

CONCEIVING THE MARSHALL PLAN: A THREE-PART STUDY OF MOTIVE BEHIND U.S. DEVELOPMENT POLICY

BY MICHAEL BRYAN

Whilst the effect of the Marshall Plan is well-noted, there exists a wide range of interpretations as to what caused the United States to supply some \$13.3 billion in aid to help rebuild Western European economies following the end of WWII.^{1 2} Three dominant schools have dominated the debate over the Marshall Plan's intent: The realist, revisionist and ideological.

In these debates, historians who have defined themselves as "realist", "neo-realist," or as proponents of a "national security" perspective, have generally stressed the geopolitical motivations of the Truman administration in launching the Marshall Plan. According to realists, American control of Western Europe was of paramount strategic importance, necessary in order to contain the USSR and in accordance with a power equation that was unhindered by ideological bias. Capitalist ideology in this view was secondary to the preservation of US national security. Melvyn Leffler is perhaps the most sophisticated exponent of the neo-realist school, seeing the Marshall Plan as motivated primarily by the desire to safeguard US national security from a potential Soviet threat.

Critics of this school charge that realists, in overstating strategic considerations, neglect the role of ideology in American decision-making. These 'revisionist' critics point to the dangers of underestimating domestic economic imperatives. Instead, they adopt a "systemic" interpretation that sees the Plan as motivated by the maximization of profit rather than the amassing of geopolitical power.³ This is typified in the works of Gabriel and Joyce Kolko whose views

¹ Robert Wood, *From Marshall Plan to Debt Crisis: Foreign Aid and Development Choices in the World Economy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

² Office of the Historian, "Milestones: 1945–1952", *Department of State*, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/marshall-plan>.

³ Thomas McCormick, "Something Old, Something New: John Lewis Gaddis's 'New Conceptual Approaches'", *Diplomatic History* 14, no. 3 (1990): 425-432.

coalesce around the economic interest, incentive, and necessity of an expansive US development policy.

A third school is more sympathetic to the portrayal of American altruism – best represented by the works of Nicolaus Mills who understood the US to be acting in accord to self-interest as well as a continent devastated by war.

The conflict that exists is three-fold, considering not only whether the intent was inherently political or economic, but whether the United States' objective was humanitarian or self-interested in its vision for Europe and whether it was aggressive or passive in its relation to the USSR.

The interpretations of Leffler, Kolko, and Mills – to differing degrees - provide a useful platform for discerning the United States' motivation for the introduction of the Marshall Plan.

Justified by more political and self-interested considerations (than Mills), Leffler portrays American policymakers as having two major and one minor objectives in launching the Marshall Plan. Through this frame, Leffler presents the Plan as a product of long-term national security contingency-planning that necessitated pan-European economic reform.

First, Leffler argues American officials wanted to bring about economic recovery so as to undermine the appeal of Communist parties (and thereby circumscribe the latent influence of the Kremlin). Leffler reasons that in February 1947, having learned the British would no longer be able to support “Greek resistance to a communist-led insurgency or to help Turkey to modernize its military in the face of Soviet pressure”, Truman determined the US would have to help these countries maintain their independence/territorial integrity.⁴ And because the problems confronting Greece and Turkey were as much economic as they were military, the US would need to provide economic assistance to stabilize and expand their economies. Leffler presents the Marshall Planners as having based the country's security upon the reconstruction of Europe and the augmentation of its economic capabilities. This differentiates Leffler's interpretation, recognizing the ambivalence of self-interested and humanitarian motives to a greater extent than Mills.

