
Cold War Ideas

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Sari Autio-Sarasma and Brendan Humphreys, eds, *Winter Kept Us Warm: Cold War Interactions Reconsidered* (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2010), 234 pp. (pb), €25, ISBN 9789521065644.

Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow and Bernd Rother, eds, *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe, 1945–1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), viii + 358 pp. (hb), £56, ISBN 9780857452887.

Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011), x + 281 pp. (hb), £25, ISBN 9780300113211.

Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), x + 293 pp. (hb), £85, ISBN 9781107001053.

Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger, eds, *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), x + 385 pp., £55, ISBN 9780857452436.

'incoherence is their greatest realization, the triumph of their democracy'

Norman Manea¹

The growing interest in ideas *during* the Cold War is slowly reshaping our ideas *about* the Cold War. Although the concept of 'Cold War culture', that is, thinking about the Cold War in its cultural manifestations, has been with us for some time now, at least since Steve Whitfield's pioneering book,² the idea of thinking about the Cold War through cultural history is of more recent vintage. Studies which examine

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¹ Norman Manea, *The Lair*, tr. Oana Sânziana Marian (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012), 69.

² Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

the superpower funding of high culture as a form of Cold War rivalry – showcasing ‘our’ system as better than ‘yours’ – are mainstays of the first approach, as is research which shows, for example, how facets of everyday life, from consumption patterns to film, sport or design were all influenced by the Cold War’s ideological strictures. The most famous example of what this sort of work studies is the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an international body which aimed to spread Western liberalism and which, it later transpired, was being funded by the CIA.³ A similar Soviet counterpart, dating from the interwar period, was VOKS, the Soviet Union’s All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, which existed from the 1920s until 1957, when it was replaced by the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries.⁴ There are now many studies of the latter sort, especially of Eastern Europe, thanks to pioneering work by Susan Reid and David Crowley, and becoming very sophisticated of late in the work of Greg Castillo, Paul Betts and others.⁵

More recently, historians have begun to think about the Cold War itself as cultural history. By this is meant less an interest in providing causal explanation of sequences of events or straightforward narrative than analysing the process of meaning-making in a given society or, as Peter Burke puts it, ‘a concern with the symbolic and its interpretation’, a definition which signals the historian’s debt to cultural anthropology.⁶ With the exception of Müller’s study in the history of

³ Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Post-War Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1989); Giles Scott-Smith, ‘The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference: “Defining the Parameters of Discourse”’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 3 (2002), 437–55; Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and Post-War American Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2002); Michael Hochgeschwender, ‘A Battle of Ideas: The Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) in Britain, Italy, France and West Germany’, in Dominik Geppert, ed., *The Postwar Challenge: Cultural, Social, and Political Change in Western Europe, 1945–58* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 319–38. For the broader context see Hans Krabbendam and Giles Scott-Smith, eds, *The Cultural Cold War in Europe, 1945–1960* (London: Routledge, 2004) and, for a recent assessment, see Gordon Johnston, ‘Revisiting the Cultural Cold War’, *Social History*, 35, 3 (2010), 290–307.

⁴ Jean-François Fayet, ‘VOKS: The Third Dimension of Soviet Foreign Policy’, in Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried, eds, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 33–49.

⁵ For example: Susan E. Reid and David Crowley, eds, *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, eds, *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009); Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger, eds, *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a discussion, see my chapter, ‘Responding to “Order without Life”? Living under communism’, in Dan Stone, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 163–81 and Paul Betts, ‘The Politics of Plenty: Consumerism in communist Societies’, in Stephen A. Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁶ Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 3. For a useful discussion, see Amos Goldberg, ‘The History of the Jews in the Ghettos: A Cultural Perspective’, in Dan Stone, ed., *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 79–100.

political thought, the books under review here fall somewhere between these two stools of histories of the cultural Cold War and cultural histories of the Cold War.

