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Two Cold Wars and why they ended differently

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Abstract. Though usually assumed by scholars of international relations to have been one-of-a-kind, the Cold War—the global East-West rivalry that ended with the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union—resembled in many of its features an earlier match usually assumed by scholars of American history to have been entirely exceptional: the continental North-South rivalry that ended with the War Between the States. Each was a contest of ideologically ambitious, institutionally immiscible, and territorially extensionist socioeconomic systems. Each rivalry evolved a mechanism for the procrastination of conflict. In both cases this mechanism was initially deliberative—based on debate. It remained deliberative in the North-South case, which deteriorated from cooperation to catastrophe, but it switched from deliberative to confrontational—based on threat—in the East-West case, which ended in voluntary unilateral abandonment of ideology, institutions, and territory. The irony of the outcomes of these two rivalries, whose likelihoods of violent end would probably have been misranked at their respective midpoints, is discussed.

On the ninth of February 1946, Joseph Stalin told the peoples of what was then the Soviet Union that armed conflict with the noncommunist world was inevitable and that preparation for a new war was urgently necessary.[1] He had his reasons for so saying, chief among them, we now presume, his intention to perpetuate the personal authority he nearly lost in the first summer of his war with Adolf Hitler. By 1953, when Stalin died, the Cold War was long-since named and, by standard chronology, decades from its close. His immediate successors quickly warmed to an armistice in Korea and may genuinely have considered the feasibility of 'peaceful coexistence', if not condominium, with the West. The Cold War might have ended for want of hostility in the late Eisenhower period,[2] yet it persisted, its riskiest moments ahead. The Cold War became a fixture of thought, a waste for all, an agony for millions, but its stability was easy to value above its reform.

The Cold War seemed to be the only child of singularly eccentric and now-neutered parents: communist ascendancy and strategic nuclear threat. Was it necessarily, then, the first and last of its kind? Or might it instead have been the latest of a small *kindred*, with an elder cousin known by an alias and cousins-to-come still unconceived? If so, what substitutes might there have been, or might there *be*, for communist ascendancy and strategic nuclear threat?

* The author gratefully acknowledges the advice of colleagues Thomas C. Schelling and George Callcott.

[1] David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 486. Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR: 1917–1991* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 297–8. Adam Ulam, *A History of Soviet Russia* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), pp. 191–2. [Note: Ulam gives the date of this speech as February 6, Nove and McCullough as February 9.]

[2] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), Volume II: *The President*, pp. 541–53.

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So much of the Cold War was a struggle of socioeconomic systems, an argument between political philosophies and production theories, a propaganda contest for moral leadership, for votes in plebiscites, for recruits in universities, labour unions, and paddy fields, a *propagation* contest in possibility-rich regions. Plausible substitutes for communist ascendancy would be few.

Plausible substitutes for strategic nuclear threat would be few as well. Many scholars have considered nuclear weapons prerequisite to cold war 'coldness', and most have considered them, if not prerequisite, then causally associated in a politically determinative way.[3] Finding a non-nuclear cold war might lend support to a contrasting analysis[4] and thus subtly recolour our view of strategic deterrence. A non-nuclear cold war might differ profoundly in the technology of strategic capability while duplicating the long-assumed—or even eventually suffered—'unthinkability' of its employment. Were we to find in a non-nuclear cold war a pattern of comparative long-run safety, then cold warfare's putative robustness,[5] its presumed tendency to transform looming military conflict into actual economic competition, would be underwritten. If we found the opposite, even in a lone second instance, then these reputations would be undermined.

Let us attempt a *generic*, a non-unique, definition of 'cold war': a prolonged and inherently dangerous yet remarkably stable antagonism of ambitious but war-wary societies both attempting by less than fully provocative means to extend not just their influence but also their mutually incompatible institutions within or into areas of high competitive interest.

By this standard, long rivalries of many varieties would not qualify. The institutional-propagation requirement and the 'long peace' requirement would keep the list short. There *is*, though, an intriguingly close parallel, one at least, highly familiar, closely studied, but rarely seen even now as what it arguably and instructively was: an all-American 'cold war'.

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From the foundation of the United States to the eve of its attempted dissolution, two immiscible socioeconomic systems—one based on not-quite-universal adult-male suffrage and almost-all-free wage labour, the other based on racially restricted adult-male suffrage and hereditary race-specific slave labour—strove for security at home, prerogative on the frontier, and priority in the future. Two self-confident societies, hopelessly incompatible yet hoping somehow to coexist, invented and refined a balancing mechanism which kept them at odds rhetorically, yet at peace and at commerce as long as it functioned, but left them only the battlefield and the blockade when it failed.

An all-American cold war? Here is an idea in instant need of defence. One might at first suspect the dead-handed pressure of 'American exemplarism', a stay-at-home internationalist's dressing-up of the even more tedious analytical fault, 'American

[3] Robert Jervis, 'The Political Effects of Nuclear Weapons: A Comment', *International Security*, 13:2 (1988), pp. 80–90.

[4] John Mueller, 'The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World', *International Security*, 13:2 (1988), pp. 55–79.

[5] John J. Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War', *International Security*, 15:1 (1990), pp. 5–56.

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exceptionalism'. North America from Yorktown to Fort Sumter was so unlike the *world* from Potsdam to the Potsdamerplatz project that any recitation of coincidences might reflexively be dismissed as a conceit. Different organizing principles, different areas and structures, different normative standards, spectacularly different technologies, and different risks and rewards all argue against analogy here. But similarities between these two struggles-in-time are suggestively numerous, and their disturbingly ironic terminal *dissimilarity*, their grim concluding counterpoint, is worth a hearing.

