

# HISTORY TEACHES

By Marc Trachtenberg

I STARTED COLLEGE AT BERKELEY IN 1962 and by the end of my first year there I pretty much knew that I wanted to become an historian, and that in particular I wanted to study the history of international politics. There were times when I was not sure I would actually be able to spend my life in this field, but I did ultimately manage to get a good job and it still strikes me as a little amazing that society was willing to pay me, quite generously in fact, for doing something I really wanted to do.

What have I learned after working for half a century now as a diplomatic historian? What insights have emerged in the course of doing that work, not just about particular historical problems, but also about more general issues? Is there anything of a general nature that I can say now about how international politics works that I probably would not have been able to say if I had not done that work? And are there any general insights that have emerged from those fifty years of study about how policy should be conducted?

I think the answer to those two last questions is yes, and my goal here is to talk a bit about those kinds of issues. But I want to do that not by laying out one by one what strike me as the most important insights that have taken shape in my mind as I did that work. Instead I want to get at the issue in a more indirect way, by talking about *how* those insights took shape. And perhaps the key point here is that they did not emerge because I had been directly concerned with either set of issues. They developed as a simple by-product of normal historical work. For many years, in fact, I had no interest in international relations theory, and in those days if I had given it any thought at all, I probably would have doubted whether it would be of any use to me in my historical work. I also tended to shy away from policy issues. I more or less took it for granted that an interest in policy—a “presentist bias”—was a source of distortion and was to be avoided.

But as I did the historical work, I could hardly help seeing the larger implications of what I was learning. This, I now understand, is true of historical work in general. As you do that work, from time to time you come across things that are surprising, occasionally even astonishing, because they are so much at variance with what you had been led to believe. And since the views you had absorbed from the larger culture about those specific historical issues are embedded in, and serve to support, certain general notions about how international politics works—and are often linked to certain common ideas about how policy ought to be conducted—the broader implications are often hard to miss.

Let me talk about how this process worked in my own case. My dissertation was on the reparation question about World War I. When I started to work on that topic, I fully accepted the conventional wisdom on the subject – the idea that the French wanted a harsh settlement; that the British and especially the Americans took a much softer line; that in the end the moderates were defeated; and that the reparations called for in the peace treaty with Germany – the Versailles treaty of 1919 – were far beyond Germany’s capacity to pay. My initial goal was to try to understand why the French pursued such a policy. But as I went into the sources I began to see that the conventional wisdom on the subject was very deeply flawed. I remember in particular being stunned by one document I read in the Klotz papers at the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine at Nanterre. In a meeting with his British and American counterparts, Louis Loucheur, the main architect of French reparation policy in 1919, actually attacked as utterly unrealistic the reparation sum the British had proposed. He could just about see, he said, how the Germans could pay the amount the Americans thought was appropriate, but as for the much larger British figure, he said “we leave to the poets of the future the task of finding solutions.”<sup>1</sup>

But that was by no means the only finding that made me question what I had read in the standard accounts. During the peace conference, the French felt let down not just by the British but by the Americans as well.<sup>2</sup> And as a result, the French government actually approached the Germans to see if the two countries could work together, both during the peace conference and after the treaty was signed. That aspect of French policy had a certain proto-Gaullist edge: the French representatives stressed the point that France and Germany had a common interest in resisting Britain and the United States, and that only the “Anglo-Saxon Powers” would profit from Franco-German antagonism. They called – and in 1920 called openly – for a policy of “economic collaboration” with Germany, and at the end of that year proposed the Seydoux Plan, which would have established a reasonable framework within which the reparations could be paid and the two countries could work together.<sup>3</sup>

This of course was not all there was to French policy at the time, but the mere fact that this strand of policy existed at all was quite amazing to me because in those days I still thought that the standard historical interpretations could basically be trusted. And it was clear that the whole story had certain important implications. You would have expected the French, given what they had just suffered at the hands of the Germans, to have pursued a very harsh and indeed vindictive policy. But it seemed that political considerations were more important than the desire for revenge, that the logic of a system based on power where emotion and ideology did not play a dominant role counted for a lot more than I had imagined – although in those days I would never have put it in those terms.