The main focus of these books is Europe, a point which is noteworthy in itself, given the ways in which Cold War history has traditionally been an American affair and, more recently, a topic in world history. It has long been clear, thanks to the work of John Young, Charles Maier and others, that the Cold War was more than the clash of the superpowers.⁷ Odd Arne Westad's 'global Cold War' has taught us that if the post-war years were ones of 'brutal stability' in Europe, the same cannot be said for large swathes of the globe, from Korea to Africa to Latin America, where real wars killed real people in the name of rival ideologies.⁸ From the point of view of European history, the (Western) Cold War narrative which derives from the Cold War itself now seems uncannily to confirm philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's critique of determinist historical narratives which shape events at the same time as they describe them. 'It is not without interest', wrote Nancy, 'to remark that this narrative of history, from its beginning or almost from it, has also been curiously involved in a dramatic, tragic, and even desperate consideration of the same universal stream of events whose narration it was supposed to be'.⁹ The fact that Cold War history-writing was part of the Cold War is clearer than ever before, especially in light of debates about 'Cold War triumphalism' in which the Western narrative is celebrated as having been right all along – Western historians, it seems, also made their contribution to 'winning' the Cold War.¹⁰ We should regard recent history-writing, too, as part of the events it purports to describe – post-1989 narratives that circumscribe the reach of the superpowers by emphasising the influence of Europeans tell us as much about our post-Cold War world as they do about the nature of the Cold War itself.

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Visions of the End of the Cold War and *Cold War Cultures* exemplify the insightful, original books that Berghahn are publishing in the field of modern European history. Both are collections of wide-ranging, stimulating essays, as is the Aleksanteri Institute collection. Taken together, the three edited books in this review contain 47 chapters

⁷ John W. Young, ed., *Cold War Europe 1945–89: A Political History* (London: Hodder Arnold, 1991); John W. Young, 'Western Europe and the End of the Cold War, 1979–89', in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, iii: *Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 289–310; Charles S. Maier, ed., *The Cold War in Europe: Era of a Divided Continent* (New York: Markus Wiener, 1991).

⁸ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See John Lamberton Harper, *The Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) for an example of the global reach of recent Cold War history.

⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Finite History', in his *The Birth to Presence*, tr. Brian Holmes et al. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 145. Nancy is here mocking Hegel's claim that 'the writing of history and the actual deeds and events of history make their appearance simultaneously, and that they emerge together from a common source'.

¹⁰ Ellen Schrecker, ed., *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History after the Fall of communism* (New York: The New Press, 2004)

so I will not describe them one by one, but will try to pick up common themes amongst them and consider what the five books under review tell us about the state of the field.

Winter Kept Us Warm is perhaps the most conventional of the essay collections in terms of the historiography of Cold War culture, for the most part dealing with cultural diplomacy. As Katalin Miklóssy writes in the preface, the book aims to show that, under the veneer of superpower rivalry, 'there appeared vivid interaction, fruitful collaboration and even resemblances between East and West' (p. 15). This might not be an especially novel claim, but the rich empirical detail of the wide-ranging chapters (just ten from over 200 presented at a University of Helsinki conference in October 2009) commands the reader's attention.¹¹

That said, it is not astonishing, after the last two decades' worth of historical research, to find that individual contacts – made by travelling orchestras, sportsmen and women, youth groups or exhibition staff – often undermined official arguments about the 'other side', as ordinary people got to know each other. More intriguing are the chapters which deal with less expected connections across the blocs, for example, Nancy Jachec's claim that Jean-Paul Sartre's "Questions of Method" (1957) played a key role in the development of de-Stalinised Polish Marxism. Jachec argues in the strongest terms that Sartre's essay, which he was invited to write for *Twórczość* (Creativity), was 'a brilliantly timed injection of French revisionist Marxist theory of the highest order into a Polish intellectual milieu that was struggling to de-Sovietise itself' (p. 74). This may be so, but it is unclear what the 'remarkably effective consequences' (p. 75) of this attempt actually were – reforms of the sort argued for by the Workers' Defence Committee (Komitet Obrony Robotników, KOR) or Solidarity in the 1970s and 1980s went way beyond those being entertained by reform-minded intellectuals within the party system in the 1950s and 1960s. Perhaps more persuasive is Stephen Scala's chapter, which shows how East German foreign policy experts had their heads turned by their Western counterparts, interlocutors who made the GDR's experts increasingly less ideologically rigid in the ways in which they perceived the workings of international relations. Like Jachec, Scala argues that this process reaped benefits 'later'. Again, the assertion is made on the basis of a jump from the material under study to a later phase, when 'influence' is presumed to have been operating. But these international contacts might be significant even without having to show that they fed into the process which brought about the collapse of communism many years later. By contrast, Rósa Magnúsdóttir presents a detailed, and rather moving, account of Icelandic socialists who devoted their lives to the cause of socialist internationalism; she plausibly argues that individuals could bypass the official channels of the state and the superpowers in order to build their own Cold War transnational networks. The discovery of such connections brings the cultural Cold War into the mainstream of contemporary transnational approaches to history.

