

---

## **Remembering the Cold War: East/West Relations 1945-1991**

**Leroy A. Binns Ph.D.**

*Grad School of Interdisciplinary Stds, The Union Institute, Cincinnati, OH*

---

### **ABSTRACT**

This project examines international relations and the underpinning and associated theories that defined public policy and its effects on geopolitics during the post World War II era.

Extermination of Hitler's Germany sets the stage for a new world order under the governance of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This conversion nonetheless recalls the cliché, "history repeats itself." Such adaptation and a 46 year shelf life verified via countless disturbing illustrations herein underlines archaic political schisms, the attempted validation of ideology laced with the trappings of containment and expansionism as mechanisms of realism and political and economic autonomy, and liberalism as recourse to global stability.

The essay is designed as an introduction to future discussions on world transformation.

**Keywords:** cold war, geopolitics, public policy, political theories

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Napoleonic War that was accredited the signature instigator affiliated with the evaporation of the distribution of power, thus ceding overwhelming dominance to France in 1815, is a teaching moment that albeit attempted by Germany's fascist leader Adolf Hitler was eclipsed by the Cold War. Such avoidance crystallized power sharing with an equal dose of misgiving and contracted the concentration of international relations to the confines of public policy applications tainted by realist and liberalist conjectures.

Issues of intent within the succeeding pages whether images of the nation-state as the principal actor in international relations via the acquisition of power in a antagonistic milieu (realism) or a diplomatic line of attack to secure global peace and security (liberalism) are complimented with individual disclosures, historic pronouncements, procedural documents, defense institutions and instruments and outcomes - all of which at the detriment of an emerging Third World augmented a political chess game between the superpowers, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Over the duration of a 46 year life span the executed course of action is culpable for a disoriented world as evident through a series of manifestations. In many instances spotlight on the elevation of military confrontations and intrusions under the guise of sovereignty and desultory efforts or obstinacy to resort to mediation perpetuated a cycle of deluge without a successful endgame.

To this end, this text amidst the dismantling of the Soviet Union alludes to an incomplete excursion in its assessment of the Cold War era.

### **EMERGING CONTEST FOR GLOBALISM**

The fall of Hitler's Germany in 1945 "heralded" a new era of skepticism among allies. In part Stalin who faced the threat of imperialism by the German army in the late 1930s distrusted the West because of her striking political contrast and hesitance in complying with a Soviet request for a second front in 1942-1943. Moreover the Leninist regime which proposed socialism in lieu of power politics was strongly opposed to political dissent within the Eastern sphere and thus sought to maintain security through cooptation (Stalin 1969).

*\*Address for correspondence:*

labenz@dr.com

On the other hand America, Britain and France were suspicious of the Kremlin's intentions and were therefore adamantly in disagreement with possible transformation within the New World. The Yalta Summit which engaged the minds of President Franklin Roosevelt (USA), President Josef Stalin (USSR) and Prime Minister Winston Churchill (UK) concerning the division of Germany into four zones support the argument for doubt. The United States and Great Britain intended to create a self sufficient Germany in comparison to the system of dependency outlined by the other participants.

An opening act of the Cold War saw resistance with Stalin's discontentment towards democratic elements on Polish soil. This episode also lent relevance to Russian security vis-a-vis the German question, enhanced a sudden “crackdown” in Warsaw and ultimately led to the termination of Western capital to Moscow through the lend-lease program (Churchill 1950, Wittner 1978).

As Soviet fears and aspirations intensified, her ideological persistence sent rippling effects throughout Europe. In compliance with the realist/realpolitik stance that sanctions the preservation of sovereignty in an anarchic international environment by any means, she addressed matters of regional security in an illegal and heavy-handed fashion. Documented accounts conceded that she denounced Western infiltration in Poland and buttressed the communist apparatus in Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

World exposure to the rise of a communist theatre eventually received a Western catalyst on March 5, 1946 in the form of Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill. His renown Fulton speech addressed the ills of socialist dogma and vehemently reinforced the politics of containment.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line all capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe, Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere. The safety of the world requires a new unity in Europe from which no nation should be permanently outcast. If the Western democracies stand together in strict adherence to the principles of the United Nations' charter their influence for furthering those principles will immense and no one is likely to molest them. If however they become divided or falter in their duty and if these all important years are allowed to slip away then indeed catastrophe may overwhelm us all (Churchill 1946).

In fact acceptance of the Iron Curtain enunciation as self evidence of tyranny saw a convinced US take action (Ulman 1976, Spanier 1992).

In 1947 she advocated the Truman doctrine, a counter-revolutionary response to assume Britain's financial obligation to Greece and Turkey. Before a joint session of Congress, President Harry Truman made an earnest plea.

I ask the Congress to provide authority for assistance to Greece and Turkey in the amount of \$400,000,000 for the period ending June 1948. In requesting these funds I have taken into consideration the maximum amount of relief assistance which would be furnished to Greece out of the \$350,000,000 which I requested that the Congress authorize for the prevention of starvation and suffering in countries devastated by the war (Truman 1947).

A similar monetary provision commonly known as the Marshall Plan was granted shortly thereafter to Western Europe to bolster those war torn economies and suppress Russian expansionist motives (Ambrose 1984).

