

Review Essay

Friends – of a Kind: America and its Allies in the Second World War

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Mary E. Glantz, *FDR and the Soviet Union: The President's Battles Over Foreign Policy* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2005, \$34.95). Pp. 253. ISBN 0 7006 1365 X.

Steven Merritt Miner, *Stalin's Holy War: Religion, Nationalism and Alliance Politics, 1941–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003, \$55.00). Pp. 407. ISBN 0 8078 2736 3.

Mark A. Stoler, *Allies in War: Britain and America Against the Axis Powers 1940–1945* (London and New York: Hodder Arnold, 2005, £25.00). Pp. 291. ISBN 0 340 72026 3.

David Stone, *War Summits: The Meetings that Shaped World War II and the Postwar World* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005, \$29.95). Pp. 304. ISBN 1 57488 901 X.

The Second World War continues to be an attractive subject for scholars and even more so for those writing for a general readership. One of the more traditional areas of focus has been the ‘Big Three’ – the alliance of the United States with Britain and the Soviet Union. Public interest in the three leaders – Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin – remains high, and their decisions continue to resonate in the post-Cold War era, as demonstrated by continued (and often ahistorical) references to the decisions made at the Yalta Conference.¹ Consequently, while other aspects of Second World War historiography have pushed into new avenues of exploration, that which has looked at the Grand Alliance has followed fairly conventional lines – the new Soviet bloc materials have been trawled to answer old questions and using the frames of

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¹ Notably in President Bush's speech, Riga, Latvia, 7 May 2005, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050507-8.html>, and comments on Yalta in the television series *Cold War* (Channel 4/Turner Television, 1998) episode 2. For recent new directions in scholarship see, for example, the roundtable discussion “The Future of World War II Studies,” *Diplomatic History*, 25 (2001), 347–499.

reference that developed during the Cold War. This has left much to be said about the nature of the relationship of the United States with its great allies and the dynamics and processes of that alliance, and overlooked full and rounded analysis of the role of that alliance as the instrument of Axis defeat.

The books under review here each take steps along this path. In many ways, David Stone's is such a traditional account, framed around the activities of the Big Three leaders. However, there are revisionist elements in Stone's exegesis. While many have traced the Grand Alliance through the Big Three meetings, notably Robin Edmonds, Stone concentrates equally on all the summits, including therefore the more plentiful bilateral ones.² In doing so he brings closer to centre stage some of the subordinate figures in each government. We begin to get a sense of the multi-layered nature of inter-Allied relationships. The Big Three are placed in a context in which much of their attention was devoted to dealing with problems and issues arising within their own bureaucracies as well as those produced by the interactions between these bureaucracies. If his arguments are rather simplified, and short of documentary substantiation, Stone moves in a direction in which studies of the Grand Alliance nevertheless need to go. He shows how in the course of wartime summitry the Alliance was composed of three bilateral relationships, each under strain, but each also the subject of a process of management by the leaders concerned, in many instances confronting countervailing tendencies in their own countries.

The weightier studies of Mark A. Stoler and Mary E. Glantz underpin the validity of this conceptualization of the Alliance. In particular they add nuance and detail to the issue of the operation of the alliance relationship at different levels. This is most apparent in Glantz's work, which has one dominant theme: President Roosevelt's struggle with his own bureaucracy as he sought to implement a policy of wartime and postwar cooperation with the USSR. This is not a new idea, but Glantz has explored in detail the ways in which the US Embassy in Moscow, in particular, sought to thwart its own presidents' policies. She brings a post-Cold War perspective and widens the range of factors that are seen as axiomatic.³

In Glantz's view, Roosevelt believed the key to fighting the war successfully and building a lasting peace was to avoid the mistakes of Versailles – especially to hold together the cooperation of the US, USSR and UK in the postwar world. In order to achieve his goal, he was a “practical idealist,” prepared to sacrifice other ideals (for instance rights of peoples to chose their own governments). Continued cooperation with the USSR was central to all his foreign policies.

Glantz assumes that cooperation with the Soviets was a realizable objective. From this starting point, she asks what were the main impediments to its achievement, and finds her answer within the US governmental establishment. To Glantz, Roosevelt had a clear and unidealistic view of the potentialities of Soviet–American

² Robin Edmonds, *The Big Three* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991).