First, though, a scholastic question: can states of a federation and blocs of those states usefully be compared to states of the international community, even to great powers, to hegemons, and to superpowers?[6] Frederick Jackson Turner believed that they could, arguing in his 1925 essay on sectional competition that the American states *ante bellum* behaved like rival European powers in prelude to the Great War.[7] I, likewise, believe that they can be compared, within self-evident limits, and, in the case of the United States before the American Civil War, before the 'second American revolution',[8] and that they *should* be so compared, again within self-evident limits. Domestic political theory has little to say about states of a federation wishing, singly or together, to become sovereign in the Hobbesian sense. International relations theory also has little to say on this topic,[9] except insofar as rebellion, revolution, secession, and polity formation become losses for residual structures and create inconveniences, dilemmas, obligations, or opportunities for already-existing and unambiguously sovereign entities. International relations theory may actually have more to say about the *corporation* than about states of a federation.

This selective muting of theoretical discourse may itself partially be a Cold War product. International Relations, meaning here the Western academic discipline, expanded fast in tense early days of transformed weaponry, exotic strategies, exclusionary societies, 'new' and intimidating critical languages. Few scholars had a hope of knowing much that was both interesting and accurate about, say, communist party in-fighting among the Soviet republics or religious cells in Eastern Europe or *cadre* disgruntlement in the People's Republic of China. Global political stakes and speed-of-play being what they were, though, predictive models were requested, and they were diligently developed. In such circumstances, the unit-components of these models could hardly have been anything other than sovereign states or formal alliances, and these in turn anything other than 'unitary' and virtually ahistorical. Extra theoretical dimensionality would later be urged, and some extra detail offered, by analysts of 'internal', 'domestic', 'bureaucratic', and 'institutional' politics and multi-level games, and historians, many of them beneficiaries of *glasnost'*, would finally begin to recapture for fact and nuance patches of high ground still mostly held by theory and bold hypothesis. But, for reasons both of

[6] J. David Singer, 'The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations', in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba (eds.), *The International System: Theoretical Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 77–92.

[7] Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of Section', in Martin Ridge (ed.), *History, Frontier, and Section: Three Essays by Frederick Jackson Turner*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), pp. 59–116, at p. 101.

[8] James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 3–22.

[9] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 102–128.

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rigour and rigidity, leaps from one 'level of analysis' to another have remained unusual, despite the fact that history brims with state-formation stories, many featuring the integration or the *dis*integration of a compound monarchy or federation.

The peacetime competition between American states individually and among them in alliance and the catastrophe to which that competition led are not well understood or well modelled as *intra*state phenomena. Indeed, the United States *ab initio* defies understanding as a unitary state at least until its civil war extinguished the faint constitutional ambiguity upon which the secessions of 1861 had precariously been based. As often remarked, 'the United States *are* . . .' became 'the United States *is* . . .' in common parlance only *after* the War Between the States, which came close to being remembered as the War of Confederate Independence—or, as cinema pioneer D. W. Griffith would call it fifty years on, to Woodrow Wilson's applause, *The Birth of a Nation*.

The states of the Union throughout the *ante bellum* generations acted quite unlike they have acted *post bellum*. They acted then far more convincingly like the sovereign entities they are now only said to be. The members of 'the American states-union'[10] kept the federal government politically weak and often nearly penurious, and they denied to it a monopoly of legitimate force. Doing so was easy, since the state legislatures selected and instructed their own representatives to the federal Senate; the popular election of Senators would not be adopted until 1913. Some states for a while kept navies. They maintained militias, in the Southern states especially active ones, and Virginia and South Carolina supported thriving military academies. They hanged traitors for treason. They made war against indigenous peoples, whom they felt justified in expelling with gratuitous force and uncivil cruelty as genuinely sovereign states might do, in the most famous instance against the express will of the United States Supreme Court, John Marshall presiding. They romanticized autonomous pasts, if they had them, and could imagine autonomous futures, if they felt they had to. Many prominent politicians, some of them regarding the Constitution as an instrument of compact, not a seal of union, spoke of blocking federal action through the 'interposition' of state authority. At the Hartford Convention, 1814–15, delegates of the New England states, embittered by a war whose diplomatic climax at Ghent and military anticlimax at New Orleans they did not foresee, were assumed to be debating interposition, even secession, behind tightly closed doors. Later, 1832–33, when South Carolina 'nullified' federal tariff laws within its own borders and promised secession if challenged, the President and the Congress, while issuing impressive but idle threats, began lowering to levels acceptable to South Carolina the tariffs whose collection had been disallowed.

After the elections of 1860, each of the fifteen states in which slavery persisted considered secession; eleven held conventions, ten of which decided to renounce Union membership; four states debated ordinances of secession in their legislatures, three rejecting, one accepting.[11] All this activity was conducted openly, federal bluffs discounted. When states one-by-one voted themselves out of the whole, the remnant of the whole felt bereft of honourable recourse until the newly formed Confederacy

[10] Daniel H. Deudney, 'The Philadelphian System: Sovereignty, Arms Control, and Balance of Power in the American States-Union, circa 1787–1861', *International Organization*, 49:2 (1995), pp. 191–228.

[11] Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 3.

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committed a premeditated act of belligerency in Charleston harbour. What followed was a war of terrible ferocity and amazing scope, waged from New Mexico to Cherbourg, a war in whose wake came a raft of *international* legal precedents. As far as many in Europe were concerned, the rebels positively had made themselves a nation, as noted in the records of Lord Palmerston's cabinet, records which became for Henry Adams, son of and secretary to Abraham Lincoln's minister to Britain, a major part of his 'education'.[12]

Is there a 'level-of-analysis' problem here? Or a 'level-of-analysis' opportunity? Both, surely, but more, in my opinion, the latter.

