critical to prevent the resurgence of German nationalism and militarism and to boost the defense capabilities of Western Europe” (279).

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At the same time, the Eisenhower administration pursued food programs and large-scale technical aid to improve political conditions in East Germany. In 1954, Eisenhower launched $3 million in funding under the Mutual Security Act to encourage inter-zonal travel and scholarships for East German students to attend Free University of Berlin. Bonn’s Ministry for All-German Affairs covertly provided US funding and supported some 900 organizations involved in aid to East Germany. As Ostermann points out, “U.S. financial support for what became known as ‘Soviet zone projects’ increased steadily, anticipating the ‘small step’ improvements for East Germans that became the hallmark of West German Ostpolitik in the 1960s and 1970s” (283). When the prospect for liberation and rollback dimmed, the key element was to maintain contact and communication with the people in East Germany in an effort to encourage anti-Communism. In 1955, the Eisenhower administration emphasized that US policy towards the Warsaw Pact states should be directed at bringing about “evolutionary rather than revolutionary change.” This matched the ideas of American diplomats in Berlin, who tried to interest the Protestant Church in arranging week-long vacations for young East Germans in the West as a way to maintain contacts (282-283).

After the suppression of the East German uprising in 1953, East-West contacts increasingly became part of an international agenda. Starting in the 1960s, West German policymakers acknowledged that incremental improvements in the status quo might facilitate gradual changes in Soviet policy toward Germany. This was the essence of the Ostpolitik concept of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and Secretary of State Egon Bahr, who believed that the Soviet Union’s domination of Eastern Europe could not be abolished over the short term. Modest changes in East Germany ought to be accomplished with Soviet consent. At the same time, Ostpolitik was envisaged as a revisionist policy. Brandt was clear that the objective was “the transformation of the other side.” Indeed, the Eisenhower administration’s magnetism and communication rationales were precursors for the dynamic détente policies of presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson in the 1960s, after the United States and the Soviet Union had found a modus vivendi. The difficult task for all US Cold War administrations was to balance power and mission in US policy toward the GDR. Time and again, policy-makers discussed the dialectics between change and stability. The crucial question was how one could “disengage the Soviets from Eastern Europe step-by-step.” In the late 1960s, Bahr argued that “the only way is beginning projects that link Eastern and Western Europe in ways the Soviets don’t consider dangerous,” emphasizing that “you bring this about only if you don’t put Soviet domination into question.” He reiterated that “this is a long procedure with its own contradictions, but it is the only way unless you give up the objective of liberating Europe.” Ultimately, bold changes did not arrive until Mikhail Gorbachev’s leadership of the Soviet Union. As Ostermann points out, “the contingency of another insurrection in East Germany would haunt American policy until the fall of 1989. More importantly, finally, it also haunted the regime in East Germany, which never fully recovered from the crisis of legitimacy that in confronted in June 1953” (284).


7 Remarks by Egon Bahr at the trilateral policy planning talks in Washington, 18 April 1969, in National Archives and Record Administration (NARA), College Park (MD), Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 (RG 59), Lot 73 D 363, Subject and Country Files of the Policy Planning Council and the Planning and Coordination Staff, 1967–1973, Box 401.
Between Containment and Rollback is an instant classic, a historical tour de force that revolutionizes our understanding of how the two Cold War Germanies emerged from the wreckage of a defeated Nazi Reich to become the centerpiece of the superpowers’ multi-decade-long competition in Europe. Christian Ostermann’s extensive use of documentary collections in the United States, Germany, and the Soviet Union is breathtaking, enabling him to write one of the most important international histories of the Cold War of the last several decades.

Ostermann’s ability to operate in English, German, and Russian sources allows him to vividly capture the ebb and flow of East-West diplomacy in the decade following World War II in ways scholars who lack his linguistic skills cannot. This has enabled him to demonstrate in exquisite detail how the policy initiatives of one superpower impacted the strategic planning of its rival. One of the most fascinating aspects of Ostermann’s research is the surprising agency with which East Germany operated—if only briefly. In a remarkable passage Ostermann captures East German leader Walter Ulbricht “renouncing[ing] any suggestion that the Soviet zone was identical to the ‘people’s democracies to its East’” and thus outright asserting a special East German status within the Soviet orbit (148). Ulbricht’s confident avowal of East German autonomy at an Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party, or SED) conference in January 1949, while simultaneously disparaging the newly ensconced Soviet regimes to its east, offers a stark contrast to conventional historical wisdom that pictures the East Germans as mere Soviet puppets. Ostermann’s account is filled with similarly fascinating revelations—indeed, one needs to read this book several times simply to capture the myriad number of historical insights found in its pages.