As the marriage between bipolar politics and realism gained notoriety, Congressional dialogue and foreign service officer George Kennan's analysis on the need to contain the Soviets translated into the institutionalization of the Foreign Service reform Act of 1947 which increased personnel within the State department and the National Security Act of the same year granting enormous authority such as covert operations to the defense department. Further the Big Three's refusal to provide assurances regarding German reparations at Potsdam stalled the Kremlin's autonomous intentions towards Germany (Schulzinger 1984).

In response to US retaliatory measures Russian paranoia unfolded with the introduction of the Cominform an instrument of international communism and a replacement for the pre-World War II Comterm to address economic and political success in the periphery (the sovereign states of Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania were annexed or forcefully and unlawfully adopted as surrogates by the Soviets). Such behavior

nonetheless led to major setback as she defensively tried to create a monolithic Eastern Europe. To the contrary President Josip Tito's denouncement of Russian communism fostered ill feelings between Moscow and Belgrade and the latter's subsequent dismissal from the communist bloc in 1948 (Djilas 1962, Donaldson 1992).

The Russian leadership accelerated the balance of power theory and by extension the doctrine of realism that endorses the principle of aggrandizement of the great powers at the expense of the weak. She intensified pressure on her Western foes by declaring a blockade on West Berlin in opposition to an unofficial division of Germany by America and company. But to their dismay the US countered this isolationist ground and sea measure. After deliberation including General Lucius Caly's suggestion of a gun battle to save the West, the army's Chief of Staff Omar Bradley convinced the president of the significance of an air lift to support Berlin. In addition this act of containment facilitated the introduction of East and West Germany, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (to counter Western aid) and the commencement of Dean Acheson's brainchild NATO in 1949 and her counterpart the Warsaw pact as vehicles to combat unforeseen military aggression on either side (Evans 1998, Schulzinger 1984, Yoder 1986).

Moscow soon set in motion her readiness to merge Korea and by so doing strengthen the Japanese communist party and Asia at large. Unfortunately the uncalculated North Korea invasion of the South led to great pain. The intrusive act was compounded by the withdrawal of the Red army across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel as part of the 1952 armistice and her worst possible reality – the loss of South Korea and Japan both of which entered into a secret agreement with Washington (Donaldson 1992).

With the continuance of political steadfastness grew technological sophistication. The American entered a new age of atomic power advanced by the National Security Council Policy Paper #68 which encouraged

An immediate and large scale build up in our military and general strength and that of our allies with the intentions on righting the power balance and in the hope that through means other than all out war we could induce a change in the nature of the Soviet system (Dept of State Bulletin 1954).

Such forthrightness was also highlighted by the 1954 invention of the H bomb. The Soviets developed an equivalent weapon within months. They devised other non nuclear artillery that was capable of demolishing Western Europe thus endorsing the Gaither report. According to Herbert York a consultant to the Gaither committee and member of the von Neumann committee on long range missiles

The Gaither report was set in motion to study the question of where we stood vis-vis the Russians with regard to the strategic nuclear situation and that included a lot of factors. It included the development of missiles, the development of nuclear weapons for these missiles to carry and it included questions like civil defense. And it involved trying to reassess, make a fresh assessment of what the Russians were doing, what they were up to and what they could be doing in the near future (Donaldson 1992).

This report as well revealed that the Soviets were spending as much on their armed forces and heavy equipment as the Americans.

Notwithstanding the threat of war it was politics as usual. A 1954 assembly of British, French, American and Russian delegates that convened in Berlin once again to settle territorial and security disputes pertinent to Germany failed to arrive at a consensus. In a move to dislodge the US from Germany the USSR's Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov's uncanny request – for all German elections in preparation for a neutralized and reunified state, the abolition of NATO and a united Europe expedited the integration of the Federal Republic of Germany into the NATO camp.

The following year the Geneva conference favored Russian interests. In sessions which consisted of representatives from the Soviet Union, United States, China and North and South Korea, the Eastern Europeans were successful when rejecting free elections in favor of collective security on grounds of unequal representation for their Asian associates amidst escalating American infiltration in the region.

As Asian concerns intensified, realism continued to shape the contours of public policy. With the focus on the shifting distribution of power among the two major players, the Soviets likewise took advantage of the French struggle against Ho Chi Minh thus pressuring a withering French power to willingly offer to partition Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel and committing all warring factions to agree to

a truce. In opposition and the possibility of a consolidation under Russian rule America refused to sign the Geneva Accords and instead instigated the materialization of SEATO (Ibid 1992).

## **COMPETING IDEOLOGIES AND PARALLEL EXPANSIONISM**

East/West relations may not only be described as a tit for tat but a subscription to the realist presupposition otherwise defined as the “power politics” school of thought. The function of the nation state as the principal actor protecting its national survival within a hostile environment is central to the conduct on display by Moscow and Washington.

The maxim, “the more things change the more they remain the same” held true over time and space as before long world transformation unveiled astonishing revelations in the Middle East and elsewhere. Unfortunately a former UN Secretary General and advocate of the liberalist hypothesis Javier Perez de Cuellar mimics the timeless voices of Immanuel Kant and Woodrow Wilson yet is overlooked.