This article is a comparative work and, so, an oddity in Cold War scholarship. Being comparative, it is not a contribution to 'systems' theory. It may still, though, have a 'systems' significance. John Lewis Gaddis, writing in 1985 and noting that the pattern of international relations then four decades old '[showed] no perceptible signs of disintegration', discussed the features favouring stability and instability. Among the former he listed bipolarity, non-interdependence of polar adversaries, favourable domestic influences, nuclear deterrence, enhanced reconnaissance capabilities, ideological moderation, and the development of 'rules'.[13] We will revisit this list further on.

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With these issues in mind, then, let us begin a parallel evaluation of *two* cold wars, the earlier one putative, the latter one archetypal, with a list of their commonalities.

- *Both cold wars began in spoils disputes among recently victorious allies, controversies arising early about influence and control in contiguous and sometimes intermediate lands, then places progressively more remote.*

The newly independent American seaboard states were at odds over the abruptly available vastness west to the Mississippi River and, after 1803, beyond it. Annexations, acquisitions, and western reserves were keenly disputed. In time, the states disagreed even more heatedly over the future of undeveloped and underinhabited American frontier territories and loosely held parts of Mexico and the Spanish and British empires.

The Soviet Union and the West argued over Germany and Austria, the Slavic and Baltic states, Iran, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan. As old empires fell to pieces and post-colonial societies fell to fighting, East-West rivalry turned to underdeveloped but often *over*inhabited lands of dubious strategic significance or in arguable need of 'national liberation' or protection from same.

- *Both cold wars were ideologically intense, actively on one side and then reactively on the other, the fundamental ideas in dispute being that racially superior or historically oppressed groups rightly ruled over or struggled against one or more other*

[12] Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), pp. 145–66.

[13] John Lewis Gaddis, 'The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System', *International Security*, 10:4 (1986), pp. 99–142.

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groups and that the dominance thus achieved was the key to social progress and economic efficiency.

In the American plantation states, many citizens, virtually all of exclusively European origin, ruled 'rightly'—in popular readings of Aristotelian,[14] scriptural,[15] and patriarchal[16] traditions—over slaves who were or were descended from 'savages', animists, and Mohammedans, some literate. Most slaves were tied to large farms producing one or more cash crops in addition to subsistence food and provisions.

In the Soviet Union, 'workers' had earlier struggled against aristocrats, capitalists, professionals, and clergy, and by pseudo-scientifically predestined right they dominated peasants,[17] though most 'workers' were themselves transplanted peasants or were directly descended from peasants—serfs freed from 1858 to 1861. After forced mass collectivization in the 1930s, agriculturalists typically were tied to large farms producing one or more centrally assigned products in addition to subsistence food.

Supposedly, during the dictatorship of the European-American over the African-American, it was managerial skill that made the 'means of production' productive. During the dictatorship of the Soviet proletariat over the non-proletariat classes, it was industrial skill. Slave owners and industrial workers likewise were vanguards of a new proto-utopian racial-or-social meritocracy, its ruling class freed from the brutalizing drudgery appropriate for the slave-or-peasant class.

Against these two versions of class-dominance theory and against the forced-labour factory farm they justified were arrayed popular theories of social mobility and the free-labour *family* farm, in nineteenth-century Northern fact, as in twentieth-century Western memory, the surest base for social mobility and among its noblest goals. Of the lot, the American forced-labour factory farm—the Southern plantation—may, strangely, have been the most efficient economically, in one controversial estimate thirty-five per cent more efficient than the Northern family farm.[18] Comparison with the Soviet collective-farm record is tortuous.

- *Both cold wars exhibited markedly asymmetrical political narrowing, with one side coming to function as or being formally from the start a collection of one-party states and the other side accommodating more parties and more open disagreement.*

For a long while, North-South rivalry lived *within* America's major political parties, as did older but less dangerous regional, ideological, religious, and cultural antagonisms. Central banking, monetary reform, infrastructural improvement, and industrial protectionism were town-rural and commercial-agricultural issues, not just—or even not primarily—North-South issues. Proponents and opponents could be copartisans. Indeed, Electoral College returns for 1836 through to 1852, the

[14] Aristotle, *Politics*, H. Rackham (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), Book I, ch I, pp. 3–7.
[15] John Fletcher, *Studies on Slavery, in Easy Lessons* (Natchez: Jackson Warner, 1851).
[16] David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 274–80, 859–62.
[17] Lenin [Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov], 'The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution', in Robert C. Tucker, (ed.), *The Lenin Anthology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), pp. 311–98.
[18] Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), pp. 5, 191–209.

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period of Whig rise and decline, showed highly dynamic party preferences from Maine to Louisiana. Yet the Whig Party itself was soon to disintegrate and the Democratic Party later to split along *old* slavery lines that were also 'new' North-South lines.[19] Daniel Webster first noted this process privately in 1838 after working hard and successfully, as a Massachusetts senator and a Whig, to defeat treasury restructuring intended to 'relieve [Southerners] from their commercial dependence on the North'. The Democratic party thereafter, he predicted, would realign along the 'strictest doctrines of [the] State Rights school' with its 'main ground' being resistance to the abolition of slavery '*in every form, & any degree*'.[20] Anti-slavery Democrats, Whigs, and, eventually, Republicans were to be quite uncomfortable in the South, where they were enemies of the 'system'. By comparison, pro-slavery Democrats and Whigs in the North remained outspoken and electable.

In the Soviet Union, from the abandonment of the New Economic Policy until the beginning of *glasnost'*, unorthodox views were routinely suppressed, while, in many Western countries, communists or socialists or leftist sympathizers were openly in or actively shadowing government. In the United Kingdom, the Labour Party Charter contained a Marxist clause, the vexatious 'Clause IV', from 1918 until 1995. Even in democracies, though, and sensationally in the United States, 'reds', 'pinks', and 'fellow travellers' were from time to time harassed or persecuted.