⁴ Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

In addition to circumscribing Communists in Western Europe, Leffler suggests the Marshall Plan sought to revive and integrate the western zones of Germany into a Western-oriented economic community. Leffler stresses the rehabilitation of the German industry as a motive for two reasons. First, Ruhr coal was viewed as indispensable for the economic reconstruction of the rest of Western Europe that would in-turn secure the stabilization of Western European politics and the “containment of indigenous revolution”.⁵ Second, the resilience of West Germany was seen as necessary to mitigate the threat of Soviet inroads (and thus the imperilment of European political reconstruction). Whilst Mills sees America as fulfilling a predominantly economic and ideological role (i.e. maintaining centrist political institutions so as to maintain free-market economics), Leffler ascribes an overtly political motive to the introduction of the Marshall Plan (which sees economic reform as merely an instrument of further containment). The reason for this difference may be their contrary attributions of Communism; Mills viewing Marxism as an economic ideology rather than a political force (as Leffler sees).

Co-opting Western Germany and stabilizing Western Europe were two key geopolitical concerns, connected to a third, albeit less significant, goal: the dilution of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. The involvement of Eastern European countries was welcomed to foster recovery, reduce Europe's need for dollars, and lessen inflationary pressures. Leffler dismisses Mills' interpretation (which asserts the US fulfilled a non-inflammatory role towards the USSR) and instead emphasizes the more aggressive view as Marshall sought to wean Eastern Europe from the Kremlin.

In making explicit the American desire to use Europe's “bases, infrastructure, diplomatic clout, military capabilities, and global presence in the struggle against Soviet communism”, Leffler presents the strategic interest of the US to be preventing any potential adversary from mobilizing the resources/economic and military potential of Europe for war-making purposes against the United States.⁶ In this regard, he sees the Plan as a means of protecting American security by ensuring the political stability of Europe.

Leffler's security considerations may stem from his work in the Office of the Secretary of Defense where he worked on arms control

⁵ *Ibid.*, 184-196.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

and contingency planning as a fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations.^{7 8} His exposure to the American national security apparatus and decision making structures of Pentagon officials may go some way in explaining the focus on security that defines his view.

Turning to the revisionist school, In *The Limits of Power*, Gabriel and Joyce Kolko⁹ depict the Marshall Plan as an attempt to coil the tentacles of Wall Street around the troubled economies of Europe. Rather than ascribing a humanitarian (Mills) or national security (Leffler) motive, Kolko perceives the Plan to be an act of economic imperialism and ideological coercion.

First, Kolko's interpretation revolves around the need for a wide market for American goods. In 1946, not only had GDP fallen 11.6%, but inflation rose by 16%. This economic shift had a regressive effect on lower-income families (through falling real incomes) whilst making American exports even less accessible for European markets.¹⁰ The implication was for "the French to [follow]... the British in cutting all but essential dollar purchases," which threatened jobs and lowered capital-investment spending.¹¹ Kolko, therefore, argues the Marshall Plan arose from the memory of the Great Depression that left as many as 12,830,000 people without work.¹² Coupled with anxiety for how to sustain an economy teetering on the brink, economic reform was therefore necessary for subsidizing the imports of goods so as to open up a vast market for America's "unsalable" surplus production.¹³ Thus, the Plan was enacted to create business opportunities and jobs. After all, the money would be used to buy goods from the US which would, in turn, have to be shipped across the Atlantic on American merchant vessels.

⁷ The Library of Congress, "Melvyn Leffler to Lecture on Cold War on Nov. 10", 2005, loc.gov/item/prn-05-224/melvyn-leffler-to-lecture-on-cold-war-on-nov-10/2005-10-18.

⁸ Wilson Center, "Melvyn P. Leffler", 2013, wilsoncenter.org/person/melvyn-p-leffler.

⁹ Hereafter, 'Kolko'

¹⁰ The Balance, "Compare Today's Unemployment with the Past", 2018, thebalance.com/unemployment-rate-by-year-3305506.

¹¹ Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

¹² *Ibid.*, 489.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 360.

Whilst Leffler and Mills recognize the persistence of the dollar gap in necessitating European economic recovery, Kolko goes further by describing the Plan as relentless in its drive to achieve homogeneity (so as to impose what equates to American economic imperialism). To mitigate the threat of a second Depression, Kolko suggests the United States aimed to “permanently influence and shape Western Europe’s internal economic policies.”¹⁴ This contradicts Leffler’s view – that the objective of the U.S. was innately political – and instead accentuates economic factors. The reason for this difference may be attributed to Kolko’s contrary view of international relations. Kolko perceives a world system whose chief actors are global market forces that prioritize the maximization of profit while Leffler sees the chief actors as nation-states whose main imperative is the maximization of geopolitical power.