We are presently embarking on an exceedingly danger course, one symptom of which is the erosion of the authority and status of world and regional intergovernmental institutions. Such a trend must be reversed before once again we bring upon ourselves a global catastrophe and find ourselves without institutions effective enough to prevent it (Kegley 2011).

Secondary actors continued to be utilized as pawns at will by the superpowers. With nationalism in full gear Egyptian President Garmal Nasser’s socialist policies namely his military association with the Soviet Union and his resentment to a Western led Arab alliance led President Dwight Eisenhower and the Secretary of State John Dulles to renege on their offer to finance the Aswan dam. This in turn provoked Cairo’s closure of the Suez Canal.

These turn of events soon highlighted the Israeli seizure of the Sinai Peninsula and the waterway in return for the passage of essential commodities through the Gaza Strip. Shortly thereafter in retaliation against a rebellious Cairo the French and the British who sustained the Jewish homeland and depended heavily on the canal for oil supplies followed suit by bombing Egyptian military targets and by capturing Port Said. The Suez crisis promoted a Western rift between Washington and her allies as opposed to Moscow an instrumental party to a cease fire to the conflict. Nonetheless subsequent to the settlement through the UN the US president won congressional approval to intervene in the Middle East if the region was threatened by communism (Evans 1998, Khrushchev 1970).

Amidst partial victory in the canal affair President Nikita Khrushchev was confronted with addition frustrations on the European front which were triggered by his criticism of Stalin’s crimes at the 20<sup>th</sup> party congress. In June 1956 civil strife erupted in support of reformation in Poland. The Soviet retreat in Warsaw sent a shock wave of anti-communism throughout Hungary as students demonstrated for the replacement of their national leader Erno Gero with Imre Nagy and the removal of Russian troops stationed in the country. Initially both wishes were granted but in aftermath the Budapest regime’s withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact forced the communist warriors to unlawfully crush the uprising and all similar actions in the East in fear of the commencement of the domino effect (Brzezinski 1971).

This moment of truth was soon followed by another, the production of the world’s first space satellite, Sputnik. Such means to Soviet strategic superiority and an irresistible space race later ignited the US Congress to sanction the national Defense Education Act of 1958 to promote higher education in the sciences and humanities as a deterrent while the likes of John Dulles encouraged a surge in nuclear weaponry to neutralize the Soviet threat (Wittner 1978).

The Kremlin’s success was however short lived as she faced a new dilemma of grave concern close to home. Despite a Sino/Soviet treaty that awarded the Chinese administration political sovereignty Peking opted for Maoism as an alternative to Asian political uncertainties primarily those in North and South Vietnam and Korea. Maoism was likewise an option to Russian dominance in world affairs (Spanier 1992).

An ability to induce or change the behavior of others in a desired direction or the opportunity to resist such impact was pivotal to the wartime allies that engaged in matters beyond the shores of Europe and Asia. In 1959 Fidel Castro and his revolutionaries overthrew the regressive Batista regime and quickly developed close ties with the Khrushchev government. This action despite the White House’s policy of non-intervention announced at a January 26, 1960 press conference provoked a crucial turning point within the American political arena. For contrary to principle John Kennedy approved the illicit,

abortive attempt to overthrow the Castro administration with the Bay of Pigs invasion later that year. The chain reaction to this US maneuver, the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 signaled yet another crisis in East/West relations. Khrushchev remembered its inception

It was during my visit to Bulgaria (May 14-20) that I had the idea to install missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba without letting the United States find out they were there until it was too late to do anything about them... My thinking went like this: If we installed the missiles secretly and then if the United States discovered the missiles were there after they were already poised and ready to strike the Americans would think twice before trying to liquidate or install by military means... In addition to protect Cuba our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call the balance of power. The American had surrounded our country with military bases and threatened us with nuclear weapons and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you, we'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine. And it was high time America learned what it feels like to have her own land and her own people threatened... All these thoughts kept churning in my head the whole time I was in Bulgaria. I paced back and forth brooding over what to do. I didn't tell anyone what I was thinking. I kept my mental agony to myself. But all the while the idea of putting missiles in Cuba was ripening inside my mind (Khrushchev 1970).

In the end after numerous ineffective communiqués by the Soviets in response to the termination of high tech military activity in Havana and American intent to barricade Cuba and if necessary destroy the missiles, the potential for superpower crossfire was resolved with the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuban sites in exchange for comparable actions in Turkey. Nevertheless French scrutiny of the US's erratic demeanor in the wake of the Cuban affair prompted an element of uncertainty – President Charles De Gaulle's decision to withdraw France from NATO which implored the question: Had France gone rogue and if not what was the nature of her adherence to the West? (Ambrose 1984)

A year later in spite of regulatory measures set forth by the 1954 Geneva conference that attributed to the peaceful unification of Vietnam, the White House under the influence of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and National Security Advisor Mc George Bundy replaced an ailing French government as protectorate of the Diem regime. In essence to prevent the collapse of South Vietnam and South East Asia team Kennedy stationed 10,000 troops in Vietnam while the CIA unconstitutionally waged a silent war against the Viet Cong whom the US defined as communist perpetrators.