- *Both cold wars developed in ways suggesting an implicit early understanding of the socioeconomic immiscibility of the systems in rivalry.*

As early as 1787, the ultimate intrajurisdictional incompatibility of free-wage and slave labour was widely understood. The Northwest Ordinance precluded slavery in the newly organized territories of the Great Lakes basin when abolition was still twenty years ahead on the high seas and much further away in some Northern states; babies could be born into slavery in New York until 1827. This immiscibility was all too obvious later on in Kansas, California, and elsewhere, and it proved volatile even in gross disproportion. The plantation states learned to regulate manumission carefully, and, when masters and slaves or slaves alone travelled on free soil, the extraterritorial status of these complete-or-partial 'Southern socioeconomic units' and the responsibility of free-state citizens to respect that status and to allow and even to assist the apprehension of any and all fugitives proved insufferable. All that said, immigrant Irish did sometimes displace slaves as menial labourers in Southern ports, and Frederick Bailey, the future Frederick Douglass, did work for wages caulking ships (apparently including illegal slavers[21]) in Baltimore harbour while still in bondage.[22]

At Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam, a poorly ordered system of 'spheres' and minimally intersecting orbits came into view. On respective lists of rational settlements this system was probably Franklin Roosevelt's last choice and Winston

[19] Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, pp. 850–59.
[20] Robert V. Remini, *Daniel Webster: The Man and His Time* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 481.
[21] Dickson J. Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 145–6.
[22] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (ed.), *Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1994), pp. 86–8.

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Churchill's second but Stalin's first, for it satisfied the law of political gravity far better than it did the urge for political entropy—most embarrassingly in Poland, whose invasion from the west but not the east had been *casus belli* for Britain and France, and most catastrophically in Korea, whose partition into *de facto* sovereign demi-states continues. Where authority did intersect—most dangerously in Berlin, most tediously in 'coalition' governments, most glamorously backstage in Western concert halls—jurisdictional distinctions became ludicrously precise. Nevertheless, 'mixed' economies did develop, both in the West, where the 'commanding heights' of industry were often state-owned but labour markets remained free, and in the East, where an after-hours labour market was always informally 'free' and where wage labour and even labour migration came to be allowed in economies still nominally communist.

- *Both cold wars were in some part caused by and in large part perpetuated by rivals' perceptions that their socioeconomic systems would work better if extended, would begin to work well only if extended, or would be imperiled unless extended preemptively.*

Designation as free soil meant the Northwest Territory, when settled and divided into states admitted to the Union, would offset the slave states sure to be fashioned from then-southwestern lands also taken from Britain four years before at Paris. But this early balancing contrivance was not finely wrought. No one knew how many states would form in either region or when they would enter the Union. No one knew that the Articles of Confederation would soon be replaced by a radically Lockean constitution. No one knew that a reformulated Congress would include a Senate well suited to slave-power obstructionism and destined itself to be the procedural object *of* as well as the perennial forum *for* legislative 'summitry'. And no one knew that Eli Whitney was about to transform the economics of American plantation slavery and the political economy of the world.

As cotton processing—milling and then 'ginning'—became increasingly sophisticated technologically, with prices for both raw and finished goods trending down but global demand for them rising drastically, prospects for individuals and communities committed to a cotton economy brightened far beyond prior imagining. Worldly security for more and more white Southern lowlanders and luxury for the masters of large plantations depended on access to unexhausted level lands, where pioneer Southern sons would make 'an empire for slavery', raising cash crops on still-fertile *western* ground (or Texan or Mexican or Central American or Cuban ground) using 'cash crops'—slaves—relocated from agriculturally abused *eastern* ground.[23]

Or so argued many antislavery activists,[24] and so also have argued many historians, their common implication being that Southern stability depended on constant expansion of two parallel markets: an external market for the products of slaves and an internal market for slaves themselves. Thus, Southern paranoia drifted

[23] Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), pp. 85–105, 246–7.

[24] Executive Committee of the American Anti-slavery Society, *Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade in the United States of North America; Being Replies to Questions Transmitted by the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, for the Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade throughout the World* (London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1841).

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less to the British navy, which seized or sank slavers starting in 1807, than it did to other dangers. Of course, British and Yankee industrial efficiency might finally have satiated demand for textiles, and Anglo-Egyptian, -Sudanese, and -Indian cotton cultivation could have been (and eventually was) increased to replace American production. But, more proximately, an ambitiously abolitionist federal executive, perhaps wielding the interstate-commerce clause of the United States Constitution, or an alliance of antagonistic interests in Congress could ruin the free market in unfree labour and so keep excess slaves from being transferred to the locus of their optimal exploitation. Other historians, relying particularly on economic and demographic data, have objected that the 'internal market' was predominantly a westward migration of slave-owning households and movable assets of whole plantations, not an 'old South' industry breeding for export to the 'new South'. Remarkably few slaves, they have shown, were 'sold down the river'.[25]

Even as we now may have trouble choosing among or reconciling these interpretations, so slavery-dependent Southerners themselves may have had trouble understanding their own predicaments. Some thought slavery's extension manifestly *dis*advantageous, since it would foster extra-regional competition in cotton or other commodities and might make westward-drifting Yankee craftsmen the trade-dominating bosses of an industrial proletariat that could never unite and really did wear chains. Yet, wherever their self-interest logically lay, white Southerners for the most part *acted* as if it lay here: they or their sons or others of their region needed their 'share' of new land, and they needed non-interference in *interstate* slave trade and travel. Showing that the internal market was economically and demographically less important than long believed or claimed does not show that it was *politically* or emotively unimportant, nor does it show that slavery enthusiasts thought that the security and growth potential of this market were, after all, minor worries. Verifiably, these were obsessions. Southern behaviour in the matter of fugitive-slave apprehension and extradition speaks to this point. Rational incentives to push a resentful North relentlessly to fulfill its perverse Constitutional obligation to catch and return a few units of troublesome 'property' had to have been trivial. But white Southerners demanded satisfaction, and, in response, they got Lincoln.

