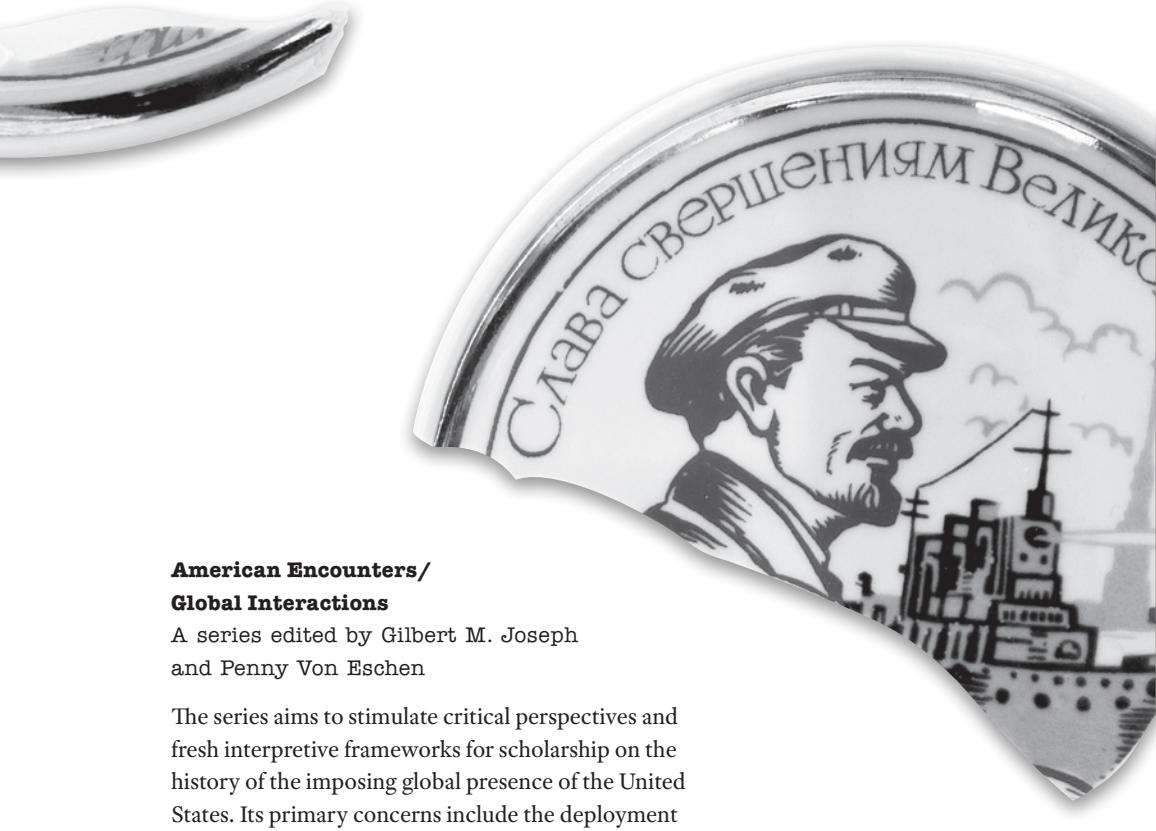
paradoxes of nostalgia

cold war triumphalism and global disorder since 1989

penny m. von eschen

PARADOXES OF NOSTALGIA



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For Kevin and Maceo

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Introduction

On February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela walked out of Victor Verster Prison near Cape Town, South Africa, where he had spent the last two of his twenty-seven years of imprisonment. Mandela's release capped what many perceived as a breathtaking moment in which the cause of human freedom seemed to be prevailing over tyrannical regimes in rapid succession. Just three months earlier, a groundswell of political change throughout Eastern Europe culminated in the dismantling of the Berlin Wall—part of a sequence of events set in motion by Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev's bold calls for glasnost (openness) and perestroika (political reform), challenging an ossified Communist Party. Just days before jubilant crowds of Berliners took sledgehammers to the wall, Czech officials released the dissident author Václav Havel. Sprung from prison in October 1989, Havel was elected president by December. His rapid ascent took him to the United States, where he addressed a joint session of Congress two weeks after Mandela's release. A week after citizens of Berlin laid waste to the wall, it was Polish labor leader Lech Walesa's turn to receive a hero's welcome in the United States. Walesa, leader of Poland's Solidarity movement and soon to be president of his home country, like Havel, addressed cheering members of Congress, as would Mandela some months later.

These exhilarating times saw dissidents elevated to high office. Popular repudiations of tyranny predated the dizzying reversals of 1989. The year before, Chileans voted in a referendum to oust that nation's military

dictator, Augusto Pinochet, notorious for his violent and repressive rule. Pinochet stepped down as head of state in 1990. Indeed, as 1989 ended, popular demands for peace, transparency, and accountability had bypassed the political status quo favored by American and Soviet elites, resulting in the unraveling of the cold war.

Mandela's release highlighted the confluence of 1980s global liberation, peace, and human rights campaigns. Little wonder that his release coincided with democratic movements in Eastern Europe, given the global ferment and synergies of the international antiapartheid movement, antinuclear and antimilitarist peace movements, and reform movements. Aspirations for freedom reverberated worldwide through popular music. In 1983, the Irish band U2's hit single "New Year's Day" honored the Solidarity movement, condemning the Polish government's hostility to the trade union–based struggle led by Walesa. U2's anthem of solidarity with striking Polish workers resonated with labor and left constituencies in Margaret Thatcher's Britain and among Americans opposed to Ronald Reagan's aggressive antilabor policies. In 1987, Poland's Solidarity sponsored a world music festival in Gdansk, in support of the South African antiapartheid cause. Performers included the Jamaican-born, British dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson and reggae bands from the Caribbean diaspora. The August 1989 Music Peace Festival in Moscow at the one-hundred-thousand-seat Lenin Stadium featured several Western heavy metal acts, including the Scorpions, Ozzy Osbourne, Mötley Crüe, Cinderella, and Skid Row, sharing the bill with local bands, including Gorky Park and Brigada S.

By decade's end, such popular soundings of democratic uprisings in Europe reached a crescendo. When George H. W. Bush and Gorbachev jointly declared the end of the cold war on December 3, 1989, hopes of transcending the stultifying restrictions of cold war blocs and the dream of a demilitarized world free of nuclear weapons seemed within reach to many.