Upon Kennedy's surprising 1963 assassination his successor Lyndon Johnson who unequivocally stated that he “would not be the first president to lose a war,” reinforced the struggle as a just cause against communism. The White House drafted 50,000 army personnel by 1965 but in the months ahead the prospects for success seemed dismal as sharp criticisms within academic and journalistic circles discredited the administration's “win by all means necessary” tactics and compared the outcome to Nazism (Schulzinger 1984).

In 1967 another confrontation surfaced that circumvented liberalism thus diluting a moral argument for diplomacy and accord as increasing political disturbances between Arab/Israeli elements exasperated Syrian and Palestinian strikes against Israel. The latter in turn responded decisively upon Damascus inciting a combative defense by Egypt at Syria request – all of which culminated with Cairo's movement of troops into the Sinai Peninsula, a demand for the removal of the United Nation's peace keeping force and the termination of privileges to the Strait of Tiran.

As resentment grew among the parties the presumption of liberalism was once again taking to task. The Wilsonian byproduct and successor to the defunct League of Nations, the UN that was fashioned to eradicate international anarchy and in its place uphold the rule of law in the name of collective security proved incapable of achieving its objective. America's disregard for mediation was orchestrated with military hardware such as French fighter jets to Jerusalem and ultimately Israeli cooptation of Jordan's West Bank, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip and Syria's Golan Heights to which the Soviets retaliated by relinquishing diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv, supporting a cease fire and through international channels airing the illegality surrounding Israeli conduct. However their efforts to remove Jewish reins in the occupied territories on grounds of national sovereignty were without merit in light of the United Nation's inability to pursue endorsements from Western heavyweights the likes of France and the United States of America (Evans 1998, Yoder 1986, Tatu 1967).

In contrast to Russia’s diplomatic failure in the Middle East, the 1968 installation of Alexander Dubcek to Prague’s highest office along with his notion of liberalization in an oppressed society sent sparks flying in different directions. At first on April 24, the Czechoslovak government declared the following before the National Assembly.

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is a socialist country. The permanent Czechoslovak foreign policy is friendship and close cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Other alliances with the Soviet Union belong to those permanent, firm values in our current revival process. This is so because our friendship with the Soviet Union arises organically from a number of experiences paid for so dearly by our nations, because we were brought to it by the very logic of historical development, the vital interests and needs of our homeland because it is supported by the will, needs and feeling of our people (Remington 1969).

Later heated debate between the domestic liberal and conservative factions on leadership policies and an increasing attempt by the former to sway the party faithful produced a consensus to democratize Czechoslovakia as well as its aftermath, the Warsaw Pact’s unlawful initiation of a massive invasion in Prague in the name of communism (Rubinstein 1985). In the end at a speech in November 1968 to the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Polish United Workers’ Party President Leonid Brezhnev rationalized Soviet intervention.

Czechoslovakia’s detachment from the socialist community would have come in conflict with its own vital interest and would have been detrimental to the other socialist states. The measure taken by the Soviet Union jointly with other socialist countries in defending socialist gains of the Czechoslovak people are of great significance for strengthening the socialist community which is the main achievement of the international working class (Brezhnev 1968).

Upon election to the White House in 1968 President Richard Nixon sought to redirect his combative efforts in Vietnam through “a secret plan” and thus adopted a new policy of pragmatism to engage neighboring and peaceful coexisting states in this affair. Laos and Cambodia which were seen by Washington as the Viet Cong’s breeding battle grounds were severely bombed as a means to curtail the war and the threat of Marxism. The diversion nevertheless proved unsuccessful as the rebels continued their destruction of US/Vietnamese military forces. Ultimately human loss (1,040,000 deaths) and massive expenditure (\$100billion) compelled the government to respond to harsh resentment at home and abroad by suspending the conflict in 1973 thus paving the way for the reunification of Vietnam under nationalist rule (Ambrose 1984).

Further the absence of UN oversight in this and other scenarios beforehand appear to legitimize realism and its distinguished adherents the likes of Edward Hallet Carr, George Kennan, Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz. Jon Mearsheimer’s remark is authentication of such assumption.

Institutions are basically a reflection of the distribution of power in the world. They are based on self interested calculations of the great powers and they have no independent effect on state behavior (Kegley 2011).

Facing disappointment in Vietnam and rising Soviet resentment in Southeast Asia, Nixon and his secretary of State Henry Kissinger devised a new geopolitical scheme to capitalize on Russia’s 1969 border disputes with China, the world’s most populous communist state. US overtures began in 1971 with a formal call by Kissinger to the Chinese capital of Peking followed by a February 1972 state visit by President Nixon at which time the American statesman and his Chinese counterpart Premier Zhou Enlai welcomed future diplomatic exchanges between their respective states (Thornton 1974).