¹¹ See also Sari Autio-Sarasma and Katalin Miklóssy, eds, *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (London: Routledge, 2010).

Visions of the End of the Cold War is a fascinating book which crosses the boundaries of diplomatic and intellectual history in provocative and thoughtful ways. It is also in some respects a curious book. It asks, first, what ideas were put forward on both sides of the Iron Curtain to hasten the end of the Cold War and, second, what impact they had. This latter is perhaps the wrong question to ask, for it leads the book's authors to sail pretty close to counterfactual history in order either to justify their spending time with 'failed' ideas or to exaggerate the significance of their chosen case study. For example, in the chapter on de Gaulle, Garret Martin explicates clearly the great statesman's ideas for overcoming the division of Europe, his promotion of détente and his independent stance vis-à-vis NATO, but he ends by arguing that notwithstanding the failure of his schemes, de Gaulle 'still played an important role because of the fact that he outlined an alternative to the bipolar order' (p. 101). Vladislav Zubok argues that post-Stalin intellectuals Mikhail Botvinnik, Lev Landau and Andrei Sakharov played an important 'indirect role as the avatars of the erosion of the Soviet black-and-white security thinking' (p. 84). Jaclyn Stanke insists on Churchill's prescience in pushing for a summit in the aftermath of Stalin's death, since negotiated détente played such an important role in the 1980s. Likewise, some of the chapters seek to prove that there are 'echoes' of their chosen subject's words in Gorbachev's 'new thinking', as Laura Fasanero argues for PCI leader Enrico Berlinguer (p. 174), and that such ideas had 'unintended consequences', as Jussi Hanhimäki argues for Henry Kissinger (p. 204) and Gregory Domber claims for Adam Michnik (p. 236).¹² It is easy to be sympathetic to such statements, but they constitute something of an admission that the authors cannot make direct connections between such ideas and the actual collapse of the Cold War order.

But that is not the point, and the book ought to point out more clearly that the role of the history of ideas is to resist post-hoc determinist narratives which suggest that history could have taken one path only. The real importance of ideas such as de Gaulle's or Sakharov's, or those of the many other thinkers studied in the book, is that, when they are historicised, they indicate the complexity of the past. The 'importance' of a subject does not only lie in whether it can be shown to have had direct influence on the course of events, so that authors must apologise (perhaps they feel like antiquarians or collectors) for studying the flotsam and jetsam of the past. Rather, historicising these ideas shows that the way in which events did develop was by no means certain, that contingency and unpredictability should be central to historians' concerns. This claim is by no means news to Cold War historians; whether it is the Cuban Missile Crisis, Able Archer 83 or the revolutions of 1989, none of this makes sense without a feel for the dramatic turn of events, a grasp of how positions can be suddenly reversed and a comprehension of unexpected shifts in paradigms.

In general, the book reconfirms Gorbachev's role as prime mover in the collapse of communism, which is why so many of the contributors seek to suggest a connection

¹²Domber writes, quite correctly, that 'By working within the international system rather than attempting to subvert it or overturn it, the Polish opposition purposefully quarantined its economic and political demands from international concerns'.

between their case studies (Christian Domnitz on Jiří Hájek, for example) and the final General Secretary of the CPSU. Geoffrey Roberts even makes the claim in reverse, implying that Gorbachev revived ideas that Molotov had set out in the 1940s and 1950s.