The buoyant hopes for democracy and disarmament that accompanied the revolutions of 1989 soon yielded to grave concerns about new conflicts in a rapidly remilitarizing world marked by spiking inequality. Only three years later, the Czechoslovakian poet-turned-president Havel warned that "if the West does not find the key to us . . . or to those somewhere far away who have extricated themselves from communist domination, it will ultimately lose the key to itself. If, for instance, it looks on passively at 'Eastern' or Balkan nationalism, it will give the green light to its own potentially destructive nationalisms, which it was able to deal with so magnanimously in the era of the communist threat."[1] Havel's prediction that

nationalism posed as great a threat to the West as the former Soviet bloc captures his sense that the hopes for freedom and social justice throughout Eastern Europe that were unleashed by the collapse of the Soviet Union were being subordinated to the strictures of Western free market and US military imperatives.

Amid the current global ascendance of authoritarianism and neofascism besetting Western industrial democracies, it remains commonplace in some quarters to look back with nostalgia at the events of 1989 that culminated in the end of the cold war. Many still celebrate that moment of capitalism's purported victory as "the end of history" and as the era of the variously named globalization, neoliberalism, or Washington consensus that followed. Among those more skeptical about the impact of increasingly unregulated capitalism, there is a tendency to regard US global leadership during this period as exemplary. From this perspective, the rise of authoritarianism stems from the abdication of US global leadership. But this view can only be sustained through a geographically and temporally narrow reading of diplomatic history.

While scholarship on the cold war has, in the past two decades, expanded to include numerous accounts of the "third world," historians of the end of the cold war have tended to focus exclusively on US-Soviet or US–Eastern European relations.[2] Treating the end of the cold war and the conflicts in Eastern Europe and Africa that immediately followed as discrete and unrelated events, scholars focusing on the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union have emphasized the negotiated end to the cold war. Historian Jeffrey A. Engel, for example, concludes his indispensable 2017 book *When the World Was New* with the declaration, "And we all survived the Cold War's surprisingly peaceful ending."[3]

As to the question of who gets to tell the story of the cold war, there is no singular version and no universally agreed on ending. Long before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, new and hotly contested political and cultural narratives about the end of the cold war appeared, claims that cast doubt not only on how we understand the end of the cold war but also about the obfuscating abstraction of the term itself. In addition to the stark inadequacy of using the term *cold war* to describe a period in which millions of combat soldiers and civilians perished in hot wars in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, from the perspective of the Koreas, China, and Cuba, it is misleading to say that the cold war ended when US-Soviet hostilities ceased. Moreover, even in places where former capitalist or communist divides were erased, local manifestations of the cold war unleashed violence

in such places as South Africa in the waning years of apartheid, as well as violent aftershocks in Bosnia and Rwanda. Hence, sustained attention to places where the narrative of the end of the cold war does not fit is critical to understanding its contested meaning as well as the erasures of unresolved histories of conflict and violence implicit in the term.

Havel's fear that the West was losing its way stemmed most immediately from his bewilderment over the failure of the United States to intervene in the growing atrocities in Bosnia. Viewed from the global South and much of the former Eastern bloc, the end of the cold war was a markedly violent and unstable process, a story of escalating violence in South Africa; US interventions in Iraq, Panama, and Haiti; and wars of genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. All of these conflicts were directly and causally related to superpower actions in the last decades of US-Soviet conflict, and to US policy decisions in the waning days of the Soviet Union and its immediate aftermath. These and other policies also produced exponential growth in inequality and the destabilization of entire regions of the globe, which, in turn, produced fertile ground for fascist and authoritarian movements.

Concerns that the United States was becoming directionless also hinted at a general malaise in American political culture and a pervasive disorientation and nostalgia even as the United States was supposedly celebrating its victory. In 1990, the former United Nations official Conor Cruise O'Brien noted, "The death of communism in Europe leaves anti-communism in America bereaved and confused."[4] Indeed, in the wake of the Eastern Europe revolutions but well before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Americans were already awash in nostalgia. Triumphalist boasts that the West had won the cold war coexisted uneasily with speculation about what the United States would do without a clear enemy. Maureen Diodati, a forty-one-year-old English teacher, asked, "Who's our enemy now? Who's going to be the bad guy?" One novelist wondered, "How are we going to talk politics anymore? If Castro goes, I don't know what I am going to do." The writer Henry Allen presciently queried, "Why do we have to look rich, tolerant, and progressive in front of the world if there's no other big country out there competing for hearts and minds?"[5]

Taking to heart Havel's warning that the West was losing its way, and viewing the end of the cold war as a global crisis, this book considers the paradoxical relationship of US nostalgia and triumphalism in the face of the widespread violence that accompanied the end of the cold war. In examining myriad expressions of nostalgia, including US presidents' and Hollywood blockbuster films' assertion, "I miss the Cold War," it is striking that one

could "miss" a conflict in which millions died across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such assertions betray the limiting bipolar assumptions and Western worldview that distort the lived experience of the era.

Despite triumphalist US assertions that "we won the cold war" through military might, many Americans shared with their counterparts in the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc complex expressions of loss and nostalgia. The end of the cold war meant the ascendancy of a form of neoliberalism that rejected the existence and possibility of mass society, the idea that individual happiness could align with the collective good. Expressing it as nostalgia for "Soviet times," "Yugostalgia," *ostalgie*, or cold war nostalgia, people throughout the globe articulated a powerful sense of loss and longing for stability, status, and the predictability of everyday life, upheld by the security of social safety nets and the consensus that societies had the responsibility to meet the basic human needs of their citizens. Thus, I am also concerned with interrogating the staying power of this form of nostalgia across former cold war divides.[6]

The processes and events that we associate with the end of the cold war prompted seismic shifts in people's everyday lives—the lived experiences of citizenship, nation, work, and family—and the meanings attached to daily life from the lofty to the mundane. The philosopher Susan Buck-Morss has argued that the dream of mass utopia defines the twentieth century: both capitalist and socialist forms of industrial modernity were characterized by a "collective dream [that] dared to imagine a social world in alliance with personal happiness."[7] As evidenced in the 1959 "kitchen debates" between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, during the cold war era both capitalist and socialist blocs shared a dream of the good life for the masses and competed vigorously over which system could best deliver it.