## **DÉTENTE AND ITS LEGACY**

At the turn of the 1970s with the US and USSR’s combined armed forces totaling over 6,000,000 men complimented with a striking arsenal of enormous magnitude and a war chest of approximately \$2 billion grew awareness to the plight of military aggression at worst the possibility of a “no win” situation emanating from annihilation in the case of a nuclear holocaust hence a liberalist attraction in the form of détente as the antithesis of the Cold War. In essence to minimize Armageddon, the superpowers guided by a doctrine known as Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) initiated arms control policies that included an updated hotline to reduce the risk of accidental nuclear mishaps and ratified a treaty commonly referred to as Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I). Such canon likewise bore an added connotation. The Soviets were of the persuasion that the accomplishment of

strategic parity would compel their counterparts to acknowledge them as political equals thus accepting communism as a legitimate brand of politics (Schulzinger 1984, Spiegel 2004).

Nixon nevertheless in anticipation of upstaging Eastern rivalry beyond the great walls of China turned his attention to the Middle East and Latin America. In 1973 the White House ignored the tenets of statehood and built its credentials by resoluteness throughout the Yom Kippur clash otherwise known as the October war and the overthrow of Chile's elected socialist president Salvador Allende Grossens under the pretext of a Marxist reign of terror in Santiago. The former promptly promoted a rejection of US foreign policy through a retaliatory OPEC oil embargo that generated a fuel shortage of astronomical proportions in America. In the case of Chile the director of the Soviet institute for Latin America seemed on target in assessment when in 1970 he declared

Socioeconomic backwardness in these countries plus the domination by latifundism and the presence of strong pre-capitalist relations in the countryside, oppression by foreign monopolies testifies to the fact that the road to socialism on the continent lies basically through a people's democratic revolution (Donald 1992).

Besides CPSU Party Secretary Boris Ponomarev's analysis of the nationalist regime which emphasized the working class as a unifying team that peacefully and democratically initiate social change was the ideological premise the US fought to denounce with the installation of General Augusto Pinochet (Ibid 1992).

In the late 1970s the Soviet's attempt to capitalize on Watergate along with an unquenchable thirst for strategic and economic positions in a changing world involved attention to the crisis in Angola – acivil war that gave rise to three political factions; the popular movement (MPLA), the National Front (FNLA) and the National Union for Total Independence (UNITA). Throughout the saga Moscow supplied her “watchdog” the Marxist inclined MPLA with high tech armory such as 122- MM rockets launchers, tanks and MIG-21 fighters. To guarantee success they also deployed Cuban troops in Luanda. The inferno nonetheless had negative implications. With the possibility of Moscow's political and economic dominance and the expansion of the war into neighboring Sudan President GaafarNimeiry expelled Soviet technicians and military advisors.

Moscow's dilemma on the African continent encompassed Somalia as well. The country's resentment of communist aid to Ethiopia due to a territorial dispute associated with Ogaden also hasten the expulsion of Soviet advisors and the denial of Moscow's access to the Port of Berbera. Equally unsettling for the Kremlin was Israel's failure to return land to Jordan, Syria and the Palestinians as endorsed by the UN as well as the Camp David Accords that embroiled an isolated Arab world as she saw Egypt the largest Arab state fall prisoner to America in her quest for dominance in the region (Yoder 1986).

The taste of victory or the lack thereof oftentimes placed superpowers in peculiar situations. In the latter half of the 1970s the US ordeal stemmed from her willingness to foster a relationship with the dictatorial Shah of Iran who in return for US protection allowed Western oil interests full privileges to the resource-laden Iranian terrain. In addition in the years that followed the Islamic revolution US refusal to extradite the deposed leader at the behest of Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini resulted in the 444 day Iranian hostage crisis and was partly responsible for the defeat of the Democratic Party at the polls in 1980.

In likeminded fashion Soviet military support of 115,000 troops, sophisticated tanks and artillery to the Afghan government in response to Kabul's demands soon became her worst nightmare. Moscow's manipulation through government intervention demonstrated the notion of realism to preserve national security and political ideology along her borders but faced dire consequences – Washington's objection by way of a boycott of the 1980 Olympics, the suspension of high technology sales and the withdrawal of Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) from the Senate. To make matters worst the Kremlin spent over \$40 billion and lost 10,473 soldiers over five years in a losing cause (Spanier 1992).

Like his predecessor President James Carter, the new Commander in Chief Ronald Reagan acknowledged the importance of Soviet compliance with human right ordinances but eschewed a liberalist approach apparently due to a preconceived notion of the UN's incapacity to resolve global disputes or a compulsion to act heavy handedly. In contrast his distaste for the political attitude of “the evil empire” was underscored through aid to rebel forces in Nicaragua, propaganda ploys in

Grenada that later destroyed the ruling junta in 1983, a 1980 – 1985 \$1 billion package to Afghanistan and the presence of missiles with multiple warheads and heavy bombers with cruise missiles to deter Soviet equivalent SS-18 missiles and fire bombers. The Reagan agenda also included the state of affairs in Poland.

In mid 1981 Lech Walesa, a shipyard employee at Gdansk sought to reverse the existing order which constituted censorship of free speech and the right to demonstrate by instituting a trade union that later became known as the Solidarity Movement. As the status quo unraveled through outbreaks of strikes Walesa’s insights were first met with hints of monetary concessions and economic reform but soon resistance in contradiction with national statehood was staged by the party apparatchik and her counterpart in the Soviet Union. Consequently the union’s acceptance grew with American monetary assistance and striking workers who continued to challenge Warsaw’s imposed martial law that touted the banning of the newly created trade union.