Second, Kolko presents the ideological and political self-interested motives of the Marshall Plan by conveying the “very real extent [to which] the ECA went beyond the needs of the American economy for stable markets and pressed orthodox policies on governments of quite varied economic and political complexions.”¹⁵ Through the strict criteria of balanced budgets, stable currencies, high profits to entice investment, and low wages to discourage consumption, Kolko presents the US as from the offset, seeking to impose a capitalist ideology on incapacitated European states. This is reinforced by provisions that sought to temper socialist sympathies by “restrict[ing] their expenditure in social welfare and subsidies.”¹⁶ Kolko argues the US was indiscriminate in using any means to further its own economic gain. This argument undermines Mills’ interpretation that the US was motivated by humanitarian intent. Kolko argues the US went so far as to manipulate the economies of Europe in a deflationary way, lowering the standard of living in order to increase efficiency and provide a surplus to export.

Kolko presents a third strand where the Marshall Plan was motivated to entrench American involvement in European affairs. Reliant on European purchases, the US sought to protect its ideological base from influence by the USSR. Consequently, Kolko ascribes Marshall’s goal as “rebuild[ing] the strength of the Western European

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 428.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 430.

economies” to serve as “a bastion against the left.”¹⁷ Unlike Mills and Leffler, who recognize American policymaker’s apprehension over the USSR, Kolko’s views may be explained by his perception of the Communist threat as being nowhere near as potent as it was made out to be. Rather, the tension was exacerbated by the United States, demonstrating the ways in which they played a partially aggressive role through the introduction of the Marshall Plan.

Kolko’s interpretation is consistent with a number of historians that sought to challenge the orthodox view of American aid in the wake of witnessing the failure of containment (exhibited by the (North) Vietnamese campaign as well as negligence in China and Cuba). This, alongside firm Marxist convictions that led him to join the Student League for Democracy, may go some way to explaining his characterization of the Marshall Plan as an example of economic imperialism.^{18 19} Finally, operating under the theory of altruism in foreign policy, in *Winning the Peace*, Mills puts forward a humanitarian argument that presents the Marshall Plan as an American enterprise that was at once strategic, altruistic, and stunningly effective.

Mills presents the Plan as driven foremost by the desire to help create large, European markets, without commercial barriers and with the healthy free-market competition. He argues the integration of markets would “encourage... European nations to pool their resources while increasing their capital formation and production.”²⁰ This integration is presented as having three key benefits. First, it would aid the revival of European productivity by removing trade barriers, lowering prices and in-turn improving European standards of living. Second, it would point the way to a new era of permanent peace, with increased cooperation making war a heavier economic burden. Third, it would secure the long-term economic independence of European states from the USSR as well as the US itself.²¹ These three points serve as the components of Mills’ accentuation on the Plan’s philanthropic intent.

¹⁷ Ibid., 429.

¹⁸ Gabriel Kolko, *Distribution of Income in the United States* (New York: Student League for Industrial Democracy, 1955).

¹⁹ Harold Lewack, *Harold Campus rebels; a brief history of the Student League for Industrial Democracy* (New York: Student League for Industrial Democracy, 1953).

²⁰ Nicolaus Mills, *Winning the Peace* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008).

²¹ Ibid., 70-113.

In addition, Mills offers a second strand that argues the Marshall Plan sought to restore Western Europe's faith in capitalism. By granting billions of dollars for the acquisition of foodstuffs, Mills argues American officials hoped to ameliorate the economic conditions upon which Communists capitalized.²² This sees “Europe’s deteriorating...political position” as a predominantly ideological conflict – suggesting that in wanting to import the American dream of economic prosperity, the US sought to diffuse the traditional class-conflicts of Europe. This demonstrates the extent to which Marshall Planners sacrificed political objectives for ideological and economic imperatives.²³

In his third and final strand, Mills portrays the Plan as answering the problem of successive failures of and deficiencies in US development aid. He captures the sense of necessity for a collective European strategy to bring their economies in-line.

