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Autor: Bischof, Günter
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Austria – a Colony in the U.S. Postwar “empire”?

Günter Bischof

To provide instant relief for all who cannot even fathom that someone might pose such a provocative question, to wit that a highly civilized country like Austria ever have might been colonized – the answer to my question is *No*. Yet this negative answer needs to be qualified. We first need to define “occupation” and look at the degree of outside domination by foreign powers of the small Alpine Republic during its interminable seventeen years of control (1938-55) by more or less welcomed outsiders. Then we need to do a bit of modern imperial history and scrutinize recent incarnations of empire-building. I propose to do this in a comparative fashion by first looking at Hitler’s and Stalin’s empires and Austria’s place in them. Then, we will look at modern definitions of “empire,” “hegemony” and “imperialism” and apply them to postwar America and determine what kind of global “empire” the U.S. fashioned in its moment of supreme power with worldwide interests after World War II. Did Austria play any significant role in America’s postwar global design?

1. “Seventeen Years” of Austrian Occupation

I take here as a starting point the many speeches of the founding fathers of the Second Austrian Republic, those who reiterated like a mantra the charge of unceasing “foreign tutelage” and “seventeen years of occupation” as the postwar quadripartite occupation of “liberated” Austria continued to last into the 1950s. What President Theodor Körner noted on May 15, 1955, the day the four occupation powers signed the Austrian Treaty, is symptomatic of the thinking of most of the postwar political leaders: “The day of complete freedom has dawned on Austria. The day Austrians have been anticipating for seventeen years . . . has come.”¹ Foreign Minister Karl Gruber prominently vented the frustrations of Austria’s political class and the population at large when he

¹ Körner’s radio speech is reprinted in Eva-Marie Czaky, ed., *Der Weg zu Freiheit und Neutralität: Dokumentation zur österreichischen Außenpolitik 1945-1955*. Vienna: Österreichische Gesellschaft für Außenpolitik und Internationale Beziehungen, 1980, 410.

blasted the Allied “liberators’ occupation” (“*Befreierokkupation*”), castigated the foreign occupation forces as “usurpers” “blackmailing Austria,” and cried out that Austrian “liberation has long ago turned into an oppressive occupation” (“*drückende Okkupation*”).² President Karl Renner early on in the Allied Austrian occupation coined the metaphor of the “four elephants in a rowboat.” The Austrian leaders more or less subtly *conflated and equated* the Allied occupation of Austria with Hitler’s occupation of the “*Ostmark*” – as if there were no differences between them.

This interpretation sees the poor and helpless Austrians in the seamless web of history as *victims* of outside political forces. There is, of course, a certain amount of truth to this as eminent historians like Friedrich Heer have rightfully pointed out – few states in Europe have experienced as many outside interventions as Austria and been managed by the changing international system as directly. More recently Thomas Angerer has even advanced the very interesting proposition that this foreign dominance (“*Fremdbestimmung*”) constitutes “a foundation of modern Austrian national history” and might be part of the modern Austrian identity.³

2. Seven Years of Nazi Occupation

Let us look for a brief moment at what kind of “new order” Hitler built in Europe and Austria’s place in it. By the end of 1942 Nazi Germany had built a European Empire not seen since Napoleon. German troops occupied the territory of fourteen European sovereign states: France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, Yugoslavia, and the three Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Hitler’s “new order” was built upon racial hierarchy and economic return. But Germany’s “manifest destiny” was in the East. Hitler’s “*Lebensraum*” design for Eastern and Southeastern Europe was a monstrous master plan for the colonization of the Slavic peoples. National Socialism’s extreme form of Social Darwinism planned for the rapid physical elimination of undesirable enemy populations. The Wehrmacht and Hitler’s ideological warriors proceeded to do exactly that in the Eastern campaigns. Millions of Soviet POWs and Jews were

² For Gruber’s speeches of Feb. 28., 1949, May 9, 1949, April 5, 1950, and press article of June 2, 1949, see Michael Gehler, ed., *Karl Gruber: Reden und Dokumente 1945-1953*. Vienna: Böhlau, 1994, 273, 286, 334, 298.