Ostermann is uniquely qualified to write Between Containment and Rollback. For the past several decades he has been a leading force in researching American efforts to roll back Soviet power in Eastern Europe, focusing on the East German uprising of 1953, which he has long argued nearly caused the collapse of the nascent East German state. As Director of the History and Public Policy Program at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington D.C. he has also been at the forefront in the declassification of Cold War documentation in the United States and around the world. It is in large part thanks to Ostermann’s tireless efforts that the field of Cold War studies can now be truly considered an ‘international history.’

Between Containment and Rollback is divided into nine lengthy chapters offering a fascinatingly detailed, year-by-year account of how the allies’ post-World War II hopes for a successful occupation of Germany and rapid reconstitution of a new German state quickly gave way to a long, bitter Cold War struggle over Germany’s future. Ostermann’s account begins with the Potsdam conference in 1945, as the allies met to discuss the final disposition of a defeated Germany. However, the conference was soon overshadowed by the massive dismantling of German industry to meet the Soviet Union’s insatiable demands for reparations arising from the immense destruction the USSR had suffered. What angered US officials, however, was the determination of Soviet leaders to seize their reparations before the allies could negotiate a final reparations agreement. Ostermann describes the shock felt by the US delegation led by President Harry Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes upon witnessing Berlin’s horrific wartime destruction, compounded by the massive Soviet dismantling effort. He argues that this triggered a fundamental transformation in Western thinking about Germany’s future: rather than treating Germany as a single economic unit, US policymakers argued instead that reparations be taken by zone, a move that practically ensured Germany’s division. What makes Ostermann’s account unique within the Cold War literature is his equally detailed recreation of the Soviet decision-making process, which was once a black box in historical research, reporting the Kremlin’s own fears and uncertainties over its relations with the West and whether the United States and its allies would support the heavy reparations that the Soviet leadership felt their nation deserved.
It is from within this milieu that the great powers launched their mutual rollback operations. The Soviet Union blanketed the western zones of occupied Germany and Western Europe with a massive propaganda effort to undermine trust in the United States among the Germans, French, and Italians. and to derail hopes for the economic recovery promised by the Marshall Plan. As the Soviet psychological warfare campaign swung into motion in 1947, General Lucius Clay, the commander of the US zone of occupation, countered with Operation TALKBACK, an extensive information campaign to rebut Soviet propaganda throughout the four zones of occupation (134-142). Using Radio in the American Sector (RIAS), created in 1946 to counter the Soviet Union's highly influential Radio Berlin, Clay launched a propaganda campaign base on news and entertainment programs to entice German citizens away from Soviet propaganda sources.

Through his research in German and Russian files, Ostermann presents one of the most detailed accounts of Soviet reactions to Western broadcasting, especially the growing alarm among Soviet and East German officials over RIAS’s increasing influence on the Germans living in the Soviet zone. RIAS soon became the most listened to radio station in Berlin, and by 1949 ninety percent of Berliners declared RIAS their favorite station (141). This success emboldened the Truman administration to launch a massive, wide-ranging campaign not merely to blunt Soviet propaganda in Western Europe, but also to undermine Soviet power in the East. Led by Frank Wisner and the newly created Office of Policy Coordination, with George Kennan playing a key advisory role, US psychological warfare swung into action, combining covert action with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation (RE/RL) broadcasting to destabilize the East Bloc.

Germany, Ostermann contends, presented an opportunity for rollback driven by the negotiated reunification of the four zones, a far different strategy than that used to undermine Soviet power throughout the rest of the Soviet bloc, which instead relied on covert action and psychological warfare. Lucius Clay recognized this opportunity shortly after becoming General Dwight Eisenhower’s deputy in 1945. Employing what Ostermann has labeled “rollback by cooperation,” Clay contended that the recovery of the Western zones required an “all-German” solution, which he believed he could achieve in concert with his Soviet counterparts (390). Clay argued that this approach would resolve the German conflict while extending American influence throughout the Soviet Zone, thus “undercutting Soviet-backed communist rule” (390).