Overall, Mills’ outlook is positive of American motives in introducing the Marshall Plan. The U.S. was grounded in a sense of American duty in which, having entered the war in order to defend the sovereignty of nations, they again felt obliged to act to protect the tenets of freedom and (economic) liberty. Although he recognizes American self-interest, repeating Clayton’s warning that a “weakened Europe” would endanger “American prosperity”, he accentuates the overriding duty necessitated by being the only country that had the means to provide.²⁴

Mills writes from a highly personal, emotive position, having been a child that remembered: “the CARE packages he and his friends were encouraged to send”.²⁵ With this romanticized view of growing up and seeing the Marshall Plan, it is unsurprising that notions of American benevolence permeate his writing.

With the sources established, the first conflict arises over whether the Marshall Plan’s objectives were inherently political or economic.

Mills puts forward a partially persuasive argument to suggest Europe’s civil unrest arose from reduced European capability to produce industrial and agricultural products sufficient to satisfy

²² *Ibid.*, 71.

²³ *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 143-145.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

demand. The implication being that the problem the US sought to solve was economic rather than political (believing the former would quell the latter).

Florian Huber affirms this, giving the example that the political reintegration of Western Germany was an essential condition for Europe's economic recovery because the entire European industrialization relied on steel and coal provided by Germany.²⁶

However, Kolko's interpretation is more convincing because of his reference to US involvement in foreign internal elections, as well as the pressure applied on Britain to dismantle the Sterling Bloc.²⁷ In recognizing the overtly political actions of the United States, he provides a more substantiated view as to how the US sought to shape Europe into a free internal-market for American-exports. It is from this he argues the US prevented European markets from becoming independent so as to limit competition and ensure the primacy of US markets. This recognition enables Kolko to more persuasively argue political influence was sought for predominantly economic motives.

McCormick corroborates this view, asserting that any move further leftwards would endanger their vision of a global multilateral capitalist system.²⁸ In presenting the threat of US corporations being closed off from the European market, McCormick reiterates the economic motivations for the Plan.

In contrast, Leffler suggests economic recovery was merely a means with which to incentivize countries teetering on the ideological brink, such as Turkey and Greece, to align themselves closer to the US.²⁹ His argument is convincing because of the evidence on American strategic ideological priorities that led the Truman Administration to support cabinets whose economic policies furthered systems quite different from the one that, according to Kolko, the US was trying to transplant into Western Europe. Stoler argues that in Rome, the Americans consistently supported a government whose economic

²⁶ Florian Huber, *Global Governance und der Global Marshall Plan: Strategien, Kritik und Analyse* (Saarbrücken: AV Akademikerverlag, 2012).

²⁷ Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

²⁸ Thomas McCormick, *America's Half-Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

²⁹ Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

policy did little to address the needs of workers and created a “prosperity for all” on which the New Ideal ideology hinged.³⁰ The Italian government merely appeared as the safest pro-American, anti-Communist regime that could be secured, and the Americans supported it *despite* its unsavory economic policies. In that sense, the American choice in Italy was not very different from the continuing US support for dictatorial, albeit anti-Communist, regimes. This supports Leffler’s assertion that strategic imperatives led to the sacrifice of specific American economic priorities.

Mills’ portrayal of economic necessity is undermined by Alan Milward who argues that, by 1947, the European economy was already well on its way to recovery.³¹ Milward maintains that the shortage of dollars could have been compensated for without resorting to Marshall aid. In a review of West Germany’s economy, Werner Abelshauser corroborates this, concluding that “foreign aid was not crucial in starting the recovery or in keeping it”.^{32 33} His interpretation is more persuasive given the economic recoveries of France, Italy, and Belgium began a few months before the flow of US money. Moreover, Belgium, the country that relied the most on free-market economic policies, experienced swift recovery and avoided the severe housing and food shortages seen in the rest of continental Europe.³⁴ The implication is that economic reform was not the primary motivator of the Marshall Plan.

