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## Broken Promises That Still Shape the World

By Ted Snider  
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The recipe for the Cold War read, "Simmer. Bring to a boil occasionally: do not boil over." Decades later, the surprising line "return to boil" was added. The table for both servings of the Cold War was set by broken American promises.

Perhaps the most ironic event in post-World War Two history is that it was the villain of the narrative, Joseph Stalin, who kept his promise, and the heroes, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, who broke theirs. The accepted narrative is a fiction. The historical record reveals that, in the true story it's based on, FDR and Churchill steal the villain's spotlight from Stalin.

In February 1945, the three great World War Two leaders met, also ironically it now turns out, in the Crimean resort of Yalta to draw the lines of the post-Second World War world. This time, the map was not to be redrawn in secret. But it was. The agreement that Roosevelt revealed to congress and shared with the world – the one that still dominates the textbook accounts and the media stories – is not the one he secretly shook on with Stalin. Roosevelt lied to congress and the American people. Then he lied to Stalin.

In exchange for Soviet support for the creation of the United Nations, Roosevelt secretly agreed to Soviet predominance in Poland and Eastern Europe. The cold war story that the Soviet Union marched into Eastern Europe and stole it for itself is a lie: Roosevelt handed it to them.

So did Churchill. If Roosevelt's motivation was getting the U.N., Churchill's was getting Greece. Fearing that the Soviet Union would invade India and the oil fields of Iran, Churchill saw Greece as the geographical roadblock and determined to hold on to it at all cost. The cost, it turned out, was Romania. Churchill would give Stalin Romania to protect his borders; Stalin would give Churchill Greece to protect his empire's borders. The deal was sealed on October 9, 1944.

Churchill says that in their secret meeting, he asked Stalin, "how would it do for you to have ninety percent predominance in Romania, for us to have ninety percent predominance in Greece? . . . He then went on to offer a fifty-fifty power split in in Yugoslavia and Hungary and to offer the Soviets seventy-five percent control of Bulgaria. The exact conversation may never have happened, according to the political record, but Churchill's account captures the spirit and certainly captures the secret agreement.

Roosevelt also clearly told Stalin that he understood Soviet concerns about security in Eastern Europe. The final wording of the Yalta agreement never mentioned replacing Soviet control of Poland.

Contrary to the official narrative, Stalin never betrayed the west and stole Eastern Europe: Poland, Romania and the rest were given to him in secret. Then Roosevelt lied to congress and the world.

The necessity of the secret agreements were well known to Roosevelt and Churchill: they came to their meetings prepared. Churchill told his personal secretary to "Make no mistake, all the Balkans, except Greece, are going to be Bolshevized, and there is nothing I can do to prevent it. There is nothing I can do for poor Poland, either". A U.S. State Department report, which was written prior to the Yalta conference, declared power sharing in Poland "unrealistic." While diplomat and Soviet scholar, George Keenan, advised Roosevelt to "drop all thoughts of free elections in Poland and Eastern Europe".

Stalin kept his word; Roosevelt and Churchill betrayed him. It has been said that the Cold War began when now President Harry Truman told Soviet foreign minister Molotov that he expected him to carry out the Yalta decision on Poland to establish a new government. Molotov was stunned.

That was not to be the last lie the West would tell the Russians. Half a century later, the second broken promise would set the table for the second course of Cold War.

It has often been reported that when Russia agreed to allow Germany to become part of NATO, NATO and the US agreed not to move "one inch" further east than Germany. The history of the promise isn't that clear or that simple, but, once again, there was a promise, and, once again, it was the West and not Russia that broke it.

At a February 9, 1990 meeting, George H.W. Bush's Secretary of State, James Baker, promised Gorbachev that if NATO got Germany and Russia pulled its troops out of East Germany "there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction one inch to the east." But according to Professor of Russian and European Politics, Richard Sakwa, this promise meant only that NATO would

not spill over from West Germany into East Germany. The promise of not "one inch to the east," meant only that NATO wouldn't militarize East Germany.