³ See, for example, Bradley F. Smith, *Sharing Secrets with Stalin. How the Allies Traded Intelligence, 1941–45* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 144. Dennis J. Dunn, whom Glantz roundly criticizes, described Faymonville as the “tool and symbol of Rooseveltism in Moscow.” D. J. Dunn, *Caught between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 25.

cooperation – and he had held this view from the start of his presidency. This vision was not shared within the bureaucracy. The dynamic for Glantz’s study is provided by Roosevelt’s various efforts to overcome the obstacles offered by the refusal of State Department professionals, military intelligence experts, or diplomats he himself appointed to Moscow, to share his optimism about the possibilities of cooperation with the Soviets. There has been exhaustive analysis already of viewpoints in the State Department, especially of the “Riga School,” who formed their negative views observing the upheavals of the 1930s Soviet Union and under the tutelage of Robert Kelley at the State Department.⁴ Glantz shifts focus, however, by looking at the situation in the USSR among US representatives. Embassy military attachés Brigadier General Joseph Michela and Colonel Ivan Yeaton, embassy staff and successive ambassadors were sceptical. Rather than force them to conform to his wishes, Roosevelt (rather typically) set up alternate lines of policymaking, using special envoys and the representatives of the Office of Lend-Lease Administration (OLLA). This had the result of deepening resentments and adding personality and demarcation conflicts to disagreements on the policy.

Essentially, Roosevelt’s opponents believed the Soviet Union was a decrepit state that commanded no loyalty from the citizens it had terrorized, and which could be expected to succumb quickly in the face of the power of the *Wehrmacht*. Any American aid would therefore be wasted. Once the Soviets had survived into the winter of 1941, the argument shifted: Soviet ambitions were depicted as extensive and malign, and any aid to them should be on the basis of strict reciprocity – notably the satisfaction of the many minor but accumulative obstructions experienced by the regular representatives in Moscow and Kuibyshev.⁵

Roosevelt rejected such an approach. In the first phase of his relationship with the Soviets the big issue for him was to keep them in the fight and to convince them of American sincerity and support. All other issues should be set aside in pursuit of this. In this objective he was supported by Brigadier General Raymond Faymonville, the Lend-Lease representative in Moscow. The OLLA, an agency set up by Roosevelt in preference to transforming the established bureaucracies, was committed to aid without strings. Faymonville had a more sympathetic view of the USSR than either the Military Intelligence Department in the War Department or the State Department Office of East European Affairs. Glantz’s presentation of Faymonville’s divergent perceptions is a valuable contribution to understanding the range of views on the USSR – he looked at the matter from a Pacific perspective, and in that context saw the USSR as a natural ally of the USA against expansionist Japan. Furthermore, he had a greater respect for the Soviet military, and like Roosevelt, but few others, predicted the Soviets would survive the German onslaught. The fact that he was correct, for Glantz, throws into greater relief the prejudices

⁴ Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), Chs. 1 and 2.

⁵ Foreign diplomatic representatives and most government offices were evacuated to Kuibyshev, on the Volga, in October 1941 as the Germans approached Moscow. For a time the US Ambassador was based there, while the OLLA representative (and any special envoys) were in Moscow, where Stalin had remained. The embassy did not return to Moscow fully until March 1943.

of his more pessimistic compatriots. She outlines in some detail the bitter relations between Faymonville and the regular embassy staff and the way Roosevelt circumvented the latter in building his policy towards the Kremlin.

This unhappy situation was not resolved until, Glantz argues, Roosevelt's policy entered its second phase. By October 1943 the war burden was more equally shared and the USSR no longer in danger of defeat. It was now time for bargaining, or at least for reasonable give and take. Michela and Faymonville were withdrawn and Averell Harriman, from Roosevelt's own inner circle, was appointed ambassador. However, it seems that Roosevelt imperfectly understood where the opposition came from, if indeed Glantz is correct that he was consciously acting to counter it. The instrument of conducting the multi-layered relations with the USSR was to be an only partially reconstructed State Department. Moreover, in his quest for expert assistance Harriman secured the return of the most articulate member of the Riga School, George Kennan, to Moscow.

Until he died, however, Roosevelt persisted in his grand design. Glantz sees this as a realistic objective. She cites the tantalizing fragments of Russian evidence that suggest the Soviets too were committed to a policy of cooperation.⁶ Thus the problem in the alliance was not Stalin – or inherent US–Soviet tensions. Roosevelt and Stalin shared a belief that they needed peace and that to get peace required Soviet–US cooperation. Therefore Glantz judges that Roosevelt at Yalta understood the price he had paid, but got what he wanted. Roosevelt's greatest problem was domestic – not Congress or public opinion but his own bureaucracy, a claim based solidly on Glantz's focus on the conflicts and disagreements over policy between those based in the USSR and Roosevelt and his personal representatives.

