NEW APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

# COLD WAR SUMMITS

## A History, From Potsdam to Malta

Chris Tudda

BLOOMSBURY

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## A History, from Potsdam to Malta

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# SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

*New Approaches to International History* takes the entire world as its stage for exploring the history of diplomacy, broadly conceived theoretically and thematically, and writ large across the span of the globe, during the twentieth century. This series goes beyond the single goal of explaining encounters in the world. Our aspiration is that these books provide both an introduction for researchers new to a topic, and supplemental and essential reading in classrooms. Thus, *New Approaches* serves a dual purpose that is unique from other large-scale treatments of international history; it applies to scholarly agendas and pedagogy. In addition, it does so against the backdrop of a century of enormous change, conflict, and progress that informed global history but also continues to reflect on our own times.

The series offers the old and new diplomatic history to address a range of topics that shaped the twentieth century. Engaging in international history (including but not especially focusing on global or world history), these books will appeal to a range of scholars and teachers situated in the humanities and social sciences, including those in history, international relations, cultural studies, politics, and economics. We have in mind scholars, both novice and veteran, who require an entrée into a topic, trend, or technique that can benefit their own research or education into a new field of study by crossing boundaries in a variety of ways.

By its broad and inclusive coverage, *New Approaches to International History* is also unique because it makes accessible to students current research, methodology, and themes. Incorporating cutting-edge scholarship that reflects trends in international history, as well as addressing the classical high politics of state-centric policymaking and diplomatic relations, these books are designed to bring alive the myriad of approaches for digestion by advanced undergraduates and graduate students. In preparation for the *New Approaches* series, Bloomsbury surveyed courses and faculty around the world to gauge interest and reveal core themes of relevance for their classroom use. The polling yielded a host of topics, from war and peace to the environment; from empire to economic integration; and from migration to nuclear arms. The effort proved that there is a much-needed place for studies that connect scholars and students alike to international history, and books that are especially relevant to the teaching missions of faculty around the world.

We hope readers find this series to be appealing, challenging, and thought-provoking. Whether the history is viewed through older or newer lenses, *New Approaches to International History* allows students to peer into the twentieth century's complex relations among nations, people, and events to draw their own conclusions about the tumultuous, interconnected past.

*Thomas Zeiler, University of Colorado Boulder, USA*

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The views presented here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the US Department of State or the United States government.

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This book is dedicated to all my students, who make me realize that I'm still learning all the time.

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ABM | Anti-Ballistic Missile |
| *Bulletin* | Department of State *Bulletin* |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| CFE | Conventional Forces in Europe |
| CF | Country Files |
| CWIHP | Cold War International History Project |
| DAC | Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev |
| *DBPO* | *Documents on British Policy Overseas* |
| DMZ | Demilitarized Zone |
| DOSCF | Department of State Central Files |
| DRV | Democratic Republic of Vietnam |
| EDC | European Defense Community |
| EOB | Executive Office Building |
| *FD*, LOC | *Frontline Diplomacy*, Library of Congress |
| *FAH* | *From a Head, Through a Head, to a Head* |
| *FRUS* | *Foreign Relations of the United States* |
| *HD* | *Haldeman Diaries* |
| INF | Intermediate Nuclear Forces |
| MAD | Mutually Assured Destruction |
| MFN | Most-Favored Nation |
| MIRV | Multiple Independently-Targeted Re-entry Vehicle |
| NA | National Archives, College Park, MD |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| NPL | Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum |
| NPT | Non-Proliferation Treaty |
| NSA | National Security Archive |
| OSI | On-Site Inspections |
| *PPP* | *Public Papers of the President* |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| *RD* | *Reagan Diaries* |
| SALT | Strategic Arms Limitation Talks |
| SDI | Strategic Defense Initiative |
| SEATO | Southeast Asian Treaty Organization |
| START | Strategic Arms Reduction Talks |
| *SWJN* | *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* |

| | |
|---|---|
| TTBT | Threshold Test Ban Treaty |
| *TYP* | *Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences* |
| UKNA | United Kingdom National Archives |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNGA | United Nations General Assembly |
| WHT | White House Tape |

# Introduction

This book grew out of the numerous lectures and exchanges I have had with my students at The George Washington University over the past eight years. I had begun teaching courses on US foreign policy since 1945, and then a few years ago I also started teaching a course called "The International History of the Cold War." I began to realize that an analysis of the various summits that occurred during the Cold War had become a key component of all my courses. My students were repeatedly struck by the importance of the more "famous" (infamous?) summits such as Yalta, Vienna, and Moscow, and as I began to focus more on the interplay between Cold War leaders they encouraged me to include more discussion of the less well-known summits such as Glassboro in class.