What is so striking about the chapters, taken together, is not so much their authors' intention of showing how much influence such ideas actually had on bringing the Cold War to an end, but how little. Many of the individuals studied here, such as François Mitterrand, Willy Brandt and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing did indeed have visions of how the Cold War should end; almost all of them were gradualist. Mitterrand, for example, as Frédéric Bozo shows, envisaged the 'unravelling' of the Cold War, but certainly not a 'radical rupture' (p.285). Indeed, they all feared the consequences of a sudden transformation on European stability and hence deliberately worked to effect small, stepwise changes. In other words, whether West German, French, Italian or American, whether socialist, conservative or Eurocommunist, all more or less conformed to the principles of Brandt and Bahr's *Ostpolitik*, that is, change through rapprochement. This is true even of those, like Kissinger, who formally rejected *Ostpolitik*. More than anything else, this gradualism points to the time-bound nature of such schemes, the fact that none was really responsible for more than airing the thought that the Cold War *could* end; none could really show how it *would* end and certainly none had any real conviction *that* it would end, with the exception, perhaps, of Reagan's (had they been able to do so then all the Kremlinologists would have been out of work). The book's individual chapters are all exemplary studies in the history of ideas and the book is a thoroughly enjoyable, eye-opening read, but its central argument – that these visions contributed in some way to ending the Cold War – should be treated with caution.

If *Cold War Cultures* is a less stimulating collection overall, it is because it is more firmly bound, discipline-wise. Although the chapters are written by art historians, ethnologists, sociologists and cultural theorists as well as historians in the narrow sense, the collection is homogeneously rooted in Cold War culture. Furthermore, although once again most of the chapters are, considered individually, well researched and engaging, the editors' claim that the book is more a cultural history of the Cold War than a history of Cold War culture ("cultural" defines our methods and perspectives on Cold War history rather than the sources or subject matter itself – p. 5) is not always borne out. Chapters, for example, on radio reform in the 1980s, the television of the 1972 Munich Olympics or public battles over advertising are closer to the latter than the former. And several of the chapters are long-winded and prolix, making their material do more than it can bear.

Among the more insightful chapters are Monique Scheer's on Catholic piety in the early Cold War, which deals particularly well with the Marian cult, indicating 'how the Virgin Mary protected the West from communism'.¹³ Luminita Gatejel's chapter on automobile culture in the Soviet Union, Romania and the GDR,

¹³See also Robert Ventresca, 'The Virgin and the Bear: Religion, Society and the Cold War in Italy', *Journal of Social History*, 37, 2 (2003), 439–56.

Roman Krakovsky's on representations of peace and war at May Day parades in Czechoslovakia, Sabina Mihelj's on narratives of modernity and identity in the Free Territory of Trieste (which existed from 1947 to 1954) all deal, in the manner of Clifford Geertz, with the interpretation of symbols and seek to explain how actors in the past created meanings. Gatejel is especially good on bringing out the hypocrisy of the Eastern European car advertisements, which offered a seductive life of travel and luxury when, in reality, 'only the Wartburg [and not the people] was allowed to cross the strictly demarcated border of the Cold War' (p. 166). The irony, of course, is that although the people might have wanted to cross the border, few on the other side ever wanted to import a Wartburg (or Volga, Moskvich, Dacia or Lada). Other chapters still are closer to 'memory studies' in their choice of topic and approach, such as Valur Ingimundarson on Evald Mikson, the Estonian living in Iceland accused of killing Jews and communists in wartime Estonia, whose anti-communism won him much support in 1960s Iceland or Petra Henzler on Tempelhof airport's 'Airlift Memorial'. There is much to be learned here, but the book is not quite the exemplar of a cultural history of the Cold War that its editors claim, a statement that is borne out, in my opinion, by the fact that the subject matter rarely leaves the realm of social or cultural artefacts and events to touch on political events and institutions.