We do not know what would have happened to the Southern slave economy had its extension continued to be political and protracted rather than becoming military and precipitous. We know the international cotton market became glutted in the early 1860s and that Southern production, first embargoed and then blockaded, proved easier to replace than expected. We know also that Chinese and southern- and eastern-European immigrants made the employment of free labour surpassingly profitable, as Newport's baronial 'cottages' attest to this day. Even in the *post bellum* South, the tenancy that replaced slavery was so like serfdom but so much simpler than bondage to maintain that one might imagine it having evolved spontaneously, first in states not heavily invested in the cash-cropping of slaves or the maintenance of great estates, then generally.

At the end of World War II, the United States was powerfully engaged in regions for which few of its citizens cared, except as sites of remote ancestry or recent sacrifice. The British Empire was intact, miraculously, but worn to threads. France was disgraced and unsteady, its empire a shell. Germany, Japan, and Italy were in

[25] Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross*, pp. 44–54.

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ruins, China in chaos. Eastern Europe, the prize for which Hitler had waged the war, had been won by Stalin, from the battle of Kursk onward in all but name and regalia a new Eurasian khan. Even so, blessed as he was, Stalin had his chores: a party to purge, a bomb to build, peoples to deport, governments to impose, and so forth. No one, hotheads aside, wanted a 'next' war yet.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union wanted solutions to, and thought it might now finally at acceptable risk be able to solve, three old external problems: political isolation, world-economic incompatibility, and strategic exposure. The single evident solution to each of these was extension. The establishment of new communist partner-states in eastern and central Europe was easy enough, and the advantages were impressive: a sizeable and ultra-reliable voting bloc in the United Nations and a confirmed role in high politics; economic integration with what had been before the war materially richer and technologically more advanced countries and with other countries to which economic activities complementary to Russia's could be assigned; an anti-subversion barrier, penetrable by radio broadcast but little else, on the borders of the westernmost (and non-Russian) Soviet republics; dismemberment or domination of traditionally dangerous competitors; a shortened defensive front with a deep non-Russian fall-back zone; and the prospect, however uncertain, that client armies might competently and loyally take the first thrust of any future eastward invasion.

Whole and undominated, though, was a new competitor, the United States, not by tradition a danger, despite having meddled in the Bolshevik revolution. By many measures, especially blood price paid, the United States had contributed less to victory in Europe than had the Soviet Union, whose land forces and tactical air forces by the battle of Berlin were demonstrably irresistible and seemingly inexhaustible. Yet it was the United States, not the Soviet Union, that exited the war a 'superpower', a state able to project effective force most any place, most any time, most any way, a state able to secure itself while contending for its core interests at disproportionate cost to any challenger. Any rival, any aspiring *second* superpower, would have to approach American performance in key sectors one way or another.

How would the Soviet Union manage? By making the most of its socioeconomic system. Command economies favoured concentration: small numbers of large facilities producing narrow ranges of widely used goods and services. Concentration supposedly captured economies of scale and scope, eliminated product incompatibilities, obviated transportation strains, minimized communications requirements (and minimized communication *per se* and, in turn, perhaps, conspiracy), and simplified central planning. However, command-economy products, other than raw materials, tended not to be competitive with market-economy products. In fairness, they were not intended to be. But the *fact* that they were typically not competitive meant they needed protected, if not 'commanded', markets in which to be 'sold' or, preferably, bartered. 'Socialism in one country', Stalin's stepping-down from the peak of Leninist impracticality, was feasible as long as the 'country' was large and variously endowed, but 'socialism in *more* than one country' was presumably better, particularly if additional countries hosted, say, the Zeiss optical and precision-instrument works (soon dismantled and moved as a 'reparation' from Jena to Russia[26]), the Skoda armoury, and the remains of the Ploiesti petroleum industry.

[26] Nove, *Economic History of the USSR*, p. 296.

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Extension initially had been achieved by occupation of areas behind one's own lines, with the ultimate disposition of those lines formally coordinated yet having been much affected by the flow of battle and by political initiative disguised as military breakthrough. Extension by prearranged partitioning came next: Germany, then Korea. By these routes, and by a longer one in China, 'socialism in one country' became antique orthodoxy.

The West now scrambled to 'contain' both a present military power, an increasingly disagreeable one, and a future *economic* adversary. Soviet industrialization in the 1930s was conceded to have been daring in concept and startling in result, and it had proved notably resistant to a great and otherwise global depression. Reports of ethnic deportations, forced collectivization, exportation of subsistence crops for hard currency, and citizen-slavery deepened the anti-communist chill of those who heard and believed, but no report undid the achievement. More impressive yet had been the resilience, the agility, the ingenuity, the counterpunch power of the Soviet economy, American assistance notwithstanding, during the war itself. Give it a rest between rounds, and what could it do? Give it half of Europe and Korea, all of mainland China, and who-knew-how-much of Latin America, from Mexico down, and the war-materials-rich decolonializing world—and what *would* it do? If 'socialist neomercantilism' came to fill the post-imperial vacuum, into what markets could free trade, inevitable enhancer of the general, if not the universal, welfare, then spread?