Glantz ends by endorsing the old revisionist line of argument that sees the transition to Truman, who sought advice from those very bureaucrats Roosevelt had sidelined, as the beginning of the process that led to the Cold War. In theoretical terms, she sees Graham Allison's bureaucratic politics model to be applicable here. In the end, the bureaucracy outlived the President. Roosevelt failed to build a bureaucratic base for his policy. While her approach clearly draws much from the work of earlier scholars, in looking at the likes of Faymonville, she stresses the greater importance of generational differences relative to Yalta–Riga axioms and most usefully places Grand Alliance policymaking within its context of bureaucratic and interpersonal politics, whereas studies of the alliance have tended to focus on leader interactions. The limitation of the discussion is that which so often arises with Roosevelt: she gives a clear depiction of a Rooseveltian “vision,” of clearly defined primary aims – Victory in War, Preservation of Peace – but with rather sparse substantiation from Roosevelt's own words. The book is also useful in its insistence on seeing Roosevelt as a manager of processes and recognizes his own deviousness and devotion to the business of political manoeuvring. These are all too familiar to students of the domestic Roosevelt of the New Deal period but often absent from studies of the wartime foreign policy president.

⁶ Vladimir Pechatnov, “The Big Three after World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post-war Relations with the United States and Great Britain,” Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 13.

Steven Merritt Miner has already written weightily on the Grand Alliance's early years and, in a book primarily focussed on a Soviet wartime domestic issue (the officially sanctioned revival of the Russian Orthodox Church), points up a further dimension which has been downplayed in the traditional story of the wartime coalition. As they assessed the possibilities – and indeed desirability – of cooperation with the Stalinist state, British and American officials, and their public opinion, were influenced by their perceptions of the nature of Stalin's domestic regime. The religious question, as Miner argues, occupied a position of unique sensitivity since religious persecution had been probably the most heinous of all Bolshevik activities in Western opinion. It was a significant impediment to forging any kind of alliance when the US and the USSR were thrown together out of common enmity to Hitler.

Miner's book tends to fall into two separate parts: that dealing with Stalin's handling of the religious issue within his domain, which is persuasively argued and well documented with newly available Soviet material, and that on the alliance dimension. This latter part deals with a significant topic, but is less extensive. In fact, it deserves a fuller study on its own. While ostensibly dealing with the full British–American–Soviet alliance, much of Miner's material is British. The religious question was of even greater importance in the United States, and Miner offers some tantalizing ideas without presenting details of American propaganda on the issue or the impact of perceptions of Soviet religious “liberalization” in either American public or elite opinion.⁷ Nor does he go into much depth on Roosevelt's feelings on the matter, though giving some evidence of the superficiality of Roosevelt's understanding of the religious geography of Eastern Europe.⁸ For FDR, indeed, the issue's main relevance was once again how it impacted on inter-Allied relations and in particular the potency of the issue for sections of American public opinion that he considered important. Miner takes British churchmen to task for their failure to speak the truth about the limits to religious freedom in the USSR. He suggests darkly that the subsequent disillusionment, plus the delusions induced in Eastern Europeans who trusted the BBC, were an important element in the onset of the Cold War. Again, one would like to know more of the American experience in this regard. One suggestive glimpse is provided in the Soviet material that Miner has unearthed that illustrates the reality of cultural differences within the alliance. Much is often made of these at a Big Three level, drawing on simplistic contrasts between the backgrounds of the leaders. But probably more insidious, if only because those leaders had limited means to eradicate them, were cultural differences entrenched within the bureaucracies. Miner's account of the way Russian War Relief (RWR), an

⁷ See Martin H. Folly, *Churchill, Whitehall and the Soviet Union 1940–1945* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 39–75, for a study of British government perceptions of the changes in the USSR, which they saw as both “liberalization” and “the return to a class society” (perhaps a uniquely British formulation). Full study has yet to be made of equivalent American observations of Soviet internal reforms. Miner claims (*Stalin's Holy War* 242) that religious-based distrust of the Soviet system was interwoven into all American and British perceptions of the USSR, but could explore this in more depth.