However, without American aid, it would have been far more difficult to make the wage-concessions necessary for continued Third-Force tenure in France, for example. Tyler Cowen argues that, without the Third-Force, alternative cabinets would have had to include either the Gaullists or the Communists.³⁵ But neither alternative was viable if France was to remain solidly anchored to America. This reaffirms the

³⁰ Stoler, M. (2016). *The Marshall Plan Revisited*.

³¹ Adam Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-1951* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 1984).

³² Abelshauser, W. “West German Recovery, 1945-51: a Reassessment.” *The Three Banks Review*, 135, (1982): 52.

³³ Samaddar, R. *Government of Peace: Social Governance, Security and the Problematic* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2016).

³⁴ Vásquez, I, “A Marshall Plan for Iraq?”, *Cato Institute*, 2003, cato.org/publications/commentary/marshall-plan-iraq.

³⁵ Gary Fossedal, “How Marshall Saved The West”, *JOC*, 1997, joc.com/how-marshall-saved-west_19970527.html.

argument Leffler makes in stating the objective of the Marshall Plan was predominantly political.

Leffler offers a powerful rebuttal to Kolko in asserting the Plan was not economically imperialist by its very nature – which sought to be a temporary provision over four years rather than a long-term investment or manipulation over Western Europe. Guo reaffirms the U.S. recognition that it would be up to the Western Europeans themselves to regulate their internal recovery.³⁶ Leffler also addresses Huber’s criticism by suggesting economic centralization was used as the means to, firstly, restrain Germany (so as to avoid the repetition of historical tragedy) and, secondly, to prevent Germany from turning to Soviet support (in-turn fulfilling two overtly political objectives).³⁷

Consequently, it may be more persuasive to see the desire to increase European economic output as a means to strengthen and speed up Western European rearmament from the Soviet specter. David Rees points out that, by 1946, the United States was already attempting to curb the expansion of the USSR in Persia,³⁸ and thus the Plan was an extension of existing American efforts to contain that threat. The restoration of Europe’s productive capability was the means by which the U.S. sought to stabilize European political structures and in turn, make them resilient to Soviet expansionism. This is substantiated by the CIA’s receipt of 5% of Marshall Plan funds (\$685 million spread over six-years), which is used to finance secret operations abroad.^{39 40} This persuasively corroborates Leffler in demonstrating the extent to which the Marshall Plan was driven by political objectives rather than economic imperatives.

³⁶ Simon Guoziru, “The Marshall Plan: Generosity or Imperialism?”, *Medium*, 2017, medium.com/@simonguozirui/the-marshall-plan-generosity-or-imperialism-a99e9674cea.

³⁷ Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

³⁸ David Rees, *The Age of Containment: The Cold War, 1945-1965* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

³⁹ Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

⁴⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, “The CIA and the Marshall Plan”. 2019, cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2011-featured-story-archive/the-cia-and-the-marshall-plan.html.

The second conflict arises over whether the Marshall Plan's objectives were more humanitarian or self-interested.

Kolko asserts that in using ideology to coerce European states to purchase more American goods, the U.S. acted with inherent self-interest. This is supported by CEEC accounts which suggest the US had used goods allocations to flood the European market. In shipping 40,000 tons of tobacco to France and Switzerland as 'incentive products', the U.S. was more concerned with its export figures than the people of Europe.⁴¹ Kolko's argument that the Marshall Plan was to secure a European market for American exports is in this regard more convincing than Mills' interpretation which understates the extent to which the U.S. relied on overseas exports. Mills poorly differentiates between the economic security of individual European states and the U.S. itself. Dependent on agricultural imports as well as a large enough market to sustain its balance of payments, the United States' interest in bolstering the economic and political stability cannot persuasively be construed as philanthropic without considering the disproportionate American benefits.