Beginning in 1917, when Woodrow Wilson responded to Vladimir Lenin's call for a worldwide revolution with his Fourteen Points proposal, the United States and Soviet Union defined themselves in relation to each other with competing universalist promises, each claiming to offer the best and only route to the good life. The bipolar conflict went beyond ideology. Indeed, claims of ideological superiority were based on the ability of a system to deliver a better material standard of living for its citizens. Throughout the era of US-Soviet competition, both sides of the cold war divide set out to prove to their own citizens, those in developing countries, and critics at home and abroad that they possessed the superior route to delivering economic and social prosperity.

Whether dissidents or patriots, people the world over measured their lives and aspirations in terms of the promises of basic needs and human dignity held out by competing cold war blocs. Hence the end of the cold war entailed crises of meaning-making—often expressed as affective popular nostalgia—as well as a global reconfiguration of power. For many on both sides of the former cold war divide, the post-1991 era, unevenly yet consistently, was marked by a loss of hope for collective well-being. Just as critically, a loss of belief in social progress—for many, the loss of political hope itself—seeped into Western and former Eastern bloc sensibilities.

Employing a global and relational frame, this book examines multifarious expressions of nostalgia across former East-West divides. Broadly speaking, some forms of nostalgia posit a mythic past of ethno-nationalism. Other expressions of nostalgia take critical aim at neoliberalism and its discontents, yearning for a time when nonmarket values served as a bulwark against unrestrained materialism, and when many citizens on both sides of the cold war divide believed in the possibility of a collective good.

Cold war binaries proved to be adaptable and mutable, bent to the will of a host of actors, foremost among them George H. W. Bush, whose administration coincided with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Bush and subsequent officials and pundits transferred the US and Soviet Union superpower conflict to a multiplicity of new enemies, naming new threats abroad and new enemies within.[8] The West's victory in the cold war was pyrrhic at best, with the afterlives of the cold war casting lingering shadows over US and global politics that continue to shape global challenges to liberal democracy.

Paradoxes of Nostalgia tracks three closely related processes: the contested history and memory of the cold war, the thorny political processes through which US cold war triumphalism prevailed over alternative visions of multilateral cooperation and disarmament, and a post-1989 rebooting of "us versus them" binaries, from the 1990s "clash of civilization" foreign policy ideas and the "culture wars" of domestic politics, as they played out in US interventions abroad and in the post-9/11 interplay of domestic and foreign politics. Tracing the rise of the frantic construction of new domestic and international enemies illuminates the historical roots of the global rise of right-wing nationalisms. These historically interwoven processes suggest that the triumphalist and paradoxically nostalgic claims made about the cold war and its demise in the West were necessary conditions for the hegemony of neoliberal economics and unilateral military interventions, epitomized by the US wars in Iraq.

I view this period less as an "age of fracture" dominated by market ideology than as one concretely shaped by an activist state and the weaponizing of global financial instruments to counter and undermine ongoing projects of collective resistance to neoliberal governance.[9] At the same time, much of the recent work on neoliberalism, while illuminating the 1970s and 1980s roots of radical deregulation and the weaponizing of global financial instruments, has obscured the contingencies surrounding the collapse of the Eastern bloc, unwittingly suggesting an economic determinism that diverts attention from the fundamental differences in competing visions of a new global order. Glossing over the political processes by which neoliberal actors marginalized the projects of Gorbachev, Havel, Mandela, and others naturalizes shock therapy and deregulation as the only possible options at "the end of history."

Repurposing the Past

This book explores the uses of history—how historical narratives around the world have been employed in the realms of politics, journalism, and popular culture, from 1989 to the present, to make claims about the cold war. Repurposing the past was critical to George H. W. Bush's conception of American leadership in a "new world order"—a phrase he borrowed from Gorbachev. Enacting their vision of a unipolar world undergirded by US-led militarism, American policy makers consistently favored nationalist over multinational formations. Relying on "clash of civilization" arguments for military spending and intervention, US officials and their policies fueled, at times unwittingly, the short- and long-term development of xenophobic right-wing ethnic nationalisms in the United States and abroad.

The "end of the cold war" needs to be understood not as an event but rather through the global processes by which US unilateralism muscled aside more popular visions of multilateral cooperation and disarmament. Historians of the era's political change have usually emphasized US relations with the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. But Bush and Congress, and the broader public, witnessing these milestones on twenty-four-hour cable news and print media, experienced Soviet reforms of the mid-1980s and the 1989 revolutions through a complicated unfolding of events in the global South and the nonaligned bloc that had shaped geopolitics during the age of three worlds. This book joins a rich, scholarly literature on US empire and extensive studies on the global cold war, including the magisterial work of Odd Arne Westad. Like this scholarship, which emphasizes the cold war's

interconnections with colonialism and imperialism in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, this book examines the fading influence of third-world discourse within a conjuncture shaped by the afterlives of imperialism, nonaligned and national liberation movements, and relations between superpowers.[10]

In addition to investigating the impact of cold war nostalgia on US politics and culture, this book follows the transit of ideas of Western triumphalism across the globe, seeking to assess the reciprocal, local expressions of nostalgia and their impact on US global relations.[11] In other words, I am interested in how foreign audiences answer, or respond to, circulating notions of US triumphalism. Relatedly, I explore emergent expressions of mythic ethno-nationalisms in Russia and the East, constructions of the past that seep into the political void created by the demise of Soviet control. My research examines the interplay between local expressions of nostalgia and assertions of US triumphalism across political geographies shaped by the cold war and the abrupt end of superpower conflict. Whether in the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Cuba, South Africa, Kyrgyzstan, or South Korea, each of these sites of cold war history and memory narrates contested views of the past, marking the tension of local histories altered by US or Soviet hegemonic projects.

This book is deeply informed by scholarship on the former Eastern bloc, *ostalgie*, and other forms of postcommunist nostalgia. Indeed, Western and Eastern forms of nostalgia must be understood in relation to one another. Western forms of nostalgia and triumphalism have also appeared in unexpected places. In addition to engaging cold war stories in the much-studied sites of Germany and Russia, this work examines the varieties of Western triumphalism in the international media and sites of public memory, among them Grutas Park in Lithuania (a theme park with a sprawling collection of discarded Soviet-era statues dubbed "Stalin World" by locals); public parks, museums, and cafés in Budapest and Prague; war and security tourist sites in South Korea; and Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet Central Asian republic and home to the farthest outlying American "lily-pad" airbase, from which US troops deployed to Afghanistan. All of these sites enact a dialogue with US triumphalism; all grapple with alternative histories of the cold war that have been provoked by triumphalist claims, histories in which neither superpower can claim righteousness or victory.