⁸ Roosevelt appears to have thought a religious union between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches was possible (Miner, *Stalin's Holy War* 167).

organization devoted to raising large amounts of American money for relief in the USSR, was ostracized by Soviet officials because its advertising techniques emphasized suffering children rather than heroic Soviet soldiers, reveals the true cultural gulf that was well-nigh impossible to bridge.⁹

Cultural differences are a central theme of Mark Stoler's book – only this time within the wing of the alliance more often characterized as founded upon cultural commonality: the Anglo-American one. Stoler's overall theme is that Anglo-American relations during the war were shaped by a complexity of factors simultaneously embracing rivalries of a number of kinds and bonds that drew the two powers together more closely than is usually the case between co-belligerent allies. In emphasizing rivalries, Stoler does not fall into the trap of ascribing them to personalities – though he paints colourful vignettes of leading protagonists of Anglo-American rivalry such as Patton and Montgomery – nor is he content simply to explain them in crude terms such as imperialism versus anticolonialism. He argues that they derived from the varying aims and objectives of the two powers, the different ways they perceived each other, the issues raised by the war and the lessons they drew from history. His central theme is that they were not easy or natural allies. Yet they managed to maintain an alliance in practice.

A central assumption of Stoler, Glantz and Stone is that they do not take Allied victory for granted. Stoler points out that the “turning-point” victories in 1942 – Stalingrad, Midway, El Alamein – were single-power victories, and that in the emergency situation of 1942 each power had gone its own way. But these were only turning points in that they stemmed the Axis advance. They did not make total victory inevitable, for the Axis still controlled vast territories rich in resources and manpower and had enormous power. A military stalemate and negotiated peace leaving the Axis governments and empires intact was a distinct possibility. To achieve a more decisive result required a more meaningful alliance, once the Allies agreed on the pursuit of total victory.

Stoler suggests that the British and Americans differed concerning relations with their Soviet ally as they did on so many other issues. In the summer of 1943 they were both for a while in agreement as to the dangerous possibilities of developments on the Soviet–German front: either a separate peace that would release the weight of German forces for the western fronts and make a cross-Channel invasion impossibly costly or, if the Soviets kept fighting, of Soviet domination of Europe. Churchill and Roosevelt's agreement at this time not to share atomic secrets with the Soviets is seen by Stoler (as it is by Stone) as an indicator of the reservations they

⁹ VOKS (the Soviet propaganda agency) withdrew support from RWR, based on their belief that working-class Americans were naturally sympathetic to the USSR, and so did not need to be “sold” on the idea of giving aid. Therefore methods that appealed to sentimentality rather than solidarity seemed an attempt at bourgeois denigration and obscured the real issues of the war for political and class motives. This was in spite of the large amounts of money the RWR was raising for medical aid for the USSR. For their part, the managers of the RWR could not understand why the Soviets would not accept that any method was acceptable so long as it sold the message, nor could they understand why the Soviets resented propaganda within the US that asserted that the Soviets were indebted to the Americans for their aid (Miner, *Stalin's Holy War* 296–303).

both shared regarding their ally. However, by the time of the Tehran conference, Stoler's research has led him to the same conclusion as Glantz. The US made common cause with the Soviets on war and postwar political issues, deliberately distancing themselves from British attitudes. Stoler argues that Roosevelt believed in the possibilities of befriending Stalin both to win the war and to create a workable postwar peace. He was convinced his personal charm would do this, but Stoler's Roosevelt, like Glantz's, was not naive. He had clear goals and pursued them consistently. His exploitation of differences of opinion with the British – he over-emphasized them at Tehran, especially over the colonial issue – was a clear attempt to build a bond with Stalin, but also reflected the continuing rivalries with the British. Stoler seems clear that Roosevelt genuinely felt that indeed it was the British who stood in the way of his vision for the postwar world much more directly than did the Soviets, with a further danger that American public opinion could go sour on international involvement if they believed the British were prioritizing the interests of empire in regions like the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. Avoiding a resurgence of US isolationism and drawing the Soviets into the maintenance of world order were the two lynchpins of Roosevelt's policy of avoiding the mistakes of the post-First World War settlement. British actions in that region meant that at the end of 1944 Anglo-American relations, not American–Soviet relations in Stoler's view, were at their wartime nadir. Moreover, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were predicting a drastic decline of British power and arguing that conflict between the remaining powers should be avoided, so it was vital not to be drawn into defending British interests in the Balkans.¹⁰

At the same time the success of the Japanese *Ichi-Go* offensive meant the US could no longer count on China holding the bulk of Japanese forces on the Asian mainland, and there was the possibility of the Japanese government fighting on from there. Only the Red Army could replace the Chinese in keeping Japanese armies tied down, so getting Soviets into the Pacific war became an even greater priority at the start of 1945.