³ Friedrich Heer, *Der Kampf um die österreichische Identität*, Vienna: Böhlau, 1981, 17; Thomas Angerer, “Der ‘bevormundete Vormund’ und zweierlei ‘Emanzipation’. Die französische Besatzungsmacht in Österreich und einige Gründe zur Historisierung der Bevormundungsthese.” *Österreich unter alliierter Besatzung 1945-1955*. Ed. Alfred Ableitinger, Siegfried Beer, and Eduard G. Staudinger. Vienna: Böhlau forthcoming.

exterminated. The rest of the populations in German hands were subjected to various degrees of repression and enslavement to produce exclusively for Nazi Germany's economic gain. Hitler strove to build an Empire as vast and efficient as the British Empire of the 19th century. In Hitler's mind Eastern Europe was destined to be the India of his Grand Design.⁴

One does not need to go as far as Poland and the Soviet Union to study Hitler's fantastic system of extermination and colonization. The military occupations of Serbia and Greece provide ample material for understanding the barbaric nature of Hitler's murderous imperialism. What increased with the eastward march of Nazi empire builders was the degree of repression, physical extermination and economic exploitation.⁵ Hitler acted as an old-fashioned colonizer, subjecting peoples and economies to direct control for the exclusive benefit of Nazi Germany.

The Nazi "occupation" of Austria in many respects was an odd and confusing one. Norman Davies has observed that "occupation" in the context of war is a *selective* and *subjective* term, but is generally defined as "military operations that are not approved." He continues: "Hence, in Allied literature, operations that were conducted by the western Allies or by the USSR are generally described as "liberations", whilst similar operations conducted by Axis forces are described as "occupation" or "invasion". For the Axis powers the roles of "liberator" and "occupier", of course, were exactly reversed.⁶ Historical truth, in this case, seems to be in the eyes of the beholder.

Hitler's decision of subject peoples' place in his Germanic Empire depended on how essential they were to his Grand Design. Austria, of course, was an essential part. Austria needed to be incorporated into the Third Reich because it was a contiguous territory with an ethnic German population that could benefit the Aryan master race with its gene pool. It also was an important strategic base for the penetration and invasion of the Balkans and it featured inviting economic and human assets. With the incorporation of Austria into the Third Reich in March 1938, it became the "first victim" of Nazi German

⁴ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World At Arms: A Global History of World War II*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 299-305; John Keegan, *The Second World War*, New York: Viking, 1989, 280-89; Jürgen Förster et al., "Germany." *The Oxford Companion to World War II*. Ed. J.C.B. Dear and M.R.D. Foot. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 464-66; Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's Weltanschauung*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1981; Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

⁵ Walter Manoschek, "Serbien ist Judenfrei": Militärische Besatzungspolitik und Judervernichtung in Serbien 1941/42, Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1993; Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation 1941-44*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

⁶ Norman Davies, "Occupation." *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 829.

expansionism and empire building. The Nazis directly incorporated Austria into the Third Reich and deprived the country of its sovereignty as a state – they did not offer any long-range prospect ever to bestow that sovereignty again. Worse, the Nazis used the Gestapo and their vast totalitarian control system to wipe out any traces of Austrian identity. Yet Austria's position in Nazi Germany was highly ambiguous. Austria was invaded by the Wehrmacht, but it was a “friendly” operation – many Austrians “approved” (Davies) of this “invasion” and “occupation.” The popular welcome of German troops in Austria during the *Anschluß* (akin to the cheers for the German invaders in the Sudetenland, Memelland and Eupen-Malmédy) has made some historians conclude that these areas were *not* under Nazi German *occupation*.⁷

So what sort of “occupation” was it then? On the one hand Austrians added an important element to the Nazi invasions of Eastern and Southeastern Europe and of the ideological warriors engaged in the extermination programs in the East. Many Austrians eagerly participated in Hitler's Empire-building and believed in the racial/imperialist ideas of *Lebensraum*. In places like Serbia and the Balkans, Austrians were even in the vanguard of Nazi repression and extermination of undesirable populations.⁸ On the other hand, Austrians soon after the *Anschluß* started to experience the Nazi system of *Gleichschaltung* and widespread oppression and control by intimidation. Either you collaborated or your life was in danger. In this sense, the juggernaut of Nazi *occupation* imprinted itself on the lives of the *Ostmark* the more brutal it became as the war continued and the less likely an *Endsieg* was in sight. Resistance to the Nazi regime was weak in the *Ostmark* and “public opinion” by and large supported the regime until the bitter end in spite of growing apathy and typical *Raunzerei*.⁹

So it was an “occupation” of sorts, approved by probably the majority of the population in 1938, with the support declining in the course of the war. It was also an occupation that was much more tyrannical and murderous vis-à-vis the Austrian population than the postwar Allied occupation ever was (the

⁷ Hans Umbreit quoted in “Germany.” *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, 464f.