Political considerations loomed large in part because the main alternative – the idea that international politics should be viewed in moral terms – had little appeal for the most important French leaders. For Clemenceau in particular, the whole idea that one could see what was “right,” make a peace on that basis, and simply assume that everyone would be willing to live with those arrangements, was utterly naïve. In a world shaped by centuries of struggle, it was foolish to think in terms of moral absolutes. It was

natural that every nation would have its own idea of what was just, and there was no reason to think that they would all see things the same way. Political conflict was thus normal – to base the peace on one’s own notion of justice would not put an end to it – and one thus had to worry about the future no matter what sort of treaty was signed. One had to worry about how possible threats could be dealt with and about how political conflict could be managed – and one thus had to worry about the structure of power.<sup>4</sup>

Was the basic framework Clemenceau laid out the framework within which policy issues *should* be analyzed? This issue was particularly salient because Clemenceau was clearly taking issue with the main alternative way of approaching these basic policy questions, questions which Woodrow Wilson was then championing, an approach that emphasized moral considerations. So looking at the history almost forces you to think about the policy issues – that is, to think about whether you sympathize more with Wilson or with Clemenceau.

Those questions about fundamental policy, moreover, are linked to key issues of historical interpretation. Those who sympathize with Wilson’s approach do not blame Wilson or Wilsonianism for the failure of the peace of 1919; they say that because of European, and especially French, opposition Wilson was unable to implement his peace program after the war. But there are also those who dislike Wilson’s basic approach to foreign policy, and who blame Wilsonianism for the failure of the peace, and, to a certain extent, for the great disasters that followed. In some respects, their approach, with its distaste for moralizing and its emphasis on power-political considerations, is similar to the approach Clemenceau outlined at the time.

What this means is that one can get at those fundamental issues of policy by studying the historical problem. Was Wilson really defeated in 1919, or was the Versailles settlement in essence a Wilsonian peace? One can study these things by looking closely at the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference. One can study what went on, issue by issue, looking at the line each major power took and trying to see which ones essentially got their way. To me, the results of that analysis were quite surprising. Wilson had no doubt that the Germans were responsible for the war; in his view, they had committed a great crime and they had to be punished for it. The “rule of law” meant that the law-breaker could not be allowed to get off scot-free; a “just peace” was one that recognized all this and was based on the idea that the Germans should be held accountable for what they had done. It was for that reason that Wilson – although his champions later tried to deny this – had no problem accepting the war-guilt clause and the provisions about the war criminals in the peace treaty. And it was for this reason that he overruled his advisors and accepted the inclusion of pensions in the reparation bill, more or less doubling the amount Germany was supposed to pay, even though this was clearly a violation of what the Americans had committed themselves to in the pre-armistice agreement – and would certainly be viewed that way by the Germans.<sup>5</sup> But perhaps the most striking thing here was that while Wilson favored a punitive peace, he also seemed to assume it would be self-enforcing. He did not take the problem of enforcement seriously, and when Germany began to resist the treaty, Wilson did not feel that force should be used against it. That

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combination, it seemed clear, was bound to cause problems: the Germans would be provoked and angered, but if they resisted, no one should do anything to keep them in line.

To me, the historical analysis certainly suggested there was something basically wrong with the Wilsonian approach to foreign policy. The opposite one – rooted in the idea that moral judgments in this area can be quite problematic, that international conflict is to be understood more in political than in moral terms, and that in such circumstances power-political considerations are bound to play a fundamental role in shaping policy – was far more attractive. Worrying about right and wrong (as though those issues had easy answers) and, by implication, concerning yourself with how justice should be meted out, only gets in the way if you're concerned primarily with how

interests should be accommodated, how a stable structure of power can be constructed, and how peace can be assured.