To Stoler, therefore, the Yalta Conference served the purpose for Roosevelt of patching up relations on the political issues that were arising with the Soviets (and to a degree with the British, though there were other, power-political, ways of managing those) so that the alliance could proceed with its primary task. For him, therefore, it was a matter of managing a continuing process, and his alleged remark to Admiral Leahy that the Polish agreement was the best that could be secured at that time can be seen as a reflection of this approach by FDR as much as an admission that the opportunity for a better agreement had passed.¹¹ Throughout his presidency Roosevelt had showed his predilection for managing crises by short-term expedients without regarding himself as committed permanently to a particular course of action or solution. The approaches of Stoler, Glantz and Stone suggest that we can understand Roosevelt's wartime diplomacy best by keeping this basic

¹⁰ The JCS warned there would be a global shift in power after the war, with the US and Soviet Union as new superpowers, neither capable of defeating the other, even with British help. For this reason, conflict with the Soviets should be avoided (Stoler, *Allies in War* 186).

¹¹ William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950), 316.

character trait in mind.¹² Stoler takes an upbeat view of Yalta: all parties “appeased,” which is, as he points out, just an emotive term for a normal diplomatic procedure, and all wanted cooperation, if on their own terms, and were prepared to compromise certain of their interests to get it, while not abandoning those interests entirely.

Ultimately he concludes, as Stone does, that growing American power shaped the outcomes of the Anglo-American rivalry, but his is a more nuanced account, taking into consideration the various currents and dynamics of the three-way relationship and recognizing that to the end the three powers needed each other to achieve victory and postwar security. He underlines that the Anglo-American wing of the Grand Alliance was fraught with tensions and major cultural and ideological differences (rather than just the dispute over military strategy in Europe) and demonstrates the ways in which these differences were mediated and negotiated and the mechanisms by which compromises were arrived at.

Taken together, these studies prompt a further rethink of the frames of reference by which we discuss, assess and analyse the wartime alliance of the US, UK and USSR. Most importantly, they highlight how new understanding of the politics of the war can be produced by understanding the alliance as a continuing process, and one that needed to be carefully maintained and managed. Those looking at it from a later Cold War perspective tended to highlight the tensions and to show good reasons to see this as an awkward, even unnatural, alliance, yet (being more interested in the collapse of the alliance and its consequences) they did not then go on to explain how that alliance was held together and was able to deliver victory. The more unlikely the alliance was, the more notable was the success in not only maintaining it, but also delivering the complete victory that perhaps we now take for granted and all too easily explain in terms of American productive capacity or Allied virtue.¹³

In the past, too often, failure to engage with these themes has been excused by repeating the cliché that the alliance was unnatural and “only” caused by common enmity towards Hitler. In fact most wartime alliances are brought about by such factors, and are often between dissimilar states. From Stone and Stoler’s analysis, the Anglo-American alliance looks every bit as “unnatural” at times as the Allied–Soviet one. Recognition of this is crucial to getting beyond the traditional obsession with focussing on the collapse of the alliance as the inevitable result of such differences and contributes instead to an understanding of how it was held together. Stone, Glantz and Stoler all testify that this was done consciously by protagonists aware of the differences and more aware, perhaps, than later commentators, that alliances are usually like that and that these have to be overcome or at least managed if the objective of the alliance is to be secured. Moreover, their coming together was no more “inevitable” than their staying together was. The much-emphasized common bond of enmity towards Hitler was established at the heart of the alliance by the

¹² Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler Franklin D. Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 7, and, for an example of Roosevelt’s desire to keep processes going, 176–79.