Western and Eastern bloc universalist ideas of the good life and mass society were defined in relation to one another. The unraveling of mass society and of a commitment—however violated—to the common and

public good must also be understood relationally. Likewise, new notions of national identity and belonging, deeply bound up with new conceptions of the enemy, must also be viewed in relation to one another.

Examining claims about the cold war is also critical to understanding how the United States conceived of and fought the so-called war on terror, and how Islamophobia became a new wedge issue in US electoral politics. So, too, is it fundamental to grasping the seeming paradoxes of US-Russian relations and the election of Donald Trump. Nationalist and imperial inflections of US and Russian nostalgia put the two countries on a collision course by 2005. At the same time, a growing affinity between the United States and Russia took shape as both nations redefined nationalism in ethnic, racial, and religious terms. In the United States, conservative policy makers promoted faith-based solutions as an alternative to a functioning regulatory and welfare state.

The post–cold war moment sowed the seeds for recent political and cultural affinities between US and Russian conservatives, reaping the whirlwind of the crisis of American democracy under threat as far right extremism found a comfortable home in the Republican Party. Within two years of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new electoral coalition of "family values" Republicans and gun-rights advocates came together in the Republican Party to win a majority in the 1994 congressional elections—the very combination of gun advocacy and conservative religious and patriarchal values that brought US and Russian conservatives together in the years before Trump's candidacy.

With the Soviet enemy gone, US conservatives promoted family-values rhetoric as part of their political assault on the welfare state and sexuality-based human rights, scapegoating African Americans and LGBT people for electoral gain. Escalating New Right antigovernment rhetoric led many to view the US government itself as the enemy. Antigovernment American conservatives found new, if unpredictable, Russian bedfellows in their attacks on the US government. Christian evangelicals had long been a potent force in the New Right, as well as the GOP electorate. Staunch anticommunists as Reagan lambasted the Soviet "evil empire," members of the Republican Party's Christian right faction, in a striking turnabout, forged business and cultural ties with Russia dating back to the late 1980s. As Trump secured the GOP nomination, he welcomed into his coalition US white Christian nationalists and "alt-right" and white supremacists who were unabashed in their racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. Pro-Russian positions taken by Trump's campaign prompted intense speculation on his ties to

Russia. Seeking to squelch investigations of possible collusion with Russia, President Trump fired FBI director James Comey, prompting a formal Special Counsel investigation of his campaign's ties with Russia, Trump's alleged acts of obstruction of justice, and possible interference in the 2016 election by Russian intelligence. With the Special Counsel investigation finding well over a hundred contacts between the Trump campaign and Russian oligarchs and intelligence operatives during the campaign, and attendees at pro-Trump rallies clad in T-shirts proclaiming, "I'd rather be Russian than Democrat," the political and cultural affinities between the US far right and Russia were striking and undeniable. A US Senate Intelligence Committee investigation concluded as much, providing a detailed account of extensive contacts between the Trump campaign and Russian officials before and after the 2016 election.

History Battles: Glasnost versus Victors' History

The path leading from the end of the cold war to the shadowy dealings of Trump and his officials with Russian officials and operatives was circuitous, contingent, and improbable, even shocking. Yet much more was at stake in the contested interregnum following the 1989 revolutions and the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the ensuing decades, myriad stagings of the cold war past sprang up in museums and tourist sites throughout the former Soviet bloc as well as in the United States. Analyzing the politicized memory of the cold war entails investigating how narratives about the period have been mobilized and manipulated by politicians and pundits as well as in popular culture.[12] Western triumphalism displaced a much broader range of stories about the cold war and what political possibilities its ending might entail. The revolutions that brought down Eastern bloc regimes began as collective efforts to reform and humanize socialism, not as pro-capitalist movements, and the set of possible futures imagined in the mid-1980s was far more expansive than one can glimpse in triumphalist victors' histories.

One of the greatest impediments to understanding shifts in geopolitics as the Eastern bloc dissolved is the tendency among pundits as well as some scholars to conflate all of Soviet history, as if early Bolshevism, Stalinism, and the era of glasnost and perestroika were all the same thing; and then to merge this with post-Soviet Russian history, as if Russian president Vladimir Putin is synonymous with the USSR simply because of his career's Soviet origins in the notorious KGB. *Paradoxes of Nostalgia* draws on such scholars of the Soviet period as Stephen F. Cohen, who emphasizes the importance

of the Soviet reform period.[13] I contend that understanding the intersections of Soviet reform and the radical reform movements of the Eastern bloc and global South—and how and why they were displaced—is vital for comprehending the past decades and writing the history of the end of the cold war.

Ironically, Gorbachev had revived the term *new world order*—invoked by Woodrow Wilson after World War I—to characterize his vision of a demilitarized post–cold war world. Gorbachev elaborated this proposed future in a joint statement with Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in the 1986 Delhi Declaration, which emphasized a strong United Nations and multinational cooperation to secure a nuclear-free and nonviolent world. Also highlighting emergency environmental reforms, the declaration contained sustainable approaches to redress the military and environmental consequences of the cold war race for weapons and mass consumption.[14] The declaration garnered praise in the West for its bracing departure from rigid Soviet ideology and its eclectic adaptation of ideas from the nonaligned world and global South.

Time magazine named Gorbachev its Man of the Year in 1987, praising him for jolting the lethargic Soviet economy, opening the government to scrutiny, and projecting "a new flexibility in Soviet behavior abroad." With millions abroad "growing accustomed to his face" and welcoming the agreement with the United States banning intermediate-range nuclear missiles, *Time* sharply contrasted Gorbachev's dynamic leadership with a United States bogged down by the Iran-Contra affair, recession, and the HIV-AIDS epidemic, where "a White House scandal unfolds, a *contrary* war continues, a boom goes bust, and a plague rages on. It was a year that Ronald Reagan would just as soon forget."[15]

Speaking before the United Nations on December 7, 1988, Gorbachev announced military cuts and a comprehensive plan for disarmament, and elaborated his hopes for international cooperation to alleviate "economic, environmental and humanistic problems in their broadest sense. I would like to believe that our hopes will be matched by our joint effort to put an end to an era of wars, confrontation and regional conflicts, to aggressions against nature, to the terror of hunger and poverty as well as to political terrorism. This is our common goal and we can only reach it together."[16]

Time magazine's Walter Isaacson praised Gorbachev's United Nations speech as "compelling and audacious" and "suffused with the romantic dream of a swords-into-plowshares 'transition from the economy of armaments to an economy of disarmament.'" Gorbachev's vision, Isaacson wrote, had "the potential to produce the most dramatic historic shift since

George Marshall and Harry Truman." Impressed that Gorbachev's proposals "fit together in a world forum to transcend the ideological dogmas that had driven Soviet foreign policy for 70 years," the danger to the United States, for Isaacson, was that it may be unable to "seize the initiative or find an imaginative response." Gorbachev, Isaacson argued, "remains the most commanding presence on the world stage. He is the one performer who can steal a scene from Ronald Reagan, and he did; as they viewed the Statue of Liberty, the visiting Communist played the self-confident superstar while Reagan ambled about like an amiable sidekick and Bush lapsed into the prenomination gawkiness that used to plague him whenever he stumbled across Reagan's shadow. Afterward, Mikhail and Raisa's foray into Manhattan provoked more excitement than any other visit since Pope John Paul II in 1979."[17]

Stressing that Gorbachev had impressively addressed every point of past contention between the United States and the Soviet Union, Isaacson noted that skepticism was prudent, but the greater danger was the possibility that a "wary and grudging attitude could cause the U.S. to miss out on a historic turning point in world affairs."[18]

President George H. W. Bush, however, was not ultimately willing to share the world stage with Gorbachev. He remained fiercely committed to the idea that only the United States could lead the global order. Indeed, in his diplomatic pursuit of international support for the US-led intervention in Iraq, Bush pushed aside Gorbachev's claims to international leadership, along with his vision of multilateral cooperation and the need to address environmental crises. Though Bush developed a rapport with Gorbachev in the months before his resignation and the collapse of the Soviet Union, their testy conflicts over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait highlighted their sharply opposed conceptions of a post–cold war new world order.

Yet it was not simply Gorbachev who lost the argument over the Gulf War, compelled to accept US leadership in a military action anathema to his demilitarization agendas in glasnost and perestroika. It was the defeat of a broader vision, shared by Gorbachev, Havel, and Mandela, of a new world order based on multilateral cooperation and demilitarization.

Gorbachev and Havel's vision of a post–cold war order was based on multipolarity in the context of political glasnost—an official public appraisal of the mistakes of the past. The promising political moment saw the Russian word *glasnost* passed into the English lexicon, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "literally 'the fact of being public'"; openness to public scrutiny or discussion.[19] Too preoccupied with claiming victory and assuming the

role of global hegemon, the United States and its leadership refused the opportunity for its own glasnost—let alone for a peace dividend—in the years following the political openings in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Bush's proclamation that the United States was now the sole preeminent power—and a trusted power at that—required disengaging from the consequences of military, political, and economic policies of the cold war era. Little wonder that Bush, as former vice president and director of Central Intelligence, was unwilling to revisit recent policies, let alone the troubling covert and illegal actions unearthed by the Church Senate committee during the 1970s. It was a different story in the former Soviet Union and Germany, countries that opened the archives documenting repression and the abuses of the cold war, prompting soul-searching about its chilling effects on society and the human soul. It was dramatically different in postapartheid South Africa, which established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and multiple official attempts to confront the barbarism of apartheid's past in order to move toward a democratic future.

Victors' History

Havel's unease over what he saw as the West's inability to "get" the East speaks to the dispute between Eastern bloc reformers' vision of a multilateral and disarmed post–cold war order and US cold war triumphalism—the insistence that the United States had won the cold war and was now the lone superpower bestriding a unipolar world. Gorbachev's appeal for political openness entailed a call for a national and international examination of the assumptions and missteps of the cold war past.

By the time of the Eastern European revolutions and fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, however, Reagan, Bush, and a spate of academics and pundits were already declaring victory. When Francis Fukuyama proclaimed "the end of history" in 1989, he echoed the Bush administration's confidence that capitalist democracy had vanquished all possible alternatives for organizing modern society.[20] Accepting the nomination at the 1988 Republican National Convention, Bush told the crowd that US perseverance and military might, *not* Soviet reforms, diplomacy, and negotiation, made all the difference: "It's a watershed. It's no accident. It happened when we acted on the ancient knowledge that strength and clarity lead to peace—weakness and ambivalence lead to war.... I will not allow this country to be made weak again, never."[21] Just as significant as Bush's intent to carry a big stick was his self-serving account of global politics.

As a former CIA director well aware that the Soviet Union was not the sole cold war actor in southern Africa and Afghanistan, Bush kept silent on US support of white minority governments in southern Africa, CIA actions in Afghanistan before Soviet intervention, and US officials' support of the anti-Soviet mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan.

Like Bush's version of the cold war, the idea that the era was more stable than what followed it ignores the deaths of millions in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. It further overlooks historical connections between cold war policies and post-9/11 conflicts, including the Soviet and US arming of dictatorships in wars of genocide in the developing world.

Reagan's antipathy toward left-leaning anti-imperialism and movements for self-determination and human dignity—along with harsh austerity and structural adjustment programs aimed at the global South and Eastern bloc—amounted to a weaponizing of the Bretton Woods institutions created to bring stability to the international financial markets and prevent war. In effect, the West tried to solve its own stagnation crisis by squeezing the global South and Eastern bloc countries, first calling in debt from loans dating from World War II, then imposing stringent austerity and structural adjustment programs as a condition for restructuring debt.

Economic and political violence intertwined in these intrusive programs promoted by Reagan and British prime minister Thatcher, often imposed on governments and local populations following coups or the use of military force against leftist opposition movements. From the use of covert operations and coups in Chile and Bolivia, to the shock therapy and structural adjustment policies enforced throughout the global South and former Soviet sphere, neoliberal privatization policies effected a reengineering of the state that included a decisive shift in state capacity to the punitive.[22]

Narratives that refuse to critically examine the cold war close their eyes to the proxy wars of the later stages of the conflict that led to US officials' support of the anti-Soviet mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan and enlisted Saddam Hussein's Iraq as allies against Iran after the shah's overthrow.

Through the erasure of such destructive engagements, the cold war's major actors are absolved from responsibility for the vexing problems of the present. In this view, post-1991 wars are attributed to a clash of civilizations, and terrorism is depicted as a product of Islamic history and culture. Such partial and distorted views of the past have misinformed post-1989 foreign policy.

Havel's warning that the United States would give "the green light to its own potentially destructive nationalisms" not only was sadly prescient about

the future state of US political institutions but was also a keen observation about American political culture in the moment. It was in the interest of Americans, Havel suggested, to deal "magnanimously" with internal ethnic and racial divides that had festered "in the era of the communist threat." But on the eve of the 1992 presidential elections and beyond, Americans were turning on each other, finding new enemies within.

In 1993, as Havel cautioned the West, liberal capitalist institutions appeared exemplary to most observers within that sphere of influence. The International Monetary Fund, backed by opinion leaders, imposed free market values on the global South and viewed similarly strong medicine as the precondition for aid to the former Soviet bloc. But as neoliberal market fundamentalism conflated democracy and capitalism, it changed the rules of politics, ultimately undermining democracy. State capacities shifted to deregulation, privatization, and increased incarceration. In tandem with accelerating economic inequality, these shifts led to the neglect of investment in public infrastructure, underfunded public education, and helped make daily newspapers and independent media a vanishing resource. In the United States, politicians and journalists saw voter suppression as compatible with the idea of free elections. Behind Havel's enigmatic suggestion that the West would lose itself if it failed to heed the aspirations of the emancipated East, the institutions and credibility of Western liberal democratic regimes were eroding, setting the stage for antidemocratic resentment in the United States.

Celebrations by free market advocates of the rapidity with which a newly unfettered market would lift all economic boats were viewed as an affront to the elderly and vulnerable—those unable to benefit from these new relations—that their lives lived under socialist regimes had been a waste, a mistake, and their lives and livelihoods were now consigned to the dustbin of history. Even the most ardent critics of the old regimes faced a disorienting sense of loss. As Jens Reich, a leading East German dissident, put it in November 1993, "I can't get rid of this feeling of being an outsider, a sense that all of my life experiences are now irrelevant. It's a strange feeling. It's as if you yourself have disappeared, as if you're a relic of a lost era."[23] Films and texts of East German *Ostalgie* further document attachment to the habits, pleasures, and compensations of daily life under communism and the disorientation and longing that developed when this fabric was ripped apart.

As the late theorist and scholar of Soviet nostalgia Svetlana Boym has argued, nostalgia worked, and continues to work, in multiple registers.

Euro-American scholarly discourse occasioned by the end of the cold war highlighted nostalgia as a major subset of memory studies. Although *nostalgia* is a seventeenth-century medical term, the post-1989 scholarly focus on it responded to broad popular expressions of longing in the wake of the collapse of Eastern bloc regimes.

In what we might think of as a restorative, mythic mode, nostalgia played a pivotal and paradoxical role in cold war triumphalism, or what Gorbachev has called America's "winner complex"—the notion that the West "won" the cold war and that alternatives to liberal capitalist democracy were forever vanquished.[24]

Nostalgia also appears in reflective and critical modes that, in interrogating the past in all its sordid and wondrous complexity, can offer trenchant critiques of current power relations. Critical nostalgias in the East have expressed grief over the loss of a commitment to the public good and a longing for a time when money did not seem to rule everything. For some, critical nostalgia entails missing the audacious dream that individual happiness could align with a more equitable and just social world.

Methodology: Sites of Meaning-Making

The story of the end of the age of three worlds is also a story in the crisis of meaning-making and the construction of new narratives and cultural practices across emergent political geographies and cultures. In a globally framed history that examines nostalgia and tracks US triumphalism into former Soviet and Eastern bloc spaces, my research has engaged sites in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

To suggest that a history is globally framed is not to claim that it covers the entire globe, or even representative parts of it. The rationale linking these places is the indelible reach and impact of US cold war triumphalism, of US policies as a "unipolar" superpower. The exercise of that power throughout the world is best understood in relation to the places affected by it and the projects and histories that it altered or distorted. The locations I visited and discuss in these pages were chosen to illuminate shifts in geopolitics from the late 1980s onward. If choices were at times dictated by happenstance, through the gift of an invitation or an unexpected opportunity to travel, each offers a critical window into dynamics that are indispensable for comprehending post-1989 shifts in geopolitics. In cases where my analysis draws on museum and site visits, though trained in history and not ethnography, I recognize that it is misleading to write about these engagements as if my presence did

not matter, and I use the first person within my descriptions of sites and encounters when relevant.

Furthermore, as a critique of US triumphalism, the book's treatment of US policy does not imply that the United States had absolute power or total responsibility in shaping post-1989 events. Nor do I claim that non-US actors were not politically and morally culpable for their own actions in provoking and shaping wars and shoring up exploitative political, economic, and social structures. Yet as the single most powerful nation in its self-proclaimed unipolar order, more than any other nation or nonstate actor, the United States transformed the terrain and set the conditions on which others acted.

Historians have debated, at times fiercely, the causes, legacy, scope, and significance of the cold war before and after 1989.[25] But an investigation of the politicized memory of the cold war must move beyond the realm of formal politics and ask how and why conservative accounts of the period gained traction with a broader public. Methodologically, this book incorporates diplomatic, political, and cultural history, investigating cold war narratives and assumptions through readings of multiple media representations within intersecting sites of politics, journalism, and popular culture.[26]

In considering post-1989 reshufflings of cold war binaries and, later, a new cold war with Russia, the rise of the internet informs my use of the term *reboot* as both a metaphor and descriptor for a material practice of the post-Soviet era. Representations of the cold war and the war on terror have been largely constructed in a digital world. The first web browser was launched in January 1993, thirteen months after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As personal computers grew ever more popular, the archive of the cold war changed along with technology. Thus, an analysis of the post-9/11 production of cold war history and memory and its mobilization in the war on terror entails an analysis of content on the internet, on television, in film and video games, and in museums, as well as foreign policy discussions and political speech and policy.[27]

Popular culture representations of the cold war were integral in producing cultural understandings of the period. Forms of mass entertainment from Hollywood films and television shows to video games and popular museums were critical in defining a popular discourse on new threats and enemies in the global landscape for consumers and audiences. Narratives of post–cold war anxiety and nostalgia provided fodder for cultural productions that echoed and recycled reductive cold war Manichean binaries and tropes. For example, presumed links between notions of deviant sexuality

and political subversion that informed the purge of gay and lesbian people from federal government employment, and structured such 1960s cold war classics as *The Manchurian Candidate* and *From Russia with Love*, were recapitulated in *Skyfall*, the 2012 installment of the James Bond franchise, in which a queer villain with a mommy complex attempts to seduce Bond and wreak destruction on the British government.[28]

My analysis attends to the constitution of power as politicians and cultural producers alike called into being new constituencies that recognized their claims or interests as aligning with their own.[29] I reject any notion of passive reception in this process, recognizing individual participation or recalcitrance in cultural and social practices that seek to recast political reality. Whether thinking about the social dynamics of a Sarah Palin rally or displays of vulgar triumphalism in popular cultural stagings of the cold war, people actively see, hear, smell, and engage the sites. Encounters with representations of the past or participation in reenactments in museums or video games may subtly, perhaps dramatically, reinforce, challenge, or alter prior assumptions and beliefs. As museum visitors, consumers of post-Soviet kitsch, and gamers participate and react, popular culture becomes a fertile arena for the production of knowledge, subjectivity, and alternate realties in ways that may or may not have been intended by the cultural producers and entrepreneurs. Hence a gaming public, like the voting public, is unstable, and neither films nor video games can be said to represent hegemonic American values or interests. Yet at stake in these contested visions of the cold war is the power to reshape political and social knowledge and points of reference, the power to open or foreclose possibilities to imagine the future.

Chapter Outline

Chapters are organized thematically within an overall chronological structure, looking backward to histories that shaped the post-1989 context and forward to the implications of policies and interventions enacted in the wake of the unraveling of the Eastern bloc. The first four chapters consider new geopolitical contests as a new historical bloc replaced the cold war–era structure of competition between universalizing ideologies.

Chapter 1 focuses on roads not taken, juxtaposing the visions and projects of revolutionaries and reformers to the unipolar hegemonic ambitions of the Bush administration and the political and philosophical arguments employed in influential interpretations of the world scene by Fukuyama and

Samuel Huntington. Bush and Congress, like the media and broader public, experienced Soviet reforms of the mid-1980s and 1989 revolutions not in a cordoned-off US-Soviet world but through the more complicated lens of unfolding developments in the global South and the nonaligned bloc that had shaped geopolitics for decades. The later part of the chapter examines how assertions of unipolarity and the end of history played out in Bush's contests with Mandela and the antiapartheid movement.

Chapter 2 traces post-1987 shifts in conceptions of the new world order, from its employment by the Soviets and Eastern European reformers who imagined a multipolar world, to Bush's triumphalist vision of a world policed by a victorious one-world hegemon. Unlike Germany, the Soviet Union, and South Africa, the United States refused a moment of glasnost, a political opening that might have allowed a reckoning with its cold war past. From Bush's manipulation of the cold war past and invocation of "clash of civilizations" rhetoric in the first US Gulf War to US responses to humanitarian crises in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, both the Bush and Clinton administrations drew on middlebrow ideas that claimed ancient and primordial hatreds as the source of conflicts, leaving the West off the hook for its part in creating the conditions of crisis.

Chapter 3 argues that the collapse of the Eastern bloc prompted a crisis in meaning-making in US society as US politics and culture repositioned American identity in response to the loss of its longtime adversary. As Americans suspiciously tracked early post-Soviet nostalgia in Russia, the end of a bipartisan consensus for New Deal liberalism in the United States and a decline of support for the notion of mass society prompted a rapid construction of internal enemies, an escalation in partisanship, and the erosion of political norms. Chapter 4 turns to expressions of cold war nostalgia in politics and popular culture amid depictions of new threats and enemies by policy makers and cultural producers. As the central cold war commodities oil and uranium escaped their cold war containers, constructions of new enemies defined as rogue states went hand in hand with a rejection of the very idea of diplomacy. New cold war framings produced in popular film, as well as in the political arena, were critical to the consolidation of a popular cold war nostalgia by the end of the 1990s, coalescing in the presidential campaign of George W. Bush.

The final three chapters chart political deployments of the cold war past from the advent of the US war on terror and across the global turn to the right over the next two decades. Chapter 5 examines a thriving global consumer nostalgia along with claims about the cold war found in museums

and popular culture in the former Soviet sphere as well as in the former West. Focusing on the instability of nostalgia in the midst of a global turn to the right, I track a shift from expressions of critical nostalgias toward assertions of mythic nostalgia dependent on historical erasures at the behest of right-wing nationalisms. Chapter 6 moves from examining stagings of the cold war past in the post-9/11 war on terror in popular culture and in official rhetoric on war and the "Axis of Evil," to examining implicit and explicit claims about the cold war in places where the war on terror was actually fought. Following the war on terror entails examining the contested presence of Western triumphalism in a former Soviet space, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, home of the US base from which most NATO soldiers deployed to Afghanistan. Chapter 7 alternates between geopolitical and cultural registers to probe the seeming paradoxes of the new cold war with Russia. During the 2000s, the two nations' right-wing alliances solidified at the very moment of a new US-Russian cold war over NATO expansion. As the rebooting of a cold war in popular culture resonated with political depictions of Russia during crises in Georgia and Ukraine, the outsize influence of Russia evident in Trump's campaign and presidency represented a twist in a contemporary drama involving new techniques of intelligence, information warfare, and kleptocracy in an era of weakened states and fragmented publics.

The epilogue considers global demands for a genuine reckoning with the past, arguing that an honest accounting of the cold war past is critical to any democratic and just future. Juxtaposing resurgent right-wing nationalist nostalgia to contemporary expressions of critical nostalgia, it emphasizes not longings for flawed past regimes and political projects but nostalgia for hope itself and the possibility of a just global society.

NOTES

Introduction

1 Havel, "Call for Sacrifice," 6–7, republished in Havel, *The Art of the Impossible*, 141.

2 I rely on this literature throughout the book. See, for example, Westad, *Global Cold War*; Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America*; Borstelmann, *Cold War*; Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*; Prashad, *Darker Nations*; Joseph and Grandin, *Century of Revolution*; Simpson, *Economists with Guns*; McMahon, *Cold War*; Makdisi and Prashad, *Land of Blue Helmets*; and Chamberlin, *Cold War's Killing Fields*.

3 Engel, *When the World Seemed New*, 484.

4 Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Communist Castaways," *Irish Times*, April 26, 1990.

