

7. The Limits of Universalism: American Postwar Planning for Eastern Europe and the USSR, 1941-1943

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Welles's efforts to shape the administration's postwar designs for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe sharply demonstrated the difficulties of applying Wilsonian principles, such as self-determination and free trade, all over the world. He believed postwar planning should be predicated upon the fact that after the war the United States and the Soviet Union would be the world's two greatest powers. Yet Welles was infuriated by the German-Soviet nonