

In recent decades, the West has become so accustomed to fervent Soviet professions of fidelity to peaceful coexistence that it is easy to forget just how sharply the post-Stalin conception of East-West relations diverges from the view that prevailed until Stalin's death in 1953. The Stalinist worldview was based upon a series of mutually reinforcing propositions which all pointed to the same gloomy conclusion: the Soviet Union was confronted by implacable enemies with whom no real co-operation was possible because they were resolutely dedicated to the destruction of the world's first socialist state.

A stark class-based interpretation of international politics served as the cornerstone of the entire edifice. A country's foreign policy was said to be unalterably determined by its economic system. The capitalist state was viewed as nothing more than the obedient tool of the bourgeoisie. The ruling capitalist elite was perceived as fearing the direct threat that socialism posed to its privileged class position and as being determined to use the state apparatus at its disposal to wage a total, unceasing struggle against the Soviet Union.

The analysis contained in Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* remained official dogma throughout Stalin's life. The inescapable laws of capitalism were seen as dictating not only hostility toward the Soviet Union but also the inevitability of war among the capitalist states themselves. However, the fact that the Soviet Union's foes would be warring among themselves was of little consolation to Stalin, since he did not believe that the Soviet Union could retreat into splendid isolation while its enemies annihilated one another.

On the contrary, the doctrine of the inevitability of war, as it was interpreted during the Stalin years, could not but encourage fatalism and passivity. Soviet security was seen as being directly threatened, since it was held to be virtually inevitable that once the capitalist nations began to fight among themselves, war would expand beyond its initial confines and engulf the Soviet Union. Yet despite this clear and present danger, the Soviet Union was seen as being largely