But the logic of the specific assurance implies the larger assurance. Russia wouldn't have it as a security concern that East Germany not be home to NATO forces if there were NATO forces in all the Soviet Republics between East Germany and the western border of the Soviet Union. The value of the promise not to militarize East Germany is contingent upon the understanding that NATO won't militarize east of East Germany.

So the question of militarizing east of Germany never had to explicitly come up: it was implicitly understood. Sakwa says, "The question of NATO enlargement to the other Soviet bloc countries simply did not enter anyone's head and was not discussed."

The promise was made on two consecutive days: first by the Americans and then by West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. According to West German foreign ministry documents, on February 10, 1990, the day after James Baker's promise, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher told his Soviet counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze "For us . . . one thing is certain: NATO will not expand to the east.' And because the conversation revolved mainly around East Germany, Genscher added explicitly: 'As far as the non-expansion of NATO is concerned, this also applies in general.'"

Former CIA analyst and chief of the Soviet Foreign Policy Branch Ray McGovern reports that the US ambassador to the USSR at the time of the promise, Jack Matlock – who was present at the talks – told him that "The language used was absolute, and the entire negotiation was in the framework of a general agreement that there would be no use of force by the Soviets and no 'taking advantage' by the US ... I don't see how anybody could view the subsequent expansion of NATO as anything but 'taking advantage. . . .'"

Mikhail Gorbachev certainly thinks there was a promise made. He says the promise was made not to expand NATO "as much as a thumb's width further to the east." Putin also says the promise was made. In 2012, Putin said, "And what happened to the assurances our Western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact? Where are those declarations today? No one even remembers them."

Putin then went on to remind his audience of the assurances by pointing out that the existence of the NATO promise is not just the perception of him and Gorbachev. It was also the view of the NATO General Secretary at the time: "But I will allow myself to remind this audience what was said. I would like to quote the speech of NATO General Secretary Mr. [Manfred] Woerner in Brussels on 17 May 1990. He said at the time that: 'the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee.' Where are those guarantees?"

McGovern says that when he asked Viktor Borisovich Kuvaldin, a Gorbachev adviser from 1989-1991, why there was no written agreement, Kuvaldin replied painfully, "We trusted you." So had Stalin. But as the promise to Stalin was broken, so the promise to Gorbachev was broken: NATO engulfed Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic in 1999; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,

Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004 and Albania and Croatia in 2009. That brought them to the door of Ukraine, and that brought on the second course of the Cold War.

The Cold War lies were not confined to Eastern Europe. Cuba would also find American promises lying broken in betrayal.

In 1962, Russia and Cuba feared an American invasion of Cuba. The fear was not the product of paranoia. Operation Mongoose was an interagency operation that received the highest priority in the Kennedy government. It was run by the CIA's Edward Lansdale, and its explicit goal was the overthrow of Castro. When Lansdale drew up the timetable for the regime change to take place in October 1962, he said that "final success will require decisive US military intervention". The Cubans and Russians were right: America was planning to invade Cuba.

At least in large part in response to this very real threat, Russia placed nuclear armed missiles in Cuba (as America had aimed nuclear missiles at Russia from Turkey). That led to the standoff of the Cuba missile crisis.

But the Cuban missile crisis came to an end with an agreement on October 28, 1962. On November 8, Noam Chomsky reports, "the Pentagon announced that all known Soviet missile bases had been dismantled." Nevertheless, on the very same day, Chomsky says, an American sabotage team blew up a Cuban facility. The covert US action killed four hundred Cuban workers the same day as the US confirmed Russia had kept its side of the promise.

But that was not the first, or even the biggest, promise the Americans broke to Cuba. At the close of the nineteenth century, President McKinley committed American troops to liberating Cuba from Spain. Congress passed the Teller Amendment which promised the Cubans that "The United States hereby disclaims any . . . intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over [Cuba]". It clearly stated that "the people of the island of Cuba are, and of right ought to be, free and independent".