Kolko's argument is strengthened by the works of Hogan who asserts the U.S. sought to "Americanize Western Europe" by implanting a corporatist economy that was part and parcel of New Deal ideology.⁴² Gaddis, moreover, sees "the United States [as having] imposed its empire on unwilling clients...and into positions of economic dependency" that exemplify enlightened self-interest.^{43 44}

This view is, however, contrasted with Mills' assertion that the Plan sought to secure the long-term economic independence of European states. Milward reaches entirely different conclusions than Hogan and Gaddis, denouncing the Marshall Plan as having retarded rather than promoted European integration. According to Milward, American aid allowed European governments to pursue their own national economic agendas, which they would have had to abandon without U.S. cash. Thus, the Marshall Plan perpetuated the nationalist orientation of European economic policymaking, whereas, without the

⁴¹ Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

⁴² Michael Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987).

⁴³ Billas, G. and Grob, G. *Interpretations of American History, 6th Ed, Vol.: Since 1877*. (New York: Free Press, 2010).

⁴⁴ John Gaddis, *We Now Know* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

Plan, European countries would have been compelled to cooperate far more extensively. By giving aid, Milward argues the Americans postponed integration rather than accelerating it – acting largely with humanitarian intent. What makes this argument more convincing is its logical consideration of what European governments could do, rather than Kolko’s unsubstantiated assumptions over what they couldn’t.

The most significant rebuttal to Kolko’s view of self-interest is not only the fact Western European governments used the Plan to implement their own national economic agendas, but that America achieved little that the Europeans did not already want to achieve themselves. Mill’s argument is corroborated by Behrman, who suggests “the story of the Marshall Plan belongs just as much to Europe as it does to America.”⁴⁵ He persuasively states that, rather than being a unilateral enterprise imposed upon one side by the other as Kolko argues, the Plan was a partnership in which the U.S. and Europe played co-leads. This was exhibited by Byrnes’ defense of Eastern Europe’s self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, where he vowed to respect any decision ratified by a two-thirds majority. This is also reinforced by Rees who suggests that, had the U.S. even sought to usurp political sovereignty, they would have found themselves incapable – already bogged down in the management of Japan and Germany.⁴⁶

Leffler similarly rejects the portrayal of the Marshall Plan as imposed by the self-interested United States, citing the shared desire to mitigate the threat of Communism. This was a case of what revisionist Geir Lundestad calls “empire by invitation”. Lundestad points out that Western European governments, as well as their voters, were in general just as opposed to communism as Americans and their government.⁴⁷ It would be a mistake, therefore, to see the Truman administration or American big business as imposing themselves on Western Europe. Rather, they were heartily encouraged to come in with their dollars and fight for the common cause of anti-communism.

Kolko’s interpretation is less convincing because of his underestimation of Western European governments sharing the

⁴⁵ Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and the Reconstruction of Post-war Europe* (London: Aurum Press, 2008).

⁴⁶ David Rees, *The Age of Containment: The Cold War, 1945-1965* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

⁴⁷ Geir Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952”, *Journal of Peace Research* 23, no. 3 (1986).

paramount goal of Communist containment. Of course, politicians in France and Italy had their own reasons for ousting the Communists, but it is questionable whether they would have taken such risks without American encouragement. In this regard, Leffler and Mills put forward a persuasive argument to suggest the U.S. acted with philanthropic intent during a rare time of aligned interests.

Where there is a disagreement between the two historians is over Mills' central premise that in the absence of severe inflationary constraints and an ideologically divergent and driven the Soviet Union, the U.S. would nevertheless have authorized (a development policy on the same footing as) the Marshall Plan. Mills justifies this with reference to Marshall's speech in which he wanted his audience to "realize how the rest of the world, in contrast to America, still struggled to get back on its feet... [asking] them to support the daring concept America should be engaged in a global defense of freedom."⁴⁸ The implication is that because the U.S. saw itself as an increasing interventionist force, the Plan was motivated by the necessity of circumstance. This is described by Schlesinger as the United States' dedication to the "declaration on liberated Europe" which meant they couldn't sit back and watch the enforcement of the Soviet totalitarian regime on powerless European countries.⁴⁹