In response Washington quickly imposed the following sanctions against the USSR: Aeroflot flights to the United States were suspended and scientific and cultural ventures were restricted as were the sale of high tech equipment and grain negotiations. Worst yet the Soviets found themselves increasingly subsidizing the Polish economy as the West withheld financial support in her bid for political leverage in the East (Donaldson 1992).

Beside cooptation and economic suppression, another issue of paramount importance to the military superiors was an arms and control treaty. Atypical Soviet perspective viewed NATO’s deployment of Pershing and Cruise missiles as upsetting the balance of power between East and West whereas the US saw the new Soviet SS-20 in a similar vein. Hence Brezhnev’s proposal for a mutual freeze on the deployment of new missiles and Reagan’s ultimatum on zero option were flatly rejected in view of their compromising positions on nuclear uniformity.

In short, matters of foreign affairs after the death of ailing Brezhnev suffered a setback. The White House found it extremely difficult to gain bargaining chips in relation to Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces accord (INF) and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with the aging and short lived governments of Yuri Andropov (1983-1984) and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-1985). Suspense became the order of the day (Holloway 1983).

The rise of Mikhail Gorbachev signaled the beginning of a new era within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with an appropriate appraisal of the balance of power conjecture that held sway in a series of proxy confrontations it was intended to avoid. The old political machine which since 1945 had entertained economic, social, cultural and political discord in the name of an uninterrupted Cold War with the United States was now replaced with the spirit of glasnost and perestroika. Gorbachev who in the likeness of a constructionist defied conventional wisdom for unorthodox orientation recalled

I really knew the shape the country was in. I saw the mess around me. But I still entertained illusions that the system could be reformed. I had tried a mini perestroika during the 10 years I was in charge of Stavropol in Southern Russia. But the curbs imposed from above had not let us go farther. So I thought it’s at the top that we must start changes to let the people breathe (Bialer 1987).

The new Russian statesman sought to dismantle weapons of mass destruction in an effort to offset internal economic decay and redefine world chaos. In 1985 he engaged his American counterpart in dialogue concerning the cancellation of Strategic Defense Initiative weapons (SDI) and medium range missiles. In fact at the historic Geneva Summit, Gorbachev agreed to a 50% reduction in strategic forces in return for US abandonment of SDI.

In the years that followed, the battle raged with more fury as the Soviet president unwaveringly enticed the international community to subscribe to the peace process. He assumed the position of aggressor at the Reykjavik meeting by reiterating his radical approach to end the impasse. In addition as the economic situation within the Soviet Union worsened Gorbachev became more persistent about domestic revitalization and a truce with the United States which in 1987 ultimately resulted in the elimination of all Soviet and American medium and short range missiles and the signing of the INF treaty (Lacayo 2003).

Amidst East/West dialogue internal friction of epidemic proportions occurred within Latin America. In Nicaragua the ruling Sandinistas continued to face strong opposition from the Contras. Although

the Soviets by way of Havana provide the Nicaraguan army with rifles, machine guns, tanks, vehicle battalions, anti aircraft missiles and patrol boats the US equipped the opponents with comparable machinery, money and military training thus intensifying casualties, fatalities and the destruction of the state's economy.

Angola simultaneously made international headlines by lending credence to the notion of political hegemony. This pro-eastern entity was also fighting a US supported insurgency. It has been estimated that the Soviets sacrificed \$1 billion within the fiscal year 1986-1987 to shield MPLA from the right wing arch rival UNITA which was assisted to the tune of \$300 million in a heavily contested struggle (Kinzer 1987, Spikes 1993).

As the world unraveled the superpowers once again elevated themselves to the role of protectorates in the Middle East. The Iran/Iraq war challenged both countries to scramble for position. Case in point while improving a 20 year bilateral friendship and cooperation treaty with Iraq the Soviets intensified their association with Iran by taking advantage of deteriorating US/Iranian relations succeeding the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the US hostage ordeal. Meanwhile the United States of America proceeded to bolster the Baghdad regime in order to maintain her distinction and geographical parity (Souresrafil 1989).

The ongoing Israeli/Arab conflict afforded Washington, a signatory to the UN charter the pretext to ignore the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and exercised a strong degree of political latitude. In spite of her acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 33/28 US military aid of approximately \$3 billion per annum during the years 1986 to 1988 encouraged Israeli resistance towards a Palestinian independent state and the return of confiscated territory to Jordan and Syria. To the contrary Moscow's monetary and military assistance to Arab states and organizations such as Libya, Syria and the PLO prolonged revolts which ultimately incited an agreement to US sponsored initiatives (Metz 1990, Zickel 1990).

Adding insult to injury the Kremlin's inability to endure a neighboring strife became an albatross around her neck. The nation's military effort to sustain a socialist government in Kabul was countered in 1988 by US aid estimated at \$710 million to the rebels in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This activity in part resulted in accelerated devastation of the Red army. In the end the regime capitulated by formally announcing a withdrawal that began in the months that followed (Urban 1990, Taubman 1988).

