isted before the war and was not an immediate, direct consequence of the leadership's post-war failure to implement desired reforms. When read in conjunction with the recent social histories on the 1930s, this study reinforces the sense of continuity in both official policies (minus the Great Terror) and popular reaction to them into the post-war period across the apparent great divide of World War II.

This being said, Life and Death under Stalin makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the realities of immediate postwar Soviet life at the local level. While many more such studies need to be done before we can obtain a comprehensive picture of the everyday Soviet experience in Stalin's last years, this work represents an important first effort in that direction.

Kenneth Slepyan

Transylvania University


The collapse of the USSR has produced at least one "peace dividend": the world of scholarship now enjoys access, however incomplete, restricted, and erratic, to Soviet diplomatic papers pertaining to the Cold War. This boon, plus Deng Xiaoping's liberalization affording somewhat greater freedom to Chinese historians, has made this volume possible. But it is the International History Cold War Project, established in 1991 by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, that has brought this "collegial, international, institutional, multilingual, multiarchival, and interdisciplinary cooperation" into operation. Based largely on newly declassified sources, the eight studies contributed to this book by four Chinese, two American, two Russians, and a Norwegian Odd Arne Westad, who also edited and introduced the book, mark a new advance in Cold War history.

Given the hermetic lid that Moscow and Beijing clamped on their respective arcania imperii, who before 1991 could even dream that we would ever see transcripts of conversations between Chairman Mao and General Secretary Stalin? They figure in here. Moreover, the book also offers history as seen from below. The essays by Deborah A. Kaple and Shu Guang Zhang weigh the contribution to China's modernization made by the hundreds of Soviet engineers, economic and military advisers, technical experts, and teachers posted to China and highlight the frictions that developed between advisors and hosts, which stoked breakdown of the alliance.

Nevertheless, it is the essays that detail relations at the top that offer the most revealing insight into causes of the rise and fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

As Niu Jun and other essayists here point out, Mao even before achieving power had many reasons to resent Stalin's mistaken China policies. If Stalin's advice had been consistently followed, the CCP would never have come to power. The formation of the People's Republic of China radically transformed relations between the CCP and CPSU. Would the USSR now be willing to abrogate the treaty it had concluded with the Nationalist Government in 1945 and abandon the legal and economic rights
in Northeast China secured by coordinating policy with the USA? On the Chinese side, what price would the newly born PRC pay the USSR to acquire desperately needed economic aid and every other kind of assistance? Stalin exacted a heavy price. It included retention of the USSR’s special rights in Northeast China under the 1945 Treaty; the establishment of joint Sino-Soviet stock corporations; and a privileged position for Soviet advisors sent to China, who even enjoyed a form of extraterritoriality.

According to Sergei Goncharenko about half of all the equipment delivered by the USSR to the PRC was intended for military enterprises and plants. Soviet economic aid to China was considerable, though the Mao Government subsequently disparaged its importance. In the ensuing polemics, the two allies evaded the question of past military cooperation. This omission was not accidental – Sino-Soviet military cooperation was too important and sensitive to be disclosed in public polemics. This gap makes the essays that deal with military cooperation most revealing: Katherine Weathersby on the Stalin-Mao connection and the Korean War; Constantine Pleshakov on Mao’s angry rejection of Khrushchev’s request for a joint Sino-Soviet submarine fleet; and Goncharenko on the Soviet nuclear bomb in Sino-Soviet relations.

Central in this story is, of course, the USA. Westad shows that the conflict with the USA was both a cohesive element and a point of contention in the alliance. The Korean War cemented it. But failure to agree on strategy in the global confrontation with Washington fed the disintegration from 1958 on. In short, Sino-Soviet friendship was primarily an anti-American alliance – or, at the global level, an antisystemic alliance. Though Moscow and Beijing shared a common ideology, they came to perceive their relationship to the US in sharply different ways. At the outset both Beijing and Moscow regarded the USA as the main threat to their security. Mao and his comrades perceived the conflict as centering on US attempts to dominate their region. For post-Stalin Soviet leaders, the main issues were universal recognition of Moscow’s global role and the search for a managed or at least structured conflict with Washington. The acquisition of ICBM capability did not increase the Kremlin’s sense of security. But the Soviet nuclear-tipped ICBM plus economic gains in the socialist world prompted Mao to believe in a corresponding growth in US vulnerability, a view not shared by Soviet leaders. In sum: “Just as the parallel perceptions of the United States in the early phase of the alliance provided much of the glue to hold it together, changed perceptions in the later period became a wedge to drive it apart.”

Or as Pleshakov emphasizes, divergent national state interests trumped ideological commonality. For Mao, by the late 1950s, the main aim remained to complete the reunification of China, i.e., to recover China irredenta, Taiwan – even if the effort increased the danger of an American nuclear response. Khrushchev’s principal aim remained to avoid war at almost all costs and to achieve détente with the USA. Hence the breakdown of the alliance.

One might add to this analysis the contention that since 1945 the USSR had become in the main a territorially satisfied power, one whose main aim was to win universal recognition of the territorial status quo (but not the political status quo) both in Asia and Europe, international boundaries won at such terrible cost in the Second World War. Moscow held that any attempt to alter these boundaries by force could