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Studying the post-World War I period more generally gave me a strong sense that international conflict is to be understood primarily not in moral, but in political terms – that is, as resulting from a clash of policies about which moral judgments might be quite problematic. Indeed, you might be able to sympathize with both sides in a conflict – in the post-World War I case with Germany, for wanting to throw off the Versailles constraints and recover its power, especially since those constraints were explicitly based on the idea that Germany was mainly responsible for the war, but also with France for wanting to keep German power limited in order to avoid having to live in its shadow. In such circumstances, how can we say who was right and who was wrong? Are such terms even meaningful in this kind of context?

Doing that work on the period after 1918 was thus quite important for me in this context because these general points emerged with particular force. To be sure, I had already begun to think in those terms as an undergraduate. The whole premise of the course on European diplomatic history I took at that time was that wars don't just happen because a particular country decides to commit an act of aggression. The premise was that to understand a war like the First World War, your goal was not to figure out who was to blame; your goal was to reconstruct the whole story leading up to the outbreak of war, and to try to grasp the logic underlying the course of events. The story might take years, even decades, to run its course, and in reconstructing it you want to put yourself in the shoes of the protagonists on all sides and try to see the world through their eyes – that is, try to see what they were reacting to, and how the choices they made were influenced by the sort of situation in which they found themselves, a situation shaped in large measure by the policy choices the other powers made for the same kinds of reasons. The idea is that you are not conducting a kind of judicial inquiry, but instead are simply trying to understand how a particular political process ran its course.

That perspective, which I had begun to absorb as an undergraduate but which really came alive for me when I did that work on the post-World War I period, struck

me as important because it was so different from the assumptions about what makes for war that you find in the larger culture. People simply assumed that World War II—both the war with Germany and the war with Japan—was a clash between good and evil. One side was the aggressor and the other side had a purely defensive policy. The war in Europe broke out because Hitler decided to start it. The war with Japan was caused by the Japanese attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. The Cold War was understood in much the same way. America and its friends were peace-loving democracies and pursued purely defensive policies. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was an aggressive, expansionist communist state.

That set of assumptions—largely unarticulated but no less widespread for that—about what international conflict was about, what one might call the “aggressor theory of war,” had major policy implications. It meant, in particular, that you needed to focus on what you might do if your adversary actually committed an act of aggression. You needed to focus on what it would take to deter a hostile power that was tempted to commit an act of aggression. It was natural, given such assumptions, that deterrence should become the be-all and end-all of strategy. But let me again emphasize the main point here: the whole strategy of deterrence was rooted in the aggressor theory of war, since it is aggression and only aggression that one seeks to deter. So if there is something wrong with that whole approach to understanding what makes for war, there must also be something wrong with the basic strategy that’s built on it.

And the more work I did, the clearer it became to me that that whole approach to the problem, rooted in the idea that international conflict is to be understood in essentially moral terms and that war was essentially a product of aggression was fundamentally wrong. I was coming to look at things in a very different way, in part as a result of my teaching. The main thing I taught for many years was a diplomatic history lecture course, and in teaching that class I felt I needed to try to make sense of the whole period I was covering. To do that, I of course used the general framework that had taken shape in my mind, especially as a result of the work I had done on the period after World War I, and applying that framework I began to question the conventional wisdom at various points. The whole notion, for example, that the war in the Pacific was caused by Japanese aggressiveness, pure and simple, struck me as quite problematic when I brought that conceptual framework to bear. Why on earth would Japan, bogged

down in China as it was, attack the strongest country in the world, if the United States really was, as one famous historian put it, a country that asked “only to be left alone?”<sup>6</sup> And here all my instincts as an historian began to assert themselves: it just couldn’t be that simple; there *had* to be a story here; the Japanese *had* to be reacting to something; the Americans *had* to be playing a more active role.