Facing growing difficulties from Moscow, Clay grew increasingly disenchanted with the possibility of “rollback by cooperation,” and by mid-1947 emphasized instead the consolidation of the Western zone. However, Kennan would come to champion rollback by cooperation as director of the Policy Planning Staff, shifting from a deep pessimism regarding negotiations with the Soviets to the possibility that German reunification could still occur on terms acceptable to the Western allies. Buoyed by the success of the Marshall Plan, Kennan considered the strategic picture in Europe was shifting in the West’s favor, and contended that the time had come to resolve the German question and remove the legal rationale for the Soviet Union’s military occupation of Poland, thus allowing the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Central Europe. Kennan championed this argument over the next five years: first in Program A, a Policy Planning Staff study of the implications of German reunification; then in his expressed concerns that the creation of NATO would permanently divide Europe, making rollback all but impossible; and again in 1953 as the Task Force A Chairman of Project Solarium, the Eisenhower Administration’s strategic review, where he contended that the East German uprising opened the door for another attempt to reunify Germany and remove Soviet power from Eastern Europe. Nor, as Ostermann demonstrates, was Kennan alone in this thinking. In 1950, the journalist Wallace Carroll, and Hans Speier of the RAND Corporation, proposed “Operation Exit,” a plan for an aggressive psychological warfare campaign to undermine Soviet power in East Germany that was declassified thanks to Ostermann’s efforts (222-224).

However, the belief that German reunification might lead to the rollback of Soviet power ran into a major stumbling block in the form of the Western allies’ continued fear of a unified Germany. As Ostermann discusses, while the growing US-Soviet rivalry took precedence, significant concerns regarding German revanchism remained, resulting in a determined effort to reduce Germany’s industrial potential. While most histories argue that the dismantling of German industry for reparation payments ended with Clay’s 1946
declaration that such transfers must cease, reparations to the Soviet Union in fact continued until 1951, and included the most important industrial groups in Germany: Krupp AG and IG Farben.¹ When Western diplomats negotiated how to get the German economy back on its feet, the dismantling of massive German steel-producing complexes, coal processing units, synthetic rubber and fuels plants, and chemical production facilities by the Western allies continued.² A survey of US newspapers from the era clearly demonstrates that the dismantling of heavy industries that were vital to Europe’s economic and military reconstruction continued despite the announcement of the Truman doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Blockade Crisis, and the Korean War.³ At the same time that Marshall Plan funds rebuilt modern heavy industrial plants in Germany, dismantling crews were hard at work tearing down similar facilities and shipping them to the recipient nations including Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, and the USSR, and despite the complaints of Paul Hoffman, head of the Economic Cooperation Administration that oversaw the Marshall Plan.⁴ Hoffman pleaded to no avail to have the dismantling stopped.⁵ The program officially ended only in 1951.⁶

The continued fears of German revanchism played a key role in the perpetuation of these policies, even as the Soviet challenge to Europe continued to manifest.⁷ The allies began to consider the Germans as allies once they recognized that the continued allied presence in West Germany would prevent uncontrolled German re-militarization and maintain West Germany’s continued western tilt. But significant damage had been done and concerns continued to grow over the very idea of German reunification.⁸

Ostermann concludes his study with a fascinating moment-by-moment account of the 1953 East German uprisings, arguing that they threatened the East German government as much as the opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which of course led to the collapse of the Communist government and reunification in 1990. Ostermann documents official Soviet and East German responses to the crisis, as the strikes and protests involving over one million people across hundreds of communities spread throughout the country. In response, the United States initiated psychological warfare programs to exploit the unrest, particularly the successful food program which enticed nearly 2.6 million East Germans to cross into Western Germany to receive packages of items scarce within the East (369).

As Ostermann demonstrates, the uprising highlighted one of the most difficult aspects of America’s Cold War rollback strategy: how to keep ‘keep the pot simmering’ in Eastern Europe without sparking a revolution the Soviets would certainly crush, as was the case in Hungary three years later. Finding this happy medium was essential if—as U.S. diplomat Charles Bohlen argued in 1952—the West were to successfully destabilize the Soviet Bloc. It was essential, Bohlen argued, that Western psychological warfare exploit the “paranoid” nature of communist regimes to the point where an uprising might succeed.⁹ US psychological warfare efforts were especially focused on attacking the Soviet power structures and exploiting the deep divisions within the Soviet and satellite regimes that manifested themselves throughout the 1950s. These efforts did not lead to

¹ See J.F.J. Gillen, Deconstruction and Decartelization in West Germany, 1945-1953, HICOG, Historical Division, Box 5, National Archives II, College Park, MD., 8-17. See also “West Favors Cutting or Halting German Reparations to the Soviet,” August 6, 1949, New York Times, 1.