A few years ago I discovered David Reynolds' 2007 book *Summits: Six Meetings that Shaped the Twentieth Century*, and I was impressed with not only the depth and breadth of his research, but also his coverage of forty years of the Cold War. I began assigning individual chapters of the book based on the needs of my courses and began to do my own research into the summits that he did not examine. Serendipitously, my students asked "why don't you write about the other summits, especially Bandung?" As I began to explain that Bandung wasn't really a "summit," or at least the way I had been taught to think about the term, I realized that, actually, Bandung did belong in this book. Indeed, as Reynolds notes in the introduction to the book, the word "summit," coined by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1950, denoted meetings "at the highest level."[1] In other words, they consisted of face-to-face meetings between presidents, prime ministers, and general secretaries aimed at resolving tensions that could not be resolved at the ambassadorial or foreign minister levels. Other, less known summits such as the 1979 Vienna meeting had either not been covered in great detail by other scholars or had occurred so recently that documentation had only recently become available. At the same time, I could include my own assessments of other famous summits such as Potsdam and Beijing. As I conducted more research, I realized that summits such as Glassboro and Malta proved important in and of themselves, as venues where leaders with opposing ideologies could personally meet to dispel misconceptions, myths, and misunderstandings. Summits, famous or not, often penetrated the public consciousness, and until the last days of the Cold War, they served as bellwethers for the state of Cold War tensions.

To be sure, former policymakers and political scientists had examined Cold War summitry before the publication of Reynolds' book. In 1976, former Under Secretary of State George Ball, who had served under presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Baines Johnson, criticized summitry for "tend[ing] to create an illusion of understanding where none really exists." Moreover, he dismissed as a "myth" the "sentimental conceit that men of different countries can understand one another better through direct conversation than when their exchange of views and ideas is filtered through experts sensitive to the nuances that derive from different cultures." Highly critical of President Richard M. Nixon's February 1972 visit to Beijing—which I discuss in great detail below in Chapter Four—as well as Nixon's three summits with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and other Cold War summits, Ball argued "there is nothing more dangerous than to rest the relations between states too heavily on the capricious interaction of diverse personalities." A reliance on interpreters, especially by "monolingual" American presidents, often led to "mischief" when leaders misunderstood what their foreign interlocutors said or promised during these personal conversations.[2]

G. H. Berridge has, for the most part, accepted Ball's criticism of summitry. Although he concedes that sometimes summitry can be useful as long as "it is employed judiciously," Berridge contends that leaders "may conclude agreements which are inconsistent with or irrelevant to national interests, or conclude no agreement at all, out of ignorance of the detail of the issue under discussion." The public relations stakes, instead, often make it impossible for leaders (as opposed to diplomats) "to contemplate bringing a negotiation to an end without something substantial to show for it."[3]

Most scholars, however, see both advantages and disadvantages in high-level summitry. In his examination of the American president and summit diplomacy, Elmer Plischke argues that, on the plus side, summits often lead to the establishment of a good personal relationship between allies and adversaries (one of the key claims of this book). The president's interlocutors, he notes, "may rest assured that they are dealing with the center of U.S. governmental power and responsibility" rather than a diplomat who may have exceeded their instructions. On the minus side, presidents may become so enamored with personal, summit diplomacy that "it may become an addiction, and that it tends to create a seductive and proliferating precedent." All the pomp and circumstance of summit meetings, meanwhile, could "inhibit unhurried judgment as well as careful consideration and negotiation."[4]

David H. Dunn also discusses the downsides of summitry and highlights the increased chances for miscommunication, cultural differences between foreign leaders, excessive like or dislike of an interlocutor, leaders' overestimation of their own abilities, or simple mistakes due to a lack of expertise. At the same time, he acknowledges one of the key claims of my book: that high-level summits can be useful for information gathering, sizing up the leader of another country—allies as well as adversaries—and for "breaking down the barriers of mutual suspicion which inevitably exist between two parties who are unfamiliar with each other." The establishment of a good personal relationship, he admits, also can have political and diplomatic benefits.[5]

Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne have, like Dunn, analyzed both the advantages and disadvantages of summitry. The former include what they call the "educative function in so far as they compel political leaders to turn their attention from the domestic to the international implications of their policies." Hamilton and Langhorne, however, also place special emphasis on the symbolism of summitry and conclude that it has helped leaders conclude lasting agreements. Summits can signal new policies to allies and adversaries alike, give added momentum to negotiations already underway, and allow leaders in democracies to "respond to the requirements of democratic politics." The downsides include playing to popular sentiment, a leader's "desire for a personal triumph," which may lead him or her to make a bad deal instead of preserving or advancing national interests, and raising expectations that can be dashed during the actual meetings.[6]

While these scholars have done some good work in pointing out the pros and cons of summitry, their analyses are flawed for two reasons. First, for the most part, they only analyze Western leaders. The Cold War, however, was a multipolar phenomenon, and recent historiography has demonstrated that Soviet and Chinese leaders faced significant domestic opposition of their own. While they may not have been subject to the vicissitudes of public opinion, they still had to contend with bureaucratic opposition, in particular from the military, which remained skeptical of talks with the West. Second, these political scientists do not use documents, especially from behind the Iron Curtain. So they are only speculating about whether or not promises were made or not made, in particular by Western leaders, and they rely mainly on public reporting, memoirs, and the like on which to base their analyses. They also rarely take into account the beliefs of Soviet, Chinese, and other non-Western leaders.

In this book, like Reynolds, I will try to "internationalize" summitry by using, when possible, non-US sources. Almost all of the American documents are readily available to scholars either in published form or on the internet in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (*FRUS*) series, while some are now available on the various Presidential Libraries websites and other websites such as the National Security Archive. Other US documents are open at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland and at the Presidential Libraries. I also use British, Chinese, Indian, Soviet, and other international sources—many available on the internet, in particular at the

Cold War International History Project's website—to explain the competing priorities of the leaders engaging in these high-level talks.

In the summer of 1945, approximately two months after Germany's surrender, the new US president, Harry S. Truman, Churchill and his successor, Clement Atlee, and Soviet premier Josef Stalin, came to Potsdam, a suburb of war-ravaged Berlin, to try to end the Second World War and create a postwar order. Topics included whether or when the Soviets would enter the war against Japan, the disposition of defeated Germany, Poland's new western frontiers, and the hot-button issue of German reparations. Late in the conference, Truman learned that the United States had successfully tested an atomic weapon. Historians remain divided over whether Potsdam represented the beginning of the Cold War or whether prospects for postwar cooperation remained. I argue that, despite their disagreements about these key issues, in the end they compromised. Each leader expected another "peace conference" to occur afterwards where they could settle the Polish borders, the actual amount of reparations the Soviet Union would receive, and the like. That this peace conference did not occur is due to events that occurred between 1946 and 1948. I contend, therefore, that the Cold War did not begin at Potsdam, nor was it inevitable. I have nevertheless called the book *Cold War Summits* because I know I will not have the last word about this historiographical controversy.

In April 1955, some twenty-nine nations met at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. I have included Bandung because it announced that the developing world had arrived on the world stage. The Cold War was a far more complex phenomenon than some historians and scholars have portrayed. The consensus that emerged from Bandung, that the developing world should concentrate on its own economic development, that imperialism of both the left and the right should be condemned and eradicated, and that the emerging nations should remain neutral in the Cold War helped define what Odd Arne Westad has called "the global cold war."[7] Despite this consensus, the Bandung Conference also exposed the fissures within the developing world, as "neutralists" such as Indian President Jawaharlal Nehru clashed with leaders such as Filipino delegate Carlos Romulo, who condemned the Soviet Union's new colonialism and sided with the United States. Meanwhile, the premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Zhou Enlai, argued that Communist China belonged with the nations of the developing world in spite of its friendship with the Soviet Union and its support of "continuous revolution."