⁸ Hans Safrian, *Die Eichmann-Männer*, Vienna: Europaverlag, 1993.

⁹ Hermann Hagspiel, *Die Ostmark: Österreich im Großdeutschen Reich 1938 bis 1945*, Vienna: Braumüller, 1995; Emmerich Talos, Ernst Hanisch, and Wolfgang Neugebauer, eds., *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich 1938-1945*, Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1988; Ernst Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates: Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, Vienna: Ueberreuther, 1994, 337-94; Evan Burr Bukey, *Public Opinion in the Ostmark* (manu-script - forthcoming); Günter Bischof, “Anglo-Amerikanische Planungen und Überlegungen der österreichischen Emigration während des Zweiten Weltkrieges für Nachkriegsösterreich.” *Österreich 1945: Ein Ende und viele Anfänge*. 1997, 15-51. Ed. Manfried Rauchensteiner and Wolfgang Etschmann. Graz: Styria.

Soviet zone included!). Certainly vis-à-vis the Austrian Jews and gypsies the Nazi occupation of Austria (with the help of the native Austrian Nazis) differed little from that of Poland and the Soviet occupied areas. In terms of economic exploitation of Austria, the record was mixed as well. While the Nazis squeezed the natural resources and the manpower of the *Ostmark* colony until the pips squeaked, it also invested and modernized the Austrian economy for war production related purposes. If the American Marshall Plan was the most generous economic aid program ever designed by an occupation power, Hitler's economic plan for the *Ostmark* during World War II was extremely crucial as well for Austrian postwar economic recovery.¹⁰

3. Ten Years of Allied Occupation

Did the Austrians feel "liberated," or invaded and reoccupied when the Allies came in April/May 1945? It is treacherous to make sweeping generalizations. Undoubtedly, the vast majority welcomed the end to the long night of Nazi terror and "approved" the invasion of the new "liberators." Undoubtedly, many feared Allied retribution for the war crimes they had witnessed willy-nilly, or even participated in (having just yesterday themselves frequently been "liberators" and "occupiers" of the Eastern *Lebensraum*). Now the tables were turned and the "unconditional surrender" doctrine struck terror into the minds of the "Übermenschen" now humiliated and occupied. Further differentiations need to be made. Many did not approve of the Allied "liberators" particularly not of the Red Army sort, looting and raping their way into Eastern Austria, in the very fashion Nazi propaganda had promised.¹¹ Certainly, almost everyone hoped that according to the "Moscow Declaration" the Allies would be merciful to "Hitler's first victim" Austria and would vacate the country quickly and reestablish Austria's independence and full sovereignty.¹²

Yet from the Allied perspective it was more complicated than simply living up to their wartime propaganda promises. Austria was a parcel in the estate left over by Nazi Germany, part of the "*Konkursmasse des Großdeutschen Reiches*," as Gerald Stourzh has aptly put it.¹³ Austrian historians (myself

¹⁰ See Günter Bischof, "Foreign Aid and Austria's Economic Recovery after World II." *New Directions in Economic and Security Policy: U.S. - West European Relations in a Period of Crisis*. Ed. Werner J. Feld. Boulder: Westview, 1985, 79-91 (with further literature).

¹¹ Margarethe Hannl, "Mit den 'Russen' leben. Besatzungszeit im Mühlviertel 1945-1955." *Zeitgeschichte* 16 (1989): 147-66.

¹² Glimpses of Austrian views of "liberation" can be gleaned from the case studies in Meinrad Ziegler and Waltraud Kannonier-Finster, *Österreichs Gedächtnis: Über Erinnern und Vergessen der NS-Vergangenheit*, Vienna: Böhlau, 1993.

¹³ Gerald Stourzh, "Erschütterung und Konsolidierung des Österreichbewußtseins – vom

included) have neglected the fact that the first Allied Control Agreement on Austria of July 1945 indeed saw it as the task of the Allied Council to make sure Austria abided by the rules of the German surrender terms, as Thomas Angerer has reminded us.¹⁴ Allied control severely restricted Austrian sovereignty even after the second more lenient Control Agreement of June 1946. This “liberation turned into an occupation” (Gruber’s “*Befreierokkupation*”), as the Austrians perceived it, increasingly grated on them (see the speeches quoted above).