⁶ “West German Occupation: It has Changed from Harsh to Benign” Ibid.


⁸ “Are the Nazis Taking Over Again?” Saturday Evening Post May 27, 1950, 32-33, 132-134.

the collapse of the Eastern bloc, but they did prompt these regimes to evolve away from Soviet leader Joseph Stalin’s totalitarian vision into regimes more responsive to the needs of their people.

Following the Hungarian revolution, rollback gave way to a new strategy centered on encouraging the opening of Eastern Europe, one premised on cultural transmission rather than destabilization campaigns. This lasted until the rise of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who decided that the satellite regimes had become unnecessary burdens and allowed them to collapse in only a few short months. Soon thereafter, the failed August 1991 coup attempt led to the collapse of the Soviet Union itself and the denouement of the rollback saga.

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I am very grateful to Thomas A. Schwartz, Hope Harrison, Konrad Jarausch, Stephan Kieninger, and Gregory Mitrovich for their thoughtful and in-depth comments on my book. All of them are superb scholars of postwar Germany or US foreign policy, and I am glad to see that key themes in the book resonated with them. My thanks also to Thomas Maddux for soliciting these reviews.

I am thankful to the commentators for allowing me to take them through a tour de force of postwar international relations over Germany, and for eloquently identifying some of the original contributions my book tries to make to the understanding of postwar German history and the early Cold War in Europe. Given the earlier groundbreaking work by other scholars, such as Frank Costigliola, Carolyn Eisenberg, Melvyn Leffler, Wilson Miscamble, Bernd Stöver, and Marc Trachtenberg, to name just a few, in addition to that of some of the reviewers, I certainly do not take this for granted.¹

My book joins several others that demonstrate that Cold War Germany remains a fertile ground for scholarly research, especially in view of the new troves of documents that have recently become accessible. For the US side, Thomas Boghardt demonstrates this in his excellent new book, Covert Legions: U.S. Army Intelligence in Germany, 1944-1949 (2022), a pioneering study of early postwar US intelligence operations in Germany that is based on classified (now presumably largely declassified) records at the US National Archives.² Other examples for fresh approaches are Scott Krause’s award-winning Bringing Cold War Democracy to West Berlin: A Shared German–American Project, 1940–1972 (2019), which investigates key transatlantic networks,³ or Stephanie Eisenhuth’s sweeping yet richly documented Die Schutzmacht: Die Amerikaner in Berlin 1945-1994 (2018).⁴

Significant lacunae, too, still exist with regard to the Soviet side of the story. To be sure, my book integrates Soviet records into the narrative, following in the footsteps of Norman Naimark’s masterful book The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949 (1995),⁵ which is based in part on the Soviet records that were then available. Despite the worsening political situation in Russia, many more Soviet diplomatic and Communist Party records became accessible at the Moscow archives (GARF, RGASPI, RGANI, and AVPRF) before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done. The archives containing Soviet foreign intelligence records and military intelligence records have never been accessible to ordinary researchers. Although there were some hopeful signs for new releases from

² Thomas Boghardt, Covert Legions: U.S. Army Intelligence in Germany, 1944-1949 (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2022); https://irp.fas.org/agency/army/covert-legions.pdf
the Russian Ministry of Defense’s post-1945 collections prior to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the war is likely to make research in the Moscow archives problematic at best in coming years.

More encouraging are developments in Germany, where the former East German records have long been open to researchers. More recently, West German foreign intelligence files have increasingly become available in the German Federal Archives. Initial work on these records by historians associated with the “Independent Historians Commission for Research of the History of the Bundesnachrichtendienst [West German Federal Foreign Intelligence Service] 1945-1968” is already recasting the conventional narrative of early Cold War Germany.6

Given Germany’s centrality to the European Cold War story, and to that story’s presumptive successes, failures and ‘lessons,’ advancing new archival inroads and new interpretative frames remains an important task. I am glad the reviewers seem to feel my book contributed to that end; I hope it in turn encourages further scholarship on this important subject.

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