The future was fuzzy from the other side of the curtain as well. Yes, 'socialism in *more* than one country' sounded promising, but no theory explained how it might work. Should Soviet and satellite representatives *bargain*? The Bulgarian and Czechoslovakian foreign trade ministers tried bargaining and were shot. Should all arrangements be made in the Soviets' favour? No, exclusively unfair terms would surely have proved self-defeating. The Soviets had declined and had forced their new dependencies to decline America's offer of Marshall Plan inclusion. In partial recompense, the Soviets offered credits and began to exchange their own mispriced goods for the mispriced goods of their new partners. In January 1949, a year-and-a-half after George Marshall's Paris proposal, the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) was established. When mainland China joined the communist bloc, inter-socialist trade, such as it was, expanded still further. In the years after Stalin's death, and especially following unrest in Poland and Hungary, COMECON agreements came frequently under revision and world prices came into benchmark use, usually to the relative advantage of Soviet partners.[27]

When European empires in the New World collapsed, receded, or rotted *in situ*, competition for extension intensified between the socioeconomic systems, Northern and Southern, of the United States; the labour status, free or slave, of states cut from post-imperial cloth was the issue. When European and Japanese empires died in the Old World and when stagnant societies continued their decay in Latin America, competition for extension intensified between capitalism and communism. During this second competition, West versus East, skulduggery was commonplace, proxy wars were frequent, 'half-proxy' wars—in Korea, in Vietnam, in Afghanistan—were less frequent but more dangerous, and benefits were maldistributed. Western clients, infamously, got much they did not need or did not

[27] Ibid., pp. 321–3, 358–9.

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use wisely or morally, but some good was done them as well. Soviet and Chinese clients had different versions of the same experience.

Did the United States, on the whole, gain through its dealings with newly independent nations? Did the Soviet Union gain? Neither question is fully answerable, though the second question may be more interesting. The Soviet Union did, conspicuously, establish a long-term barter trade in goods and services, including tourism and mercenary military adventurism, with Cuba, as well as a complex relationship with the socialized sector of India's mixed economy and a diplomatically nearly normal relationship with the Indian government.[28]

Did the Soviet Union fall to pieces because it failed economically? Ostensibly so, though other explanations, and variations of this one, are numerous.[29] Did the Soviet Union fail economically because the extension of its system was blocked, or was systemic extension adequate but ultimately harmful,[30] or was the system itself hopelessly incompetent,[31] ever ready to implode? The current scholarly vote is split, with any or all of these explanations often merged with (or even replaced by) a statecraft explanation, this one contending that the Cold War was won by the West, not lost by the East. Whatever the standard and revisionist judgments may become, however, we do know from the record of its ultimate collapse that the Soviet Union did *not* 'make the most' of its system in central and eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Indonesia, and the Caribbean. And we know that it tried.[32]

- *Both cold wars led the less developed of each rival pair to envy and emulate the more developed, sometimes in ideologically discordant ways.*

The South moved toward radicalism not because its system was collapsing but because its system might have been made even more prosperous if allowed to extend at a self-determined rate. Radical Southerners in this sense emulated radical American colonists, whose westward settlement had been restricted by Britain after the Seven Years War but whose prosperity and prospects had nonetheless become the envy of the Empire. Many white Southerners also believed their system's industrial capacity and financial competence had to be made more nearly comparable to those of the North and Europe, that the South needed selectively to be 'Northernized'—more raw cotton finished before export, more iron forged at home, more agricultural lending free of 'foreign' profiteering—without exchanging slave labour for 'wage slavery'. This long and tricky process, Southern radicals believed, might somehow be quicker and safer *with* separation than without it.

[28] John Kenneth Galbraith, 'The Second Imperial Requiem', *International Security*, 7:3 (1982), pp. 84–93, at p. 91. Nove, *Economic History of the USSR*, p. 359.

[29] Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, 'The International Sources of Soviet Change', *International Security*, 16:3 (1991), pp. 74–118.

[30] Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 156–85.

[31] Celeste A. Wallander, 'Opportunity, Incrementalism, and Learning in the Extension and Retraction of Soviet Global Commitments', *Security Studies*, 1:3 (1992), pp. 514–42.

[32] Henry Bienen, 'Soviet Political Relations with Africa', *International Security*, 6:4 (1982), pp. 153–73. Valerie Bunce, 'The Empire Strikes Back: The Evolution of the Eastern Bloc from a Soviet Asset to a Soviet Liability', *International Organization*, 39:1 (1985), pp. 1–46. Steven R. David, 'Soviet Involvement in Third World Coups', *International Security*, 11:1 (1986), pp. 3–36. Richard K. Herrmann, 'Soviet Behavior in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies, and Important Lessons, *World Politics*, 44 (1992), pp. 432–65. Nove, *Economic History of the USSR*, pp. 391–419.

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The Soviet Union moved toward accommodation because its system was collapsing *despite* extension—arguably, toward the end, *because* of extension, specifically into Afghanistan.[33] Soviet reformers, many of them, hoped selectively to 'Westernize' their system, some preferring political change first, others preferring economic change only (as in China). In the event, 'Westernization', such as it was, proved as corrosive to the Soviet system as many slave owners suspected 'Northernization' would have proved to the Southern system.

- *Both cold wars exhibited a strong preference for the procrastination of conflict through the balancing of opportunity and power, and in both a deliberative mechanism was tried first.*

One settlement of the American Revolution was negotiated slowly abroad, another even more slowly at home. In this second settlement, the American plantation states gained Congressional and Electoral College 'representation' for three-fifths of their slave populations. They also got a southern capital city and a weak central government with veto power held by a president about as likely as not, given the composition of the College, to be a plantation master himself. They got slave-state parity in Senatorial voting—in effect, a legislative veto—when Alabama entered the Union in 1819. Then, when the statehood application of Missouri promised almost immediately to unbalance the Senate again, this time in favour of the 'Slave Power', Maine, an increasingly restive admiralty district of Massachusetts, was admitted as a free state. This 'Missouri Compromise' of 1820 established, and the Compromise of 1850 elabourated, a pattern of paired and mutually cancelling additions to Senatorial voting-bloc power.