It is ironic that Austrian criticism of the ongoing occupation grew, the longer it lasted and the more invisible and benign this Allied “tutelage” or “foreign interference” turned.¹⁵ In the first couple of years after the end of the war, the Austrians accepted Allied control of Austrian affairs more readily than in the 1950s when the Austrian treaty negotiations carried on seemingly interminably and with no end in sight. In 1945/46 the liberated Austrians experienced and largely accepted the full force of harsh occupation policies, akin to what Germany predicated on the retributive and revengeful “Morgenthau mentality.”¹⁶ Austrians, like Germans, experienced severe political, economic and cultural controls, denazification, demilitarization, censorship and all kinds of social restrictions like “non-fraternization.”

Without being able to make subtle distinctions here, it was above all the Soviets who displayed this “Morgenthau mentality,” subjecting Eastern Austria to a fearful occupation reminiscent of the Nazi regime. Many Austrians did not welcome the Soviet occupiers as “liberators.” Given that they were “Slavic *Untermenschen*” and that they had an ax to grind with all “Germans” after their occupation of the Soviet Union, they were feared in Austria more than the Nazis ever were. Austrian postwar selective memory only confirmed this perception.¹⁷ The Red Army rolled over Eastern Austria like the rest of Nazi-

Zusammenbruch der Monarchie zur Zweiten Republik.” *Was heißt Österreich? Inhalt und Umfang des Österreichbegriffs vom 10. Jahrhundert bis heute*. Ed. Richard G. Plaschka, Gerald Stourzh and Jan Paul Niederkorn. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1995, 309.

¹⁴ Angerer, “Der ‘bevormundete Vormund’.”

¹⁵ For a discussion of Allied “tutelage” over occupied Austria see Günter Bischof and Josef Leidenfrost, eds., *Die bevormundete Nation: Österreich und die Alliierten 1945-1949*. Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag, 1988. For a critique of the “Bervormundung” discourse and, from the perspective of the French occupiers, a more subtle language of Allied “Beeinflussung,” see Angerer, “Der ‘bevormundete Vormund’.”

¹⁶ Professor Brian Loring Villa from the University of Ottawa has coined this term in an unpublished essay in my hands.

¹⁷ On the theme of selective memory and the postwar conflation of German victimization by the Allies with the victims of Nazi Germany, see Robert G. Moeller, “War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany.” *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 1008-49. Moeller’s theses are very applicable to postwar Austrian historical memory of World

controlled Eastern Europe and seized everything that could be carried away as war booty. The Soviets also demonstrated their ultimate control as an occupation power by rubbing in their victory and subjecting the apprehensive female population to the terrible fury of the raping *soldateska*. The Soviets exploited their Austrian zone of occupation in the manner of a subject colony similar to their German zone.¹⁸ They pressed more than a billion dollars of reparations out of Austria and made the country pay dearly for the role Austrians played in Hitler's armies.¹⁹ They subjected the population of their zone to countless indignities and humiliations to drive home the point of who was in control.²⁰ Surely it was above all this record which the Austrian politicians had in mind when for diplomatic reasons they blasted the occupation powers *in toto*.

Yet the Western occupation powers were not without fault. Gruber & Co. were similarly upset about being drawn into the Cold War maelstrom of East-West tensions, which after 1948 more than anything else prolonged the Allied presence in Austria. As World War II and its horrors receded into historical memory, the Austrian population no longer viewed the Western Allies as "liberators." Austrians increasingly disapproved of the burdensome ongoing foreign presence (Western troops included) and increasingly perceived them as an oppressive foreign *occupation* force. Yet at the same time as Austrian politicians blasted these foreign "usurpers," they tacitly began to welcome the presence of these Western forces as a guarantee against Communist takeover.

As a result of the Czech Coup, the Berlin crisis, and the Korean War the Cold War was "militarized" in Austria as elsewhere.²¹ After the so-called Communist "putsch attempt" in Austria in the fall of 1950, the hard core of reliable anti-Communists in the Figl government gave in to American blandishments to start a secret rearmament of Austria. Pentagon planners feared that a withdrawal of occupation forces would open up a strategic vacuum in

War II. See also the essays by Heidemarie Uhl and Günter Bischof in *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*. Ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka (Contemporary Austrian Studies 5). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1997, 32-63, 302-41.