However, Leffler puts forward a more convincing case to suggest a hostile Republican party, defined by an emphatic win in the 1946-Midterms and driven by a desire for "tax cuts and reductions in government expenditures... had no inclination to incur the costs or to assume the commitments...in lowering tariffs. They appeared to be economic nationalists or political isolationists."⁵⁰ Leffler's characterization of the American political landscape undermines the assertion there was the political will for the United States to play an interventionist role with philanthropic/altruistic intentions. Not only is this view consistent with U.S. foreign policy in the twenties and thirties, but also in accordance with the stated beliefs of the GOP following WWII.⁵¹ Instead, Leffler recognizes humanitarianism as a

⁴⁸ Nicolaus Mills, *Winning the Peace* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008).

⁴⁹ Arthur Schlesinger, "Origins of the Cold War", *Foreign Affairs* 46, no.1 (1967): 43.

⁵⁰ Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*,141.

pragmatic choice, given that “replacing the British would cost the Americans more than sustaining the British” in terms of pan-European security.⁵²

In this regard, Leffler’s argument is more compelling. Whilst Mills relies almost entirely on economic necessity (and the corresponding moral compulsion) as a justification for humanitarianism, Leffler recognizes a plurality of motivations, including national security, containment of the USSR as well as economic misery. Even Kolko makes a concerted and convincing effort to defeat other supposed motivations (e.g. characterizing security as an instrument with which to rally Congressional support). Mills’ interpretation is also undermined by its over-reliance on primary sources from politicians – who although may state their intended motive as being to help other European leaders – have an interest in being evasive.

In summary, Kolko makes no attempt to veil his anti-American values. He exculpates America’s adversaries whilst portraying America as a nation “intellectually and culturally undeveloped,” “blind to itself” - an “evil society.”⁵³ By having the starting point of his research rooted in the preposterous idea that America is a totalitarian nation, Kolko casts a negative light on every U.S. action without substantiating why this stance is deserved. Using an analytic framework almost identical to that employed by Kremlin propagandists, his arguments are preconceived to reach the same inflexible conclusion. It is this uncompromising dismissal of any philanthropic intent that serves as the fatal flaw for an otherwise cogent economic analysis.

In this regard, Mills’ argument is more compelling. Whilst Kolko relies on Soviet sources to provide evidence for American motivations, Mills employs a wider range of information, especially following the declassification of Soviet documents in 1991, which don’t give insight into what the American motivations were but do confirm the validity of American fears.^{54 55} Nevertheless, Mills’

⁵² Ibid., 140-152.

⁵³ DiscoverTheNetworks, “Gabriel Kolko”, 2019, archive.discoverthenetworks.org/printindividualProfile.asp?idid=1300.

⁵⁴ Donald Raleigh, “Doing Soviet History: The Impact of the Archival Revolution”, *The Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 16.

⁵⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Impact of the Opening of Soviet Archives on Western Scholarship on Soviet Social History”, *The Russian Review* 74, no. 3 (2015): 377.

explanation is harmed by its overreliance on the economic necessity that negates the role of self-interest without proper substantiation and justification.

Leffler, meanwhile, rejects a world-system whose chief actors are global market forces and whose main imperative is the maximization of profit. For this reason, he understates economic imperatives – without justification or sufficient rebuttal - to the detriment of his interpretation.

Nonetheless, in well substantiating his view of Communism as more of a political force than an economic ideology, he persuasively affirms security considerations.

Ultimately, the objectives of the Marshall Plan were many and interrelated. Those who have attempted to separate them and isolate one at the expense of another have ignored that the Administration itself never presented those goals as separate entities but as a comprehensive foreign policy. Consequently, the Marshall Plan was neither conceived primarily as an instrument for Western Europe's economic resuscitation, nor a pillar of the Truman Administration's incipient campaign to contain the Soviet Union, but the combination thereof.

It would be appropriate to place more emphasis on the economic motivations than Leffler does; the Plan being motivated by the duality of national security and economic fears, with humanitarianism playing an underlying role.