The House of Representatives exhibited from 1837 to 1844 an even more explicit preference for procrastination, imposing upon itself a gag rule tabling all antislavery petitions, of which there were many, without debate or discussion. An attempt to establish a similar rule in the Senate failed in 1838. Also never established was what John C. Calhoun, slavery's preeminent legislative intellect, would propose posthumously in 1854: two presidents, one for the North and one for the South, each with an absolute veto over the actions of the other—a dying dream of coexistence through mutual obstruction.[34]

Initially, the Soviet Union gained United Nations membership and voting rights for two of its constituent republics and, naturally, for almost all its satellites. The Soviets also secured permanent-member veto authority over Security Council resolutions and tried unsuccessfully to apply veto protection to procedural decisions as well. Years later, they would propose a paralysis-prone three-member general secretariat: the much-ridiculed *troika*. With at least two of the Security Council's permanent members permanently at odds, the United Nations, a war-waging alliance at its inception, could during the Cold War only occasionally and only marginally exercise its authority to bear arms. Its most forceful application of power, resistance to a northern invasion of southern Korea, was authorized while the Soviets were boycotting the Security Council. Except for several of its more effective

[33] Galbraith, 'The Second Imperial Requiem', Wallander, 'Opportunity, Incrementalism and Learning'.
[34] William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 515–19.

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agencies, such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations gained and retained a reputation for deliberative frustration similar to that of the United States Senate from 1820 to 1854.

- *Both cold wars moved toward confrontation when their deliberative balancing mechanisms failed.*

The cost of America's great and many lesser unnamed or unrecorded compromises was high. Millions of Americans were born, laboured, and died as the property of other Americans, who had no right to own them. Territories overripened on the vine of statehood while countervailing polities formed. National goals could not be agreed upon nor internal improvements accomplished, and activists of neither side were willing decade after decade to feel disadvantaged in half their country.

When Missouri slave owners looked west, they saw Indian Territory, established in 1834 as a reserve for Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw peoples 'removed' westward from the Southern states. Pressure rose not only to 'unreserve' most of the tribal land—free-soilers were already settling there—but also to repeal the Missouri Compromise itself, so slaves could make on the prairie a more northerly home for their masters' institutions. From the murk of Senatorial stalemate came the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Its apparent form was continuity, for it created two new states at once. Its key provision—'popular sovereignty'—was plebiscitary, for it left to a simple majority of free adult male 'squatters' a new state's once-and-forever choice of socioeconomic systems. Its likely promise was conflict, for it lifted the latitude-limit from the slave economy, made foreseeable the control of the Senate by one side or the other, and made the manipulation of non-iterated elections a goal worth killing for. What followed immediately was a proxy war. On one side were white Missourians and other white Southerners and pro-slavery ideologues determined to claim their implicit share of a quasi-diplomatic bargain. On the other side were free-soil Kansans and other Northerners and anti-slavery ideologues determined to contain an evil empire within still-too-large borders.

There was yet some hope that the old North-South deliberative mechanism's most adversarial element, argument before the United States Supreme Court, might pacify the Union. Its inability to do so was an inauspicious sign. In 1857, the Court, empanelling a Southern majority and reading the Constitution no doubt as intended by its authors, endorsed the perpetual bondage of Dred Scott, a Missouri slave once 'free' in Illinois and the Wisconsin territory. Two years later, the Supreme Court rejected a Wisconsin court's attempt to nullify the fugitive slave laws of 1793 and 1850.

Radicals in the North were apoplectic, their more moderate co-regionalists furious, but even this victory for the 'Slave Power' did not appease the South, for whose revolutionaries and patriarchs old assurances, and others yet to come,[35] were no longer sufficient. Much that transpired from 1857 to 1861, *politically*, might have reassured the plantation states, had their decisive interests been as conservative as the word 'plantation' implies. But their interests, as characterized by the men chosen

[35] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, by arrangement with Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 256.

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to voice those interests, had by this time become unapologetically grand, even imperial. Domestic non-interference by what seemed increasingly to be a foreign and *competitively* imperialistic Yankee power was an insult, not an offer. There was for these Southerners no protection without progress, no progress without extension, no extension without self-determination. By 1854, the North-South balance of opportunity and power was broken.

In the East-West case, the first-built balancing mechanism, deliberation in the Security Council, failed much sooner than had its analogue in the North-South case. The original war-fighting United Nations allies, now founders of an international peace-promoting and peace-keeping organization, had starkly different interests, but, at war's end, they—or, at least, the Western members of the alliance—did not know that these different interests would prove so routinely to be opposing interests. The 'communism power' proved aggressive: a civil war in Greece, a coup in Czechoslovakia, coup-equivalents elsewhere in eastern Europe, 'liberations' of China and Tibet, partition of Vietnam, proxy wars worldwide, 'popular sovereignty' plebiscites proposed (and rejected). Most aggressive of all, at least in strategic terms, was the Soviet Union's covert basing of nuclear-armed intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba, a move which led not only to the Cold War's tensest moment but also to the intensive reengineering—really, to the virtual reinvention—of an old and curious *confrontational* balancing mechanism, strategic arms control: incremental acts of trust made necessary by incremental acts of *dis*trust.