The same kind of point could be made about Hitler’s decision to go to war with the United States right after Pearl Harbor. But it also turned out that even the war of

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1939 was not to be understood as an act of aggression pure and simple. The basic point here was made by my own teacher, Raymond Sontag, in a remarkable article published in 1957. There was one theme that emerged when one studied the evidence, he said, “a theme which has relevance to our own day. It is the way in which a succession of diplomatic moves, intended only as preparatory to a still distant trial of strength, developed into a diplomatic crisis involving all of Europe, and eventually precipitated a world war which at the outset Hitler had no thought of starting and which to the end he hoped to avoid.”<sup>7</sup> The implication was hard to miss: imperial Japan and Nazi Germany were probably the two most aggressive powers in modern history, so if even in these cases the aggressor theory of war did not come close to capturing everything that was going on, one really had to wonder about how valid it was in general.

The Cold War was a much easier case: it was not hard to look at that conflict in essentially political terms. The key here for me was the argument Adam

Ulam developed in his important study of Soviet foreign policy, *Expansion and Coexistence*. The Soviets were worried about Germany—especially about what would happen if that country became a nuclear power—and the great Berlin Crisis of 1958–62, the central episode of the Cold War, was to be understood in the context of those concerns.<sup>8</sup> Ulam did not give much evidence to support that interpretation, but it rang true for me, and it became part of my (at first tentative) interpretation of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup>

But because this sort of interpretation is in a sense imposed on the subject—that is, it goes beyond what the available evidence fully supports—you need to keep something of an open mind and do what you can to get deeper insight into the issue. It is in that connection that certain historical findings are of fundamental importance: these findings carry particular weight because they’re surprising, in the sense that they’re at odds with what you’ve been led to believe.

Let me give three examples of what I have in mind, all relating to US foreign policy in the Cold War period. The first has to do with President Kennedy. A lot of people take Kennedy’s inaugural address, and especially the reference to how the United States would “bear any burden” in the Cold War, at face value. But it turns out that this was not the real Kennedy at all; there was a huge gap, as there often is in political life, between rhetoric and reality. Kennedy was by no means a simple-minded Cold Warrior: he very much wanted to reach an accommodation with the USSR, and he made it clear to the Soviets in particular that he understood their concerns about Germany and was willing to accept Eastern Europe as a Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>10</sup> He also recognized that as soon as China got the bomb, which it did the year after he was assassinated, it would be impossible to defend Southeast Asia and the defense

of that area was not a burden he was willing to bear in those circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

The second example has to do with US policy in the immediate post-World War II period. Here again the assumption was that US policy was rooted in ideological considerations, and that in particular the American government refused to accept the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the establishment of communist police states in that region. But it is quite clear that in 1945 the Truman government was willing to accept the new realities in that part of the world, and indeed had little trouble accepting the division of Germany. This whole story took me quite some time to sort out, but I think the basic findings here are very solid. I was particularly struck by a comment President Truman made at Potsdam in July 1945. He thought we would “have a Slav Europe for a long time to come” and did not think that that would be “so bad.”<sup>12</sup>

The third example has to do with John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower’s Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959. Most people still think of Dulles as highly ideological and moralistic, someone who really thought of the communist world as forming a single monolithic bloc, and that the United States and Russia were engaged in a kind of zero-sum game. But it is quite clear that Dulles’s approach was much more sophisticated and power-politically oriented than we had been led to believe.<sup>13</sup> China, in Dulles’s view, was by no means a Soviet satellite, and even in his first year in office he thought relations between Russia and China were somewhat strained. “The best hope for intensifying the strain and difficulties” between those two powers, he told the British and French foreign ministers in December 1953, was to “keep the Chinese under maximum pressure.” That pressure, which might include even military measures short of war, would “compel them to make more demands on the USSR which the latter would be unable to meet and the strain would consequently increase.”<sup>14</sup> His highly ideological rhetoric, in particular about a monolithic Sino-Soviet bloc, is thus not to be taken at face value. It served an important political purpose. The calculation was probably straightforward: if war broke out between China and the United States, the USSR itself might be attacked. That being the case, the Soviets would have a strong incentive either to distance themselves from the Chinese or try to hold them back; the Chinese would resent it if the Soviets took either course of action, and tensions between those two powers would increase.