The year 1989 forged the extension of Western cleansing worldwide with the commencement of a new Republican leadership headed by President George Bush. Under Washington's tutelage mass movements throughout Eastern Europe voiced outrage at the conduct of their respective repressive regimes and succeeded in replacing autocracy with new political establishments. Such actions stressed the polarization of political power throughout nations the likes of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria and Romania as well as the inability of the Soviet Union to intervene in the name of ideology and geopolitics. The student revolution in Tiananmen Square, China also served notice to the Soviet government as it encouraged the need for transformation.

Political tensions escalated as the Soviet's stance weakened globally. The Nicaraguan ordeal that was overtly supported by Moscow finally ended abruptly in March 1990 with a presidential and congressional election which brought to power right wing Violeta Barrios De Chamorro. Months later, the US recorded a victory with the defeat of yet another Soviet ally, the Iraqi government subsequent to her invasion of the oil rich Kingdom of Kuwait (Spanier 1992).

The 1990s punctuated the Kremlin's vulnerability. The battles that waged profusely beyond the Marxist epicenter were profoundly affected by the changing tides sweeping across the communist landscape. As Eastern allies courted the West Boris Yeltsin a Western oriented technocrat rose to prominence within Russia and became the republic's first publicly elected president. Such an outcome led to strong condemnation of the old vanguard and forced Gorbachev to seek additional authority and make concessions to appease the political right – all of which climaxed with the independence of the Baltic States, an attempted coup by government and military officials, the secession of the remaining Soviet republics and the resignation of Gorbachev.

While the United States of America finally won her ultimate victory – the fragmentation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, this exploit was instrumental in unforeseen consequences. Most notably are the extinction of realism that succumbed to limitations primarily the recycling and extension of conflicts and a concerted endeavor to reinforce the pillars of liberalism, party to moral crusades with

minimal influence on state conduct as a feasible source for crisis intervention (Donaldson 1992, Kegley 2011).

In light of a vacuum the constructivist/idealist construct is gaining impetus with the championship of ideas comprised of collective values, culture and social identities. John Ruggie joins the ranks of Friedrich Kratochwil, Nicholas Onuf, Christian Reus-Smit and Alexander Wendt in defense of the least tested theory by alluding to a lack of consciousness.

There is an extraordinary impoverished mindset at work here, one that is able to visualize long term challenges to the system of states only in terms of entities that are institutionally substitutable for the state. Since global markets and transnational corporate structures (not to mention communication satellites) are not in the business of replacing states, they are assumed to entail no potential for fundamental international change. The theoretical or historical warrant for that premise has never been mooted, let alone defended (Griffiths 2009).

Nonetheless until this dogma addresses the power structures and social conditions that will fortify modifications in value it could fall prey to the personification of evil - a torrential tide of radicalism repeatedly referred to as terrorism (Snyder 2004).

## CONCLUSION

Subsequent to the erosion of Hitler's Germany to the Big Three Alliance, the political sequence persisted with the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union accompanied by an exhibit of an unsustainable dosage of realism in preference to communal intercession. Such was the case that led to the dismantling of the Concert of Europe, a remedy for the Napoleonic conquest. The Russians who became petrified by the thought of Western infiltration “sounded” the alarm of the proletariat and the working class in opposition to capitalism – an illusionary alternative to despair.

The battle of propaganda led to the acquisition of Eastern Europe by Moscow and the later the invasion of Poland and Hungary in order to diffuse the remnants of Western democracy in the periphery. On the other hand US conduct produced a divided Germany to save Western Europe from the specter of Marxism or as both concurred the preservation of sovereignty as prescribed by the Treaty of Westphalia.

Throughout these and other restrictive and onerous convolutions much attention was paid by the superpowers to commensuration and allowance for freedom to maneuver and maintain world power while in contrast aspirations were lacking to conjointly observe self determination and uphold morality. In Vietnam the American synthesis mistakenly was one of Marxist connotation as was her engagements in Chile and Cuba. The USSR as well added to the fray by misinterpreting warranted revolts in Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan as imperialistic when in fact both can be attributed to unlawful domestic dictatorial behavior.

In spite of the introduction of collective security (e.g., NATO and the Warsaw Pact) and the universal establishments (e.g., UN) problems persevere. In the case of the former protection is limited to the associated organizations whereas with regard to the latter terminology (e.g., the language of aggression) has oftentimes been interpreted differently by member states enabling nations on occasions to take action against allies. Thus the force of law has always been supplemented with the law of force.

Upon consideration of crises, managerial courtship was of varied forms. In an effort to deny the Russians power in the Third World, the West sustained Israel in the Suez Canal crisis, the 1967 Six Day War and the Yom Kippur confrontation of 1973. The West also embraced China, a Soviet communist rival as a means to dismantle the Soviet empire. Meantime the East fortified her influence on intermediate turf, including Cuba. But attempts to avoid direct confrontation and limited restrictions on surrogates have demonstrated a lack of control in relation to world politics.

With lagging success the silent battle raged on with steam from sophisticated armory to space technology. The arms race became useful in maintaining parity or advancement whenever expedient. In sum both superpowers utilized military strength as vehicles in this arena and have resisted changes within the status quo (e.g., Nicaragua and Afghanistan are common illustrations of power broker's intolerance).