This is where Sarah Snyder's book works to good effect – her work deals with politics at the highest level, but seeks to show how actors interpreted what might have remained purely empty, rhetorical political statements and made them into something meaningful. Although not a book primarily about Europe, Snyder's readable and deeply researched monograph continues a well-established tradition of highlighting the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) as a source of meaningfully focused dissent in Eastern Europe and, in Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', one of the main contributions to the undermining of communist rule and the dismantling of the Soviet Union. The book is thus a successor to works by Daniel Thomas and others who have also argued in this vein.¹⁴ Snyder, following Thomas, shows how the CSCE engendered a transnational human rights activism, thus explaining how the numerous 'monitoring groups' interacted with one another in order to produce an effect which was greater than the sum of its parts. She differentiates her work from Thomas's by arguing that it was not so much human rights norms as human rights activism – real people rather than pieces of paper – which made the difference to communist rule. Snyder's book has already received considerable attention, including being the subject of an H-Diplo roundtable.¹⁵ The burden of her book is to suggest that human rights ideas played a greater role in ending the Cold War than did containment or the arms race.

¹⁴Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist, eds, *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965–75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart, eds, *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

¹⁵<http://www.h-net.org/diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIII-32.pdf> (accessed 31 July 2013).

Snyder's evidence is compelling: the many groups to which Helsinki gave rise, most notably Helsinki Watch in the West and the Moscow Helsinki Group, were able to maintain links with one another and act in a co-ordinated fashion thanks to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. These bodies 'enabled Helsinki advocates to pursue joint strategies and tactics, heightening their effectiveness' (p. 11). Thanks to the so-called 'boomerang' effect, whereby local activists enrolled international supporters, thus increasing pressure on their governments, such advocacy became increasingly effective, with both Presidents Carter and, more surprisingly (at least at first), Reagan, consistently raising the human rights issue at superpower summits and during the so-called 'Helsinki process', or follow-up conferences in Belgrade (1977–78), Madrid (1980–83) and Vienna (1986–89). Once Gorbachev took office, American pressure began to bear fruit, as Gorbachev and his advisers, especially Alexander Yakovlev and Eduard Shevardnadze, saw the necessity of improving the Soviet Union's human rights record if the reform processes of *glasnost* and *perestroika* were to be taken seriously.

Snyder's mention of Gorbachev points to the limits of her analysis. Her argument is that 'a number of the steps taken by Gorbachev, such as . . . signalling that the Soviet Union would no longer intervene militarily in Eastern Europe, contributed to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe' (p. 13). This is rather understated. Certainly human rights issues influenced Gorbachev's 'new thinking' and he became increasingly embarrassed by the gulf between communist rhetoric and reality, as Snyder shows in her chapter tellingly entitled, citing Václav Havel's comment to Helsinki Watch in February 1990, 'perhaps without you, our revolution would not be'. But more fundamental to the collapse of communism was Gorbachev's consistent maintenance of his position that he would not permit Soviet interference in the affairs of the other Warsaw Pact states and, most important, his defiant rejection of military intervention. Without that open stepping back from the Brezhnev Doctrine nothing else would have been possible.¹⁶ The Helsinki process was important – it is part of the background to Gorbachev's actions – but was not in itself the main cause of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. In her conclusion, to be fair, Snyder does make the more modest claim that the Helsinki process was *among* the causes of the collapse of communism, and with this few would quibble. Her nomination of 19 January 1989 – the day that the CSCE representatives signed the Vienna Concluding Document – as the end of the Cold War will raise eyebrows, however, especially among those who favour a more Reaganite, 'containment' narrative (though Snyder's case is also somewhat triumphalist insofar as it hangs on American leadership in the human rights advocacy network), those who regard the popular uprisings in Eastern Europe of autumn 1989 as the real moment of truth or those who see Gorbachev's

¹⁶ See, for example: Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997).

studied non-interference as key – that is to say, most historians of the Cold War. Besides, whilst the Concluding Document did contain strong commitments to human rights and various freedoms, there is nothing in the document which suggests the representatives expected an end to the formal Cold War; indeed, it concluded by assigning 24 March 1992 in Helsinki as the date for the next follow-up meeting to commence.¹⁷

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The odd one out in this clutch of books is Jan-Werner Müller's. I wanted to include it here for several reasons: first, a synthetic account of this sort is quite different from the traditional research monograph or from collections of cutting-edge chapters on narrowly-circumscribed topics and, although historians are often dubious about the merits of syntheses, they serve the valuable purposes of communicating research to a wider audience and of conveying a sense of the state of the field. It is thus important to assess how historians such as Müller use the synthesis as a vehicle for articulating their own views, for they will be influential. Second, and closer to the concerns of this essay, Müller's book indicates how it is possible to write a mainstream account of the twentieth century without the Cold War being the dominant framework, indeed, almost without it featuring at all.

This is then, a partial review, which will focus on the three chapters dealing with the post-1945 period, although the book as a whole is a very readable, coherent narrative of an aspect of twentieth-century history that is more or less neglected in the standard accounts.¹⁸ In his chapter for the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Müller suggests on the one hand that there was a greater shared intellectual culture across the Iron Curtain divide than one might assume and, on the other, that Western Europe was permitted an intellectual parochialism that has been denied it since 1989, as a result of its being sheltered by the American superpower.¹⁹ These claims are both persuasive but, as with all such sweeping statements, subject to modification. The material he uses in that chapter mostly appears in *Contesting Democracy* too, but in the latter the Cold War context is much less explicit. In the book, Müller naturally deals with Eastern and Western Europe, though he is more comfortable when discussing the western half of the continent, with excellent exegeses of the ideas behind the Western European 1968, for example, (which he also discusses elsewhere to great effect²⁰).

¹⁷The document is available at <http://www.osce.org/mc/16262> (accessed 31 July 2013).

¹⁸Of the first part of the book, I note with surprise that the Holocaust is not dealt with in greater depth, even as an intellectual project.

¹⁹Jan-Werner Müller, 'The Cold War and the Intellectual History of the Late Twentieth Century', in Leffler and Westad, eds, *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 3, 1–22.

²⁰Jan-Werner Müller, '1968 as Event, Milieu and Ideology', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 7, 1 (2002), 15–37; Müller, 'What Did They Think They Were Doing? The Political Thought of the (West European) 1968 Revisited', in Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 73–102.

With respect to Western Europe, Müller explains clearly how the power of political theory declined after the war as, after the initial phase of recovery, government took on the air of technocratic management and commentators tended to believe that previous ideological battles had been overcome thanks to the boom. Those who were more critical and saw economic success as bringing in its train a generation of politically docile Europeans were in a minority. Müller calls this ‘post-post-liberal order’ (p.130), and it is exemplified in a wonderful quotation from Swedish analyst Herbert Tingsten from 1955: ‘as the general standard of values is commonly accepted, the functions of the state become so technical as to make politics appear as a kind of applied statistics’ (p. 144).

This argument about politics as technocracy – today we see this even more clearly in Italy – is somewhat undermined by the fact that a whole generation of students soon saw their governments as anything but non-ideological. Müller’s analysis of 1968 in Western Europe is one of the book’s strong points, with very clear exegeses of the thought of Cohn-Bendit, Marcuse, Debord and others, as well as a convincing claim that even if their revolutionary aspirations were ridiculous, the students did change Western European mores.

Of course, more than 1968, what did for the supposed charms of technocracy was the crisis of the 1970s. Some comments are in order, for here the explanatory limits of history of political thought become clear. Müller talks, for example, of the ‘apparent failure of Keynesian policies’ in the mid 1970s. This is a claim that emerges from the writings of the anti-Keynesians, who argued that deficit funding and the like were causing runaway inflation. In fact, stagflation was caused more by the liberalisation of the banking sector and the lack of restrictions on money supply in the early 1970s than by pay greed encouraged by full employment (though this also played a part). And Keynes did not – as critics still fail to see – argue that government should engage in unrestrained deficit spending, but that major projects (such as infrastructural ones, for which state oversight is crucial) would more than pay for themselves and would encourage growth rather than debt. Although he takes his distance from Hayek and his followers, Müller occasionally recites their dictums a little too uncritically.