This is perhaps a little speculative, but the basic point here is quite clear. Power-political considerations counted for more and ideological considerations counted for less in these cases than you had been led to believe. And that in turn serves to deepen your general understanding of how international politics works, especially the role that power-political thinking plays in shaping the way international conflicts run their course.

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The main idea here is that one has to look at an armed conflict as the outcome of a political process, unfolding over time, with its own logic, and about which moral judgments might well be quite problematic. That idea, to my mind at least, has very

important policy implications, and let me try to draw out some of them here. I just used the term “political process” and both words in that term are important in this context.

The word “political,” first of all, has a number of connotations: political as opposed to moral; political as opposed to military; political as implying that power considerations are important. Each of these distinctions is significant in policy terms. The whole idea that we should not think of political conflicts primarily in terms of who is to blame, that we should try to understand the logic underlying the course of events, means that we should adopt an approach that looks toward political accommodation: a *modus vivendi* is much easier to achieve when neither side engages in finger pointing, and both sides take a more sophisticated and perhaps more jaundiced view, one rooted in a certain sense for how the adversary sees the situation. The emphasis on power implies that we should always pay attention to power realities and power-political considerations—with “power” understood in a broad rather than purely military sense. The term “political,” in fact, implies that military considerations are of limited—although by no means negligible—importance.

I spoke before about the narrowness of the concept of deterrence, and about the problem of focusing excessively on those considerations (of a military nature) that come into play when a country is tempted to commit an act of aggression. But one sees a certain tendency to overemphasize the importance of military considerations on the left as well: the whole idea that “arms races” are important sources of international conflict, and that arms control is therefore of fundamental importance, is a good example here.<sup>15</sup>

But the word “process” is perhaps of more fundamental importance than the word “political.” Many of the other things I’ve talked about are standard fare in realist thought, but this emphasis on process is, I think, one of the most important things an historian can bring to the table. The whole idea that a war is the outcome of a political process that can take years to run its course is natural to the historian because the historian’s job is to trace that process, but most people do not think in those terms. Most people, as I said before, think that the War in the Pacific can be explained by referring to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Even many political scientists think that when you look at a war, you can code one side or the other having “started” it, although in most cases things are not quite so simple. But if war is to be understood, as a general rule, as the outcome of a political process, then the goal of policy should be to influence the way that process runs its course by creating incentives and disincentives that could help shape the sorts of policies the other powers involved in the conflict adopt.

That point for me is absolutely fundamental. It implies, among other things, that one’s own policy should not be defined in absolute terms, but rather should be contingent on the behavior of one’s adversary. Instead of opting for a “hard line” or a “soft line” in any particular case, one should make it clear that the specific line one takes will be a function of what one’s adversary does. The basic idea here is somewhat counterintuitive: one can help shape events by pursuing an essentially reactive policy—that is, by making it clear that the ball is essentially in the rival power’s court. Indeed, adversaries and friends should have both something to fear and something to gain if they behave one way or another. Otherwise, they have no leverage, no way of influencing the other’s behavior, and thus no control over the way the process runs its course. You



might think this point is so obvious that you do not need an historian to make it, but it is surprising how often it is ignored in practice, US policy toward Iraq in the 1990s being a very good case in point.<sup>16</sup>