The Americans quickly dispatched of the Spanish, as promised, and then quickly dispatched of the promise. McKinley announced that America now ruled Cuba according to "the law of belligerent right over conquered territory," which came as a surprise to the Cubans who didn't know they had been conquered. The US promised to free Cuba from Spain, got rid of Spain and kept Cuba for themselves.

And this was not an isolated act of betrayal. The broken promise to liberate a colony from Spain was a pattern. Not just Cuba, but the Philippines too, would suffer the breaking of this American promise.

When Emilio Aguinaldo, one of the leaders of the Philippine resistance, met with American officials, he offered to assist them in invading the Philippines. According to historian William R. Polk, the grateful Americans assured him that America "neither needs nor desires colonies. . . ." While admitting that he could not speak for the American government, the ranking US officer in attendance, Commodore George Dewey, assured Aguinaldo that "there is no doubt if you

cooperate with us and assist us by fighting the common enemy, that you will be granted your freedom the same as the Cubans will be."

Too bad Aguinaldo couldn't look ahead just a little bit in history, because the Philippines would be treated "the same as the Cubans will be." In 1898, the Americans defeated the Spanish, and Aguinaldo declared independence for the Philippines. McKinley defended the Philippine's independence from Spain by warning against "forced annexation," and then forcibly annexed them. The Americans argued that the Philippines would descend into chaos unless America took over, purchased the Philippines from Spain for \$20 million dollars and changed the mission goal from liberation to occupation.

Not only have the modern edition of the Cold War and current relations with Cuba been shaped by broken American promises. So, too, have relations with Iran.

The trepidation with which Iran approaches relations and negotiations with America is shaped by the erosion of broken US promises. When former President Hashemi Rafsanjani intervened and used Iran's influence in Lebanon to help win the release of American hostages being held in that country, President George H.W. Bush promised Iran that if they used their leverage to help the US, it would "be long remembered" and that "goodwill begets goodwill." Iran kept its promise, but America broke its promise. Bush waited for Iran to fulfill its promise and then did nothing in return. Instead, the Americans informed Rafsanjani that he should expect no American reciprocation.

This history of American broken promises informs the distrust and wariness with which Iranian hardliners view the imposition of new American sanctions and the sluggish and obstructionist way America is carrying out its promise to remove existing sanctions.

Moving from nuclear crisis to nuclear crisis, the North Koreans, like Stalin, would come to see that, in the true historical narrative, those portrayed as the heroes could steal the villain's spotlight. And like Stalin, it was the North Koreans who kept their promise while the Americans broke theirs.

In 1994, President Carter's intervention opened the door to the Framework Agreement with North Korea. In accordance with the agreement, North Korea had stopped testing long range missiles and was verifiably not making any more bombs. But then President George W. Bush broke America's promise and threatened North Korea, in violation of the agreement, by naming it a member of the Axis of Evil and by listing it in the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review as a country the US should be prepared to drop a nuclear bomb on. The States also only came through on 15% of the fuel she promised in the agreement. The US then canceled the agreement altogether, leading to North Korea pulling out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. So it was the Americans, and not the North Koreans, who broke their promise and put today's nuclear crisis in North Korea back on the table.

That was the first broken US promise, but it was not to be the last. In 2005, North Korea again agreed to completely eliminate its nuclear weapons and missile development program and allow inspectors in exchange for an American promise that they would stop threatening attacks and

begin planning for a light water reactor – which can be used for medical purposes but not for weapons – and fuel. For the second time, Bush broke America’s promise. Noam Chomsky says that Bush promptly canceled the light water reactor, took up the threats again, and froze North Korean funds in foreign banks, even when North Korea’s transactions were entirely legal. With the agreement killed and the promise broken once more, the North Koreans returned to their weapons program and tested a weapon.

Each of these current crises – resurrected Cold War hostilities with Russia, the crisis in Ukraine, relations with Cuba, negotiations with Iran, nuclear weapons in North Korea – were born, at least in part, with broken promises. And, in each case, it was America, and not America’s evil enemies, who broke its promise.