¹⁸ For the German zone, see Norman Naimark's brilliant study *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1995, 69-140; for Austria, see Klaus-Dieter Mulley's paper in *Österreich unter Alliierter Besatzung* (forthcoming); and Günter Bischof, "Between Responsibility and Rehabilitation: Austria in International Politics 1940-1950," PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1989, ch. 2.

¹⁹ Bischof, "Between Responsibility and Rehabilitation," ch. 5.

²⁰ See for example the local study by Edmund Merl, *Besatzungszeit im Mühlviertel*, Grünbach: Edition Geschichte der Heimat, 1989.

²¹ Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989; Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Austria, which was unacceptable in this hot phase of the Cold War. In the years 1951-54 Austria became a “secret ally” of the West – with the nucleus of an Austrian Army being trained by the Americans, with the defense of Austria being included into NATO defense planning, with CIA “dirty” warfare entering the Austrian Alps as secret arms caches were placed into remote locations for future Austrian guerrillas to defend the “*Alpenfestung*” against Communist invaders (inviting a future Bay of Pigs?). During the Korean War this sort of secret Allied military and strategic interference became acceptable to the top Austrian leadership at the same time as the Allied occupation was cynically blasted in Sunday speeches and put on an equal footing with Hitler’s “occupation.”²²

We all know that Austria’s economic survival and miraculous recovery would not have been possible (or at least would have taken much longer) without generous American financial aid. The Austrians in their economic misery relentlessly pushed for American economic aid and in this sense invited in a larger American commitment. Clearly, Washington invested a billion-and-a-half dollars of economic aid into Austria for the strategic purpose of containing Communism in a vital Central European position rather than for creating economic dependency in a place that had never been important as a U.S. foreign market. In a similar fashion Norway received an even higher per capita amount of Marshall funds to contain Communism on a vital spot of the Northern European periphery. It is not widely known that Norway and Austria, two small European countries but crucial Cold War battlegrounds, received the highest per capita average in Marshall aid of all 16 ERP recipients.

Warren Cohen surely is correct when he notes that Truman’s national security advisers “provided the foundation for an extraordinary level of prosperity for all who accepted American hegemony for the next two decades.”²³ Yet Anders Stephanson is also right in observing that “containment paved the way for an enormously powerful United States to expand its influence on a global scale and effectively establish hegemony over the world of industrial capitalism.”²⁴

²² Günter Bischof, “Österreich – ein ‘geheimer Verbündeter’ des Westens? Wirtschafts- und Sicherheitspolitische Fragen der Integration aus der Sicht der USA.” *Österreich und die europäische Integration 1945-1953*. Ed. Michael Gehler and Rolf Steininger. Vienna: Böhlau, 1993, 425-50; idem, “Austria looks to the West”: Kommunistische Putschgefahr, geheime Wiederbewaffnung und Westorientierung am Anfang der fünfziger Jahre.” *Österreich in den Fünfziger Jahren*. Ed. Thomas Albrich et al. Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 1995, 183-210.

²³ Warren I. Cohen, *America in the Age of Soviet Power 1945-1991* (Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations 4), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 36.

²⁴ Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1995, 123.

4. What kind of “American Empire”?

Which brings us to the final question of what kind of “American Empire” the emerging postwar American preponderance of power created? The short answer is that global American positions of strategic hegemony, the preservation of a liberal world trading system and the promotion of American core values around the world at best can be called the building of an *informal empire* akin to the mid-Victorian British Empire. Postwar American supremacy was indirect and generally in accordance with the will of the people under American influence.²⁵ The U.S. was mobilizing the free world and regenerating it with its superior political and economic system of liberal democracy and industrial capitalism.²⁶ The Evil Empire needed to be contained by American superiority – by its “moral hegemony.”²⁷ In Western Europe at least (the Third World is another story), American hegemony was not tyrannizing subject peoples as the Soviets did in Eastern Europe.

Germany and Japan had experienced total defeat in 1945 and were highly receptive to a drastic reorientation according to American values – American rule was accepted and even popular.²⁸ “Liberated” Austria never experienced this total mental shock of absolute defeat (even though individual Austrians surely did). Given Austria’s ambiguous international status, the political elite was left in the world of make-believe with its notion of Austria as “Hitler’s first victim” and therefore never accepted Allied tutelage as readily as Germany and Japan. In this sense Austrian political culture never was “Americanized” like Germany’s and Japan’s (I’m not entering Reinhold Wagnleitner’s domain of cultural predominance here²⁹).