Today with the demise of the Soviet Union and the formation of democracies and alliances throughout Eastern Europe the world is at the crossroads of conversion and must decide whether to regress or

charter a course forward. In a speech in celebration of Peace Fair at Utica College in New York in 2003 a colleague and the executive director of Africa Faith and Justice Network Dr Marcel Kitissou laments,

In twenty five centuries of history, China has enjoyed only two centuries of peace. In twenty centuries of history, the West has done no better. For example in the 16th century, Europe had known only 10 years of peace, in the 17th century, only 4 years of peace, in the 18th century, only 16 years of peace. From 1500 to 1800 in three hundred years, Europe has known 270 years of war, i.e., in average a new war every 3 years. Since 1945 more than 200 small wars or low intensity conflicts have caused more than 30 million casualties;  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them being civilians. Currently and for two consecutive generations only 10% of humanity has lived in peace. If peace as we have known it is harmony but the absence of war then we have not had a nuclear peace but the absence of a nuclear war. So far we have been lucky.

With the United States elevated to the most coveted position of lone superpower in the face of a decaying world economy, faltering democracies of the East, massive bloodshed in Bosnia and Georgia, unsettled unrest in the Middle East and Southern Africa plus global terror, the question arises; Is Washington equipped for uni-polar leadership or will the Cold War be replaced by extreme adventurism?

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] Ambrose, Stephen. Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938. Harrisonburg: Donnelley & Sons Co, 1984.
- [2] Bialer, Seweryn. Gorbachev's Move. Foreign Policy. (Fall 1987) 59.
- [3] Brezhnev, Leonid. Speech to the Polish United Workers Congress. Warsaw: November 13, 1968.
- [4] Brzezinski, Zbigniew. The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- [5] Churchill, Winston. The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy. Boston Houghton Mifflin Co, 1950.
- [6] The Iron Curtain Speech. Missouri: March 5, 1946.
- [7] Department of State Bulletin. 30, No 767. March 8, 1954.
- [8] Djilas, Milovan. Conversation with Stalin. New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1962.
- [9] Donaldson, Robert. Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II. New York: Pergamon Press, 1992.
- [10] Evans, Graham. Dictionary of International Relations. London: Penguin Press, 1998.
- [11] Griffiths, Martin. Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- [12] Lacayo, Richard. 80 Days that Changed the World. Time. March 30, 2003: 78.
- [13] Metz, Helen. Israel: A Country Study. Washington DC: US Government Press, 1990.
- [14] Holloway, David. The Soviet Union and the Arms Race. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- [15] Kegley, Charles. World Politics: Trend and Transformation. Boston: Wadsworth, 2011.
- [16] Khrushchev, Nikita. Khrushchev Remembers. Boston: Little Brown, 1970.
- [17] Kinzer, Stephen. Internal Strife in Central Nicaragua. New York Times. September 13, 1987:1,24.
- [18] Remington, Robin. Winter in Prague. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969.
- [19] Rubinstein, Alvin. Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II. Boston: Little Brown, 1985.
- [20] Schulzinger, R. American Diplomacy in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- [21] Snyder, Jack. One World, Rival Theories. Foreign Policy, Nov/Dec 2004.
- [22] Souresrafil, Behrouz. The Iran/Iraq War. New York: Guinan Press, 1989.
- [23] Spainer, John. American Foreign Policy Since World War II. New York: CBS College, 1992.
- [24] Spiegel, Steven. World Politics in a New Era. California: Wadsworth, 2004.
- [25] Spikes, Daniel. Angola and the Politics of Intervention. London: McFarland & Co, 1993

### **Leroy A. Binns “Remembering the Cold War: East/West Relations 1945-1991”**

- [26] Stalin, Josef. The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union New York: Greenwood Press, 1969.
- [27] Stephen, Walt. International Relations: One World, Many Theories. Foreign Policy, Spring 98.
- [28] Tatu, Michael. Power in the Kremlin: From Khrushchev to Kosygin. New York: Viking Press, 1967.
- [29] Taubman, Philip. Soviet Plans Troop Pullout New York Times. April 8, 1988: 1, 10.
- [30] Thornton, Robert. Soviet Strategy and the Vietnam War. Asian Affairs. No 4: March – April 1974
- [31] Truman, Harry. Speech to the US Congress. Washington Dc: March 12, 1947.
- [32] Ulam, Adam. Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1973. New York: Praeger, 1976.
- [33] Urban, Mark. War in Afghanistan. New York: St Marten’s Press, 1990.
- [34] Wittner, Lawrence. Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.
- [35] Yoder, Amos. The Conduct of American Foreign Policy Since World War II. Toronto: Pergamon, 1986.
- [36] Zickel, Raymond. The Soviet Union: A Country Study. Washington DC: US Government Press, 1990.

### **AUTHORS’ BIOGRAPHY**



**Leroy A. Binns Ph.D.** is an International Relations specialist whose areas of concentration are East/West Relations & Caribbean and Latin American Affairs. He is currently a lecturer within the Department of Government at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.