When, in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba, John Kennedy agreed to deactivate a roughly comparable American force in Turkey, the Cold War's 'Kansas-Nebraska' period was kept conventional. Its nuclear 'squatters' lost their 'voting rights', and, through rapidly improving remote-sensing surveillance, they were well on their way to losing their privacy. Though 'breakout' remained a hard-line hope and an arms-racing hazard, 'breakout' *as policy* came ever more tightly under restraint—with leading debatable exceptions being treaty-manipulation schemes, anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) systems, multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs), and the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). In contrast to the all-American cold war, when secessionists radicalized what seemed a majority of free Southern men, arguments of 'easy victory' in the nuclear age encouraged none but the most sanguine,[36] in all the major meanings of that word.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was made possible by the prior failure to replace deliberative balancing, which had stopped working early in the East-West case for the same reason it had failed eventually in the North-South case: deliberation was nearly meaningless when all important votes were too dangerous to lose. What developed during and after October 1962[37] became, at last, an alternative mechanism for the procrastination of conflict, this one based on threat itself. While the full version of nuclear-age threat was much too dangerous to carry out and hardly credible to make,[38] lesser versions could be fully credible and inconvenient, expensive, or painful to counter. Guerrillas could be supplied; missiles could be put on rail

[36] Richard Rhodes, 'The General and World War III', *The New Yorker*, 19 June 1995, pp. 47–8, 53–9.
[37] Ray S. Cline, 'Commentary: The Cuban Missile Crisis', *Foreign Affairs*, 68:4 (1989), pp. 190–6. Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight, and David A. Welch, 'Essence of Revision: Moscow, Havana, and the Cuban Missile Crisis', *International Security*, 14:3 (1989), pp. 136–71.
[38] David Alan Rosenberg, 'The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945–1960', *International Security*, 7:4 (1983), pp. 3–71.

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cars; grain could be withheld; submarines could be muffled; restive border states could be visited. Threat and counterthreat could be *scaled*, and that meant they could be negotiated, first tacitly, then at a table.

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If evaluated at their respective midpoints for likelihood of violent end,[39] the American North-South and global East-West rivalries would probably have been ranked incorrectly. One was highly legalized, the other highly militarized. Why did the protagonists of the first meet at Manassas and those of the second at McDonald's?

We should recall Gaddis's list of stabilizing international-relations features. We may accept the list as fitting the era of East-West rivalry, an era whose close was unexpected but nonetheless quiet. How would this list fit the era of American North-South rivalry, an era whose close surpassed in horror any sensible prediction? Bipolarity was a decades-long feature. Non-interdependence of the polar adversaries was less definite; the South, though highly dependent on Europe, was still far more dependent than it wished to be on the North. Many domestic influences were favourable; as far as males of exclusively European descent were concerned, both adversaries were democratic (and both would maintain solid civilian control of their respective militaries even *in extremis*). Neither possessed weapons that today would be strategically significant or even operationally useful, but their most formidable military technologies and tactics were not well understood until well after widespread employment. Similarly, neither knew the strengths and weaknesses of its opponent accurately until after engagement, if then. Ideologies did not trend progressively toward moderation—just the opposite. 'Rules', such as the fugitive slave laws, did develop, but their observation enraged as well as regularized.

The presence and functionality of certain of these features may have delayed destabilization of the self-divided American house, and the absence or the inadequacy of other features may have condemned its societies to civil war. But other hypotheses can also be entertained. If the Confederacy had chosen as its opening move not the bombardment of Fort Sumter but the placing of an embassy in Washington, the quick recruitment of a Federal volunteer army would have lacked its historic stimulus. If the United States of America had then conceded the sovereignty of the Confederate States of America, rather than 'invading' Virginia, the North-South rivalry, transformed from an interstate to an international problem, might successfully have found a replacement for its failed deliberative balancing mechanism. A replacement would still have been needed, and quickly, since the chief reason for rivalry—competitive extension—would have persisted. Perhaps at this juncture leaderships north and south would have found through the scalable threat-and-counterthreat of confrontational balancing a mostly peaceful way to divide and, slaves aside, prosper.

America's great internal bargains of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seemed paragons of republican constitutionality, the Civil War a tragedy of compromise undone. But what might have happened in the United States if the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the bargain that ended compromise, had never become law?

[39] Gaddis, 'The Long Peace'.

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Could a Union divided sea-to-sea been at civil peace until, say, 1888, the year Brazil abandoned slavery? Would emancipation then have precipitated a revolution in America, as it did in Brazil? Deliberative balancing meant *by design* political irresolution. Politics, ironically, cancelled out of the American equation. Only force was left.

The opposite phenomenon was observed in the rivalry just ended. Strategic arms control, maligned for institutionalizing rather than obviating preparations for war, became the 'Senate' of the East-West era, and a rather good one, too. Arms control *itself* became a political institution,[40] its professionals officed in bureaucracies, its bureaucracies sensitive to 'process' and skilled in perennialization, its ends and means reduced to treaty, its treaties morally forceful whether ratified or not, its speech and manner increasingly symbolic, its masters tempted to gaming, its games typically anticipated and predictably countered, its proposals and agreements less and less likely to meet objective standards of *military*-strategic, as opposed to *political*-strategic, logic.[41] Arms control lessened the risk of all-out precipitous violence until the political reasons for risk resolved, and it increased the chance that those reasons *would* resolve by synthesizing within East-West relations an artificial but nonetheless useful tradition of trust. It was *force* that cancelled out in our day, leaving us politics.

[40] Raymond L. Garthoff, 'Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy', *International Security*, 3:1 (1978), pp. 112–47.

[41] Thomas C. Schelling, 'What Went Wrong with Arms Control?', *Foreign Affairs*, 64:2 (1985), pp. 19–33.

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