This whole way of thinking is rooted in the study of great power politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today, when very few of us believe there is any real risk of a great power war, the discussion here might therefore have a certain antiquated quality. One might think that these ideas are not relevant to the world we now live in. My own feeling, however, is that the system still “selects out” actors who behave strategically because if they don’t, they stand a good chance, to use Kenneth Waltz’s term, of “falling by the wayside.” And the basic principles I’ve talked about here apply whenever people, to any significant degree, behave strategically. International conflict, and indeed conflict in general, has a certain logic. Historical work can help you see what that logic is, and when you see it, you’re in a much better position to think about policy. **Y**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Marc Trachtenberg, “Reparation at the Paris Peace Conference,” *Journal of Modern History* 51:1 (March 1979), p. 34, and Marc Trachtenberg, *Reparation in World Politics: France and European Economic Diplomacy, 1916–1923* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> The main problem was the unwillingness of France’s allies to accept a settlement based on the principle of “equality and community of sacrifice.” But at one key point, and on one important issue – the inclusion of pensions in the bill – President Wilson actually sided with the British; that decision resulted in a much higher reparation bill than the French would have preferred. Loucheur made it clear to both Wilson and the British prime minister, David Lloyd George, that if it were up to the French, a strict interpretation of the Fourteen Points – that is, limiting the bill to reparation for material damages and excluding pensions – would be a better solution. By Loucheur’s own estimates, that would have meant that the total bill would have been less than \$25 billion; the burden on the German economy corresponding to that sort of figure, although substantial, was by no means beyond Germany’s capacity to pay. But Wilson was not interested in that idea and ended up supporting the inclusion of pensions. When one of his advisors, John Foster Dulles, pointed out to him that the same logic that had ruled out war costs should also rule out pensions, Wilson refused to accept the point. “Logic! Logic! I don’t give a damn for logic,” he said, “I am going to include pensions.” See Trachtenberg, *Reparation in World Politics*, pp. 64–69, and Trachtenberg, “Reparation at the Paris Peace Conference,” pp. 41–42.

<sup>3</sup> See Trachtenberg, *Reparation in World Politics*, pp. 86–87, 112–14, 119, 158–61, 172–78.

<sup>4</sup> This sort of thinking was laid out most clearly in Clemenceau’s speech to the Chamber of Deputies on December 29, 1918.

<sup>5</sup> I wrote a couple of articles dealing with these questions: “Versailles after Sixty Years,” *Journal of Contemporary History* (1982), and “Versailles Revisited” (Review of Manfred Boemeke, Gerald Feldman and Elisabeth Glaser, *The Treaty of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years*. Cambridge, UK: German History Institute, Washington, and Cambridge University Press, 1998), *Security Studies* 9:2 (Spring 2000), 191–205.

<sup>6</sup> See the last page of A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Sontag, “The Last Months of Peace, 1939,” *Foreign Affairs* 35, no. 3 (April 1957), p. 507.

<sup>8</sup> Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–73*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).

<sup>9</sup> That interpretation has a more solid evidentiary base today. See especially Oleg Troyanovsky, “The Making of Soviet Foreign Policy,” in William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev and Abbott Gleason, eds., *Nikita Khrushchev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 217.

<sup>10</sup> See Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 322.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Krock of *The New York Times* asked Kennedy in 1961 what he thought of the domino theory – “that is, if Laos and Viet-Nam go Communist, the rest of South East Asia will fall to them in orderly succession.” Krock noted that “the President expressed doubts that this theory has much point any more because, he remarked, the Chinese Communists are bound to get nuclear weapons in time, and from that moment on they will dominate South East Asia.” Krock interview with President Kennedy, October 11, 1961, Krock Papers, box 1, vol. 3, Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton NJ. See also Arthur Krock, *Memoirs: Sixty Years on the Firing Line* (New York, 1968), p. 370. See also Kennedy remarks to State Department senior officers (draft transcript with suggested additions and deletions), attached to Bundy memorandum

for the president (Tab 6), May 29, 1962, p. 10, in dossier relating to Kennedy's forthcoming talk to the Foreign Service Association, President's Office Files, box 38a, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, and available online at <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKPOF-038-031.aspx>. He also brought up this issue in the National Security Council on January 18, 1962, and January 22, 1963; *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961–63*, vol. 8, pp. 240 and 462. Under Johnson, however, the thinking was very different: to prevent people from thinking that faced with a nuclear China the United States would withdraw from Asia, the US government had to stand firm in that area in general and in Vietnam in particular; see Matthew Jones, *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race, and Nuclear Weapons in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. p. 463.

<sup>12</sup> Extract from the James Forrestal Diary, entry for July 28, 1945, Forrestal Diaries, vol. 2, Forrestal Papers, Mudd Library, Princeton University. Also online at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/documents/forrestal.html>. This passage was deleted from the edited version of this diary entry published Walter Millis, *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking, 1951), p. 78. On this general issue, see my article "The United States and Eastern Europe in 1945: A Reassessment," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 10:4 (Fall 2008), and the H-Diplo roundtable that was devoted to that article (<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-X-12.pdf>), as well as the first chapter in the *Constructed Peace book*.