5 Henry Allen, "Lost in Glasnost: The Cold War May Be History, but the Spoils Are Spoiled," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1990. My approach to the uses and abuses of the past has been shaped by Eric Foner. See Foner, *Who Owns History?*

6 Scribner, *Requiem for Communism*; Sarotte, *1989*. This book is informed by a vast literature on post-1989 former Soviet and Eastern bloc spheres. Kristen Ghodsee's scholarship has been especially important in critiquing US triumphalism and its global impact. See Ghodsee, *Red Hangover*.

7 Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, ix.

8 For exemplary scholarship on shifting constructions of enemies, see Little, *Us versus Them*.

9 Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*.

10 Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire*; Westad, *Global Cold War*; Singh, *Race and America's Long War*. For exemplary global framings of the intersections of the cold war and

empires, see Lauren Hirshberg, *Suburban Empire*; Monica Kim, *Interrogation Rooms*; and Colleen Woods, *Freedom Incorporated*.

11 I draw on the wealth of new scholarship on the former Eastern bloc that has appeared over the past decade to investigate Western triumphalism and nostalgia in relation to forms of nostalgia in the former Eastern bloc. For some of the important scholarship on these multiple and various forms of nostalgia, see Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*; Scribner, *Requiem for Communism*; Luthar and Pušnik, *Remembering Utopia*; and Todorova, *Remembering Communism*.

12 Important scholarship on US cold war memory includes Wiener, *How We Forgot the Cold War*. Although the different emphases of Wiener's book and my own (forgetting versus nostalgia) may sound opposed, I see the arguments as two sides of the same coin, both concerned with the evasions and distortions of the history of the cold war. See also Schrecker, *Cold War Triumphalism*.

13 Stephen F. Cohen, *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives*.

14 Vladimir Radyuhin, "Delhi Declaration Still Relevant, Says Mikhail Gorbachev," *Hindu*, March 1, 2006, updated March 23, 2012, https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-international/delhi-declaration-still-relevant-says-mikhail-gorbachev/article3157743.ece. See Sahai, *Delhi Declaration*.

15 "Man of the Year: An Intimate Portrait," *Time*, January 4, 1988.

16 "The Gorbachev Visit; Excerpts from Speech to U.N. on Major Soviet Military Cuts," *New York Times*, December 8, 1988, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/08/world/the-gorbachev-visit-excerpts-from-speech-to-un-on-major-soviet-military-cuts.html.

17 Walter Isaacson, "The Gorbachev Challenge," *Time*, December 19, 1988, 16, 17 (from the Vault).

18 Isaacson, "Gorbachev Challenge," 20.

19 *Oxford English Dictionary*, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095854377.

20 Mark Hosenball, "Centuries of Boredom in World without War; an American Theory," Spectrum, *Times* (London), September 3, 1989.

21 George H. W. Bush, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in New Orleans," American Presidency Project, August 18, 1988, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/268235.

22 Klein, *Shock Doctrine*. See Slobodian, *Globalists*.

23 Quoted in Stephen Kinzer, "Prenden Journal: For East German Theme Park, the Bad Old Days," *New York Times*, November 9, 1993.

24 Schrecker, *Cold War Triumphalism*.

25 For an important early example, see Hogan, *End of the Cold War*.

26 For models of this approach, see McAlister, *Epic Encounters*; Schwenkel, *American War in Contemporary Vietnam*; and Shibusawa, "Ideology, Culture, and the Cold War." While this book is not framed as a study in memory per se, other important models include Blight, *Race and Reunion*.

27 My debt to scholars in developing intertextual methodological approaches is elaborated in Von Eschen, "Memory." See especially McAlister, *Epic Encounters*; Rosenberg, *Day Which Will Live*; and Friedman, *Covert Capital*.

28 For an excellent analysis of how these tropes operated in 1950s and 1960s American culture, see Jacobson and González, *What Have They Built You to Do?*
29 Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*.

1. The Ends of History

1 Quoted in Judith Havemann, "Bush Expresses 'Delight,' Issues Invitation to the White House," *Washington Post*, February 12, 1990.
2 Robert Windram, "US Government Considered Nelson Mandela Terrorist until 2008," NBC News, December 7, 2013, http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/us-government-considered-nelson-mandela-terrorist-until-2008-f2D11708787.
3 For an example of reporting during the 1988 campaign, see Stephen Engelberg with Jeff Gerth, "Bush and Noriega: and Examination of Their Ties," *New York Times*, September 28, 1988, http://www.nytimes.com/1988/09/28/us/bush-and-noriega-examination-of-their-ties.html?pagewanted=all; and Howard Kohn and Vicki Monks, "The Dirty Secrets of George Bush: The Vice President's Illegal Operations," *Rolling Stone*, November 3, 1988, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/the-dirty-secrets-of-george-bush-71927/.
4 Andrew Marshall, "What Happened to the Peace Dividend?," *Independent* (London), January 2, 1993, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/what-happened-to-the-peace-dividend-the-end-of-the-cold-war-cost-thousands-of-jobs-andrew-marshall-1476221.html.
5 Denning, *Culture in the Age*.
6 LeoGrande and Kornbluh, *Back Channel to Cuba*.
7 Perry Anderson, *Zone of Engagement*, 281.
8 Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Slobodian, *Globalists*.
9 Schrecker, *Cold War Triumphalism*.
10 Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *National Interest*, Summer 1989, 18.
11 Perry Anderson, "The Ends of History," in *Zone of Engagement*, 279–376. James Atlas, "What Is Fukuyama Saying? And to Whom Is He Saying It?," *New York Times*, October 22, 1989, https://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/22/magazine/what-is-fukuyama-saying-and-to-whom-is-he-saying-it.html.
12 Mark Hosenball, "Centuries of Boredom in World without War; an American Theory," Spectrum, *Times* (London), September 3, 1989.
13 Francis Fukuyama, "The History at the End of History," *Guardian*, April 3, 2007, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/apr/03/thehistoryattheendofhist.
14 Francis Fukuyama, "American Political Decay or Renewal: The Meaning of the 2016 Election," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2016.
15 Fukuyama, *End of History*, 44–45.
16 Fukuyama, *End of History*, 352.
17 Patrick E. Tyler, "U.S. Strategy Plans Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop: A One-Superpower World; Pentagon's Document Outlines Ways to Thwart Challenges to Primacy of America," special to *New York Times*, March 8, 1992.