More important, Müller argues, taking on the mainstream narratives of late-twentieth century history, that ‘In the end, the post-war settlement was not fundamentally renegotiated in line with anything that could plausibly be called neoliberalism’ (p. 226). This is surely correct, in terms of neo-liberalism understood *sensu stricto* as a return to nineteenth-century free trade, individualism and the rule of law. Müller is right, too, to say that in Thatcher’s Britain, public spending as a percentage of GDP did not shrink (p. 227). But most social and economic historians use the term neo-liberalism to describe the changes that took place in Europe from the mid 1970s which involved the privatisation of national industries and services, the change in the direction of government spending from welfare benefits to health and education, the deregulation of the banking and finance sectors, and the introduction of market principles into the public sector. The result was not a perfect model of classical liberalism, but it was also decidedly not a social democratic vision of the world, even when implemented by politicians (Mitterrand, Craxi, González, Blair,

Jospin, Schröder) representing supposedly centre-left governments. In this instance, an insistence on correct definitions in political thought obscures major changes in social and economic history.

In the same way that Snyder's book is celebratory of the US-led human rights network, Müller's analysis has a faint whiff of whiggishness about it. His argument that 'once the utopian energies of Thatcherism had dissipated, the European picture still recognisably featured the contours of the post-war constitutional settlement (including the welfare state, in either a Christian Democratic or Social Democratic version)' (p. 237) neglects the extent to which the post-war *social* settlement had been severely attenuated. Müller's argument is an unexpectedly welcome counter to the predictable Cold War triumphalism on the one hand and to post-democratic doom-mongering on the other. Müller's defence of Francis Fukuyama – he rightly points out that many of his critics only saw the Hegelianism they wanted to see – is fair, but to draw the conclusion that today we have entered an age of muted ideological production seems like a risky pronouncement. With China's authoritarian capitalism faltering, the West in its fifth year of economic and financial crisis and Nazis marching openly in Athens and Budapest (as Müller has pointed out himself²¹), it may be that reports of the demise of nineteenth-century style ideology are premature. Müller is right to define democracy as 'institutionalized uncertainty' (p. 242); given that we are undoubtedly living through a fissile period, it will be interesting to see just how much uncertainty democracy can withstand. No wonder the history of the Cold War is booming – it is becoming strangely to feel like a still point in a turning world: winter kept us warm indeed.

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In the introduction to their important new book, *Uncertain Empire*, Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell argue that the time has come for some metahistorical reflection on the meanings of 'Cold War'. Instead of simply taking the Cold War as a subject to be studied, they argue, we need now to reflect on the ways in which the term 'Cold War' has been given different meanings over time; indeed, we need to consider the ways in which these different meanings have helped to shape the 'Cold War' that historians have studied/constructed. 'Whether we like it or not, then,' they argue, 'the idea of the Cold War is loaded with conceptual possibilities with which we must grapple'. Their aim is to make such meanings 'as self-conscious as possible'.²² The books under review here show above all that Cold War historiography is flourishing, to the extent that fears that social and cultural approaches are displacing the traditional

²¹Jan-Werner Müller, 'Longing for Greater Hungary', *London Review of Books*, 34, 12 (21 June 2012), 12–13.

²²Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell, 'Introduction', in Isaac and Bell, eds, *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6, 8. I make a not dissimilar argument with respect to Holocaust historiography in my introduction to Stone, ed., *The Holocaust and Historical Methodology*, 1–19.

focus on high politics seem unwarranted.²³ Such worries are unduly territorial and pessimistic given the healthy state of diplomatic and international history; besides, part of the reason for that renewed vigour is precisely the interaction and mutual benefit to be gained from bringing diplomatic and cultural history into a closer relationship. These books also indicate clearly that this methodological conjunction is bearing fruit; soon it will be necessary to go a step further and, *pace* Isaac and Bell, historicise this methodological pluralism in metahistorical terms as itself a revealing post-Cold War phenomenon.

²³ Holger Nehring, 'What Was the Cold War?', *English Historical Review*, 127, 527 (2012), 920–49.