<sup>13</sup> Here, for example, is an extract from Dulles's discussion of US foreign policy toward Germany in the National Security Council in February 1958: "Secretary Dulles began by stating his opinion that with respect to Germany the policies of the United States and of the Soviet Union have something in common — namely, that it was not safe to have a unified Germany in the heart of Europe unless there was some measure of external control which could prevent the Germans from doing a third time what they had done in 1914 and 1939. Secretary Dulles insisted that the Soviet Union would never accept an independent, neutralized Germany in the heart of Europe. He added that he was convinced of this fact from many private conversations with Soviet leaders, who had made it quite clear that they would never agree to the creation of a unified Germany unless it were controlled by the USSR. Nor, on the other hand, should the United States accept a unified Germany except as part of an integrated Western European community. We simply could not contemplate reunifying Germany and then turning it loose to exercise its tremendous potentialities in Central Europe. . . . We could not close our eyes to the fact that this great power must be brought under some kind of external control. The world could not risk another repetition of unlimited power loosed on the world." Discussion at the 354th Meeting of the National Security Council, February 6, 1958, pp. 7–8, Declassified Documents Reference System (available online through subscribing libraries), item no. CK3100278522.

<sup>14</sup> Meeting of US, British, and French foreign ministers with President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Churchill, December 7, 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, 5:1809. I should note in this connection that many intelligence estimates from the 1950s relating to this issue have been declassified, and it is clear from those estimates that the government had a surprisingly good sense for what relations between the USSR and China were like at the time. Many of those documents are available online on the CIA's Freedom of Information Act website ([www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov)). The NIC (National Intelligence Council) Collection and the China Collection are particularly rich in this regard. The CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence has a "Listing of Declassified National Intelligence Estimates on the Soviet Union and International Communism, 1946–1984" on its website (<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/listing-of-declassified-national-intelligence-estimates-on-the-soviet-union-and-international-communism-1946-1984/index.htm>), and one can often find full text versions of particular documents listed there online in the CIA's Electronic Reading Room ([http://www.foia.cia.gov/search\\_options.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/search_options.asp)).

<sup>15</sup> Another example is the great importance many people during the Cold War period placed on what was called "strategic stability," as though the "reciprocal fear of surprise attack" was ever a major problem in international political life. Insofar as any historical support was given for that theory, that support came from a particular interpretation of the coming of the First World War during the July Crisis in 1914. It turns out that that interpretation does not stand up in the light of the evidence. See my article, "The Coming of the First World War: A Reassessment," in my book *History and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). This, to my mind, is a good example of the way historical analysis can shed light on an important issue of policy.

<sup>16</sup> You would think that if the Americans wanted to make sure that Saddam Hussein did not develop "weapons of mass destruction," they would have said that if he cooperated with the control regime, the United States would ease up on the sanctions that had been imposed, but that if he resisted that regime, very strong action would be taken. But it was US policy to maintain the existing sanctions no matter what, and instead of reacting harshly to Iraqi resistance, the American government opted for what were essentially pinpricks. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, for example, stated explicitly in early 1997 that "We do not agree with the nations who argue that if Iraq complies with its obligations concern weapons of mass destruction, sanctions should be lifted." Quoted in David M. Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq: Politics in the UN Security Council, 1980–2005* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 121. In such circumstances, Saddam had little incentive to accept the control regime. He himself made the point "on numerous occasions" by asking his ministers rhetorically: "We can have sanctions with inspectors or sanctions without inspectors; which do you want?" Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq's WMD [Duelfer Report] ([http://www.foia.cia.gov/duelfer/Iraqs\\_WMD\\_Vol1.pdf](http://www.foia.cia.gov/duelfer/Iraqs_WMD_Vol1.pdf)), September 2004, vol. 1, p. 61.