June 1967 was a time of increased tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. President Lyndon Johnson and Premier Alexei Kosygin met at Glassboro State College in New Jersey to try to mend the relationship. Relations between the two superpowers had been hurt by the US war in Vietnam, the Soviet decision to undergo a massive nuclear arms buildup, and the Six-Day War between Israel and the Arab states that had erupted earlier in the month. Not much has been written on Glassboro with the exception of a few pages in a few monographs; most scholars consider Glassboro to be a well-intentioned and relatively inconsequential footnote in the Cold War. I will demonstrate, however, that the summit jump-started important arms control negotiations such as Non-Proliferation (NPT) and the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) between the two nations and also signaled that neither side wanted to be dragged into a proxy war in the Third World. This will be the first thorough examination of the goals, discussions, and outcome of the Glassboro summit.

The 1972 Beijing summit, on the other hand, has been considered one of the crowning successes of Cold War summitry. The meeting between US President Richard Nixon and PRC Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, and Nixon's subsequent meetings with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, has been dubbed "the week that changed the world." Indeed, this summit represented a turning point in the Cold War, as the Americans and the Chinese buried two decades of animosity and began to alter their strategic relationship. The Nixon strategy of "détente," or the relaxation of tensions between adversaries, received a huge boost after this meeting.

Vienna seemed to be the last achievement of the détente era. The United States, led by President Jimmy Carter, and the Soviet Union, led by General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, met in Central Europe in June 1979 to sign the SALT II Treaty. However, the signing of the treaty masked a deepening freeze in the US–Soviet relationship. The Carter administration was alarmed by the Soviet, Cuban, and East German intervention in the Horn of Africa, the discovery of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba, and Moscow's refusal to allow Soviet Jews and other dissidents to emigrate from the Soviet Union. Moscow, in turn, was angered by Carter's demands that it respect human rights, and grew frustrated that the president's national security team seemed to want to repudiate the agreements that Brezhnev had made with President Gerald R. Ford in 1974. Brezhnev's declining health and Carter's troubles with Congress also hampered US–Soviet relations in 1979. Thanks to the recent release of documents, this will be the first thorough examination of the goals, discussions, and outcome of the Vienna summit.

US President George H. W. Bush and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev met in Malta in December 1989, only a few short weeks after the peaceful fall of the Berlin Wall. Many observers were stunned when Gorbachev decided not to intervene to prevent East Germany's dissolution. The Malta Summit represented Bush's attempt to manage the end of the Cold War and to work with Gorbachev to insure against a conservative backlash within the Soviet Union against Eastern Europe's rapidly changing strategic, political, economic, and social conditions. Gorbachev's declaration that the Soviet Union and the United States were "not inherently enemies" signaled that the Cold War had ended.

Each chapter also contains a historical narrative and an analysis of some—but not all—of the seminal events that led to and followed each summit. The chapters that analyze the four "superpower" summits—Potsdam, Glassboro, Vienna, and Malta—focus on the most important conflicts in the US–Soviet (and sometimes British) relationship. The Bandung and Beijing chapters, on the other hand, focus on the events that occurred in the Third World such as decolonization, revolutions, and, in particular, the conflicts that arose between the United States and the PRC.

# CHAPTER ONE

# The Potsdam Conference: The Beginning of the Cold War?

The alliance that opposed Germany, Italy, and Japan during the Second World War was always one of convenience among three nations with different national ambitions and interests. Great Britain was a capitalist, constitutional monarchy and a colonial empire. In 1938, the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, unsuccessfully attempted to "appease" German dictator Adolf Hitler by allowing Hitler to annex the German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia in return for "peace in our time." After Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3. Chamberlain resigned in May 1940 and was succeeded by Winston Churchill, who had opposed Chamberlain's German policy. After the fall of France on June 22, 1940, Britain became the sole holdout against Germany in Europe, which necessitated arms shipments from the United States. Churchill also looked to Washington to help preserve the Empire.[1]

The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was a totalitarian communist dictatorship led by Josef Stalin that was dedicated to world revolution and the overthrow of capitalism. On August 23, 1939, in order to forestall a potential German attack, Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov and German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop signed a treaty agreeing to not attack the other nor aid the enemy of the other. Secretly, the two nations agreed to divide the Baltic States, Finland, and Poland between themselves. Only two weeks after Germany invaded western Poland, the Soviet Union invaded eastern Poland. The treaty lasted until June 22, 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Over the next four years, the two belligerents fought some of the bloodiest battles in human history and committed terrible atrocities in the East.

The United States had a very different experience, and very different goals. A capitalist democracy, it was closely allied with Britain. However,