²⁵ See Geir Lundestad’s insightful analysis “The American ‘Empire’ 1945-1990” in his collection of essays *The American ‘Empire’ and Other Studies of US Foreign Policy in a Comparative Perspective*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, 55 and *passim*. This is a more subtly argued essay than his oft-quoted “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952.” *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (1986); 263-77. The classic study of informal empire remains Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, London, 1961; for useful summaries of recent literature on imperialism, see Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism*. Transl. P.S. Falla, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; and Winfried Baumgart, *Imperialism: The Idea of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

²⁶ Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*, 124; Tony Smith, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 113-76.

²⁷ For “moral hegemony,” see Walter Isaacson’s tribute to McGeorge Bundy, *Time*, Sept. 30, 1996, 34.

²⁸ Lundestad, *American “Empire”*, 61f.

²⁹ Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the*

At least in its self-perception and missionary rhetoric, one of the basic premises is that the U.S. was an inherently anti-colonial power.³⁰ Most American historians bought into this national mythology by refusing to call American expansionism in the 19th century what it was – imperialism.³¹ This in spite of its aggressive continental imperialism in the 19th century – its god-given “manifest destiny.”³² After its continental imperial expansion, the U.S. did not follow the course of European imperialism at the turn of the century and built a formal empire of vast overseas colonial possessions. Richard Overy has a point when he argues that these overseas bases in the Caribbean and Pacific prior to World War II “were sentry posts to the western hemisphere and not stepping stones to world empire.”³³

Postwar American hegemony was premised on the foundation of the national security imperative as Melvyn Leffler has so convincingly shown in his recent studies. The U.S. created military bases around the world and economic dependencies but never a formal empire. It was the specter of Communism that overcame American isolationism and fashioned the shaky domestic Cold War consensus. The U.S. had to be drawn kicking and screaming into assuming its global interests. The merger of ideological rivalry with and fear of the Soviet Union brought about the Cold War, which came to overshadow East-West battlegrounds such as Austria. Given the emerging Soviet threat, American officials became “keenly sensitive to the vulnerability of their domestic political and economic institutions.” With the advent of the Korean War the convictions of U.S. officials and European elites converged – “to contain Communism at home and Soviet power abroad.” In the early 1950s the U.S. assumed a position of hegemony in the international system, taking on the responsibilities of ensuring “the military security and financial liquidity of the non-communist world.” Given the drastic perception of the Soviet threat in the early 1950s the U.S. vigorously entered the realm of geopolitics to defend its core values and its material self-interests.³⁴

United States in Austria after World War II. Trans. Diana M. Wolf. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

³⁰ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

³¹ For a brilliant analysis of this theme, see Robin W. Winks, “The American Struggle with ‘Imperialism’: How Words Frighten.” *The American Identity: Fusion and Fragmentation*. Ed. Rob Kroes. Amsterdam: Amerika Instituut, 1980, 143-77.

³² Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*.

³³ Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, New York: Norton, 1995, 29.

³⁴ Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1994, vii-ix, 81f, 95 and passim; for a more complete analysis see his masterful *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992; For a more

Compared with their experiences under Hitler and Stalin, Austrians never felt the American presence as an imperial one. During the early Cold War struggle in Central Europe, Austria was important strategically to American national security managers but never economically. The U.S. never tried to control Austria in an imperial fashion in Michael Doyle's sense – *effectively* controlling its foreign and domestic policies.³⁵ It may have done so temporarily in places such as Guatemala, Cuba, Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia – but even there local successfully strongmen circumvented or resisted overbearing American tutelage and hegemonic control, much more so than Hungarian, Poles and Czechs ever managed to do.

Even though Leffler entirely ignores Austria, his interest and power oriented “national security” approach is highly applicable to American policies vis-à-vis postwar Austria. Austria certainly was a colony in Hitler’s Empire; Eastern Austria figured shortly as a colonial outpost in Stalin’s postwar Empire. Compared with the German and Soviet imperialist presence in Austria, the mild American hegemonic rule was benign and beneficial. It may have been popular to equate the harsh wartime German and the relatively moderate postwar Western occupations of Austria to vent frustrations. Yet it was also unconscionably populist and historically misleading to do so. But then, we all know that the quarry of history serves for most politicians as a vast arena for national mythmaking.

theoretical explication of Leffler’s approach, see his “National Security.” *Explaining American Foreign Relations*. Ed. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 202-13; see now also John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press, 1997.

³⁵ Michael W. Doyle, *Empires*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986, 44, 130 and *passim*.