¹³ Richard Overy gives a wide-ranging assessment of the reasons for Allied victory, acknowledging the contribution of the Alliance, but perhaps could go into more detail of the processes by which unity was maintained and coordination managed. R. Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London: Norton, 1995), especially Ch. 8.

conscious decisions of the three states to pursue total victory in preference to some variant on a negotiated peace, which could have been achieved unilaterally. After each had separately stemmed the Axis tide during 1942 they did not have to chose the path of completely defeating the Axis, which was more difficult and would be longer in duration. Furthermore, such an aim implied that the task would not be completed by the termination of combat. Continuing joint efforts would be required to cement in place the radical new world order that must result from the extinction of Japanese and German power. Each of the three leaders of the Grand Alliance appreciated that cooperating to win total victory necessitated also cooperating, if to a lesser degree of intensity, in the maintenance of the postwar settlement. It was a viewpoint that they each struggled to impose on their own subordinates.

Indeed, it is evident from the findings of the studies under discussion here that the history of the Grand Alliance has to take fuller account of the fact that obstacles to cooperation existed within the respective governments as much as in inter-Allied relations. Any satisfactory account must assess the impact that such internal bureaucratic politics had on the conduct of relations between the Big Three leaders and how cross-Allied interactions at a lower level worked to shape the way that they fought the war together. Simply referring to basic ideological differences between British imperialism, American capitalist democracy and Soviet communism actually sheds little light on this. At times they seem each to have appreciated the difficulties the others faced, and it may have been one of the elements that helped them form the personal rapport which was evident at the Tehran and Yalta conferences. Each had fears of what would happen if the less cooperative tendencies came to wield greater influence in their allies, and tended to exaggerate their strength to the extent that in the early postwar years this became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Soviets in particular were sensitive about the strength of anti-Roosevelt forces in Congress and big business.¹⁴

Emerging from this body of scholarship, then, we have a picture of America's wartime alliance as a continuing process, in which Roosevelt and his fellow leaders struggled to manage relations between themselves while simultaneously coping with tendencies within their own governments that at least made this task more complicated. Accepting this leads on to a new conceptualization of Roosevelt's wartime policies towards his major allies. Trying to characterize Roosevelt's alliance as a finished item, and make it out to be a success or a failure, a "not so Grand Alliance," in Perlmutter's phrase, is to miss the essence of what Roosevelt was doing – Roosevelt himself would have rejected such an approach. Roosevelt regarded the solution to the problems of wartime diplomacy and peacemaking rather in the way he approached the Depression: as an organic and dynamic process.

¹⁴ Harriman telegram to Hull, 28 Jan. 1944, State Department papers 740.0011/2105 Record Group 59, US National Archives. The Soviet attitude is evident in Ivan Maisky's memorandum of 11 Jan. 1944 in Pechatnov, 4–6, and after the war in the Novikov telegram of 27 Sept. 1946, in Kenneth M. Jensen, *The Origins of the Cold War: The Novikov, Kennan, and Roberts "Long Telegrams" of 1946* (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace, 1991), 5–6. Regarding Britain, the Soviets feared the continuing strength of the "Cliveden set." Maisky conversation with Foreign Secretary Eden, 31 Aug. 1943, Foreign Office papers FO371/36956/N4977, British National Archives.

Roosevelt's sharply attuned political brain understood, indeed probably prioritized, the importance of short-term progress, in which long-term goals were evident but with the achievement of immediate gain taking precedence. A key element to this approach was to keep movement going in these short-term steps, to keep possibilities open. This was the key to the policy of constant experimentation in the New Deal, and to his concern in his relations with the Soviets to keep cooperation going and keep his allies with him. The long-term goal would be defined only in general terms, allowing considerable tactical flexibility, and indeed allowing re-definition as circumstances changed. This is the essence of what is often described as Roosevelt's "pragmatism" in dealing with the Depression and is a useful concept to aiding understanding of his wartime approach to his allies. Thus Roosevelt's "vision" was very generalized – there was no blueprint of a plan or even commitment to a particular methodology any more than the New Deal was a set programme of legislation expected to solve the Depression at a stroke. The important matter for Roosevelt was to keep possibilities open. Thus both the Atlantic Charter and the Yalta agreements served a short-term end in moving Roosevelt's alliances forward, but were vague enough as statements of larger policy goals to allow further flexibility along the way, and he would not have regarded them as statements of unchanging policy – as "doctrines" the like of which Cold War presidents were to prove themselves eager to establish as fixed principles of US foreign policy. This organic nature of the Grand Alliance and its basis in "practical idealism" are essential to grasp if it is to be fully understood as a functioning mechanism, and if we do so we can perhaps then be more open to seeing it for what it was, a highly successful war-winning alliance held together by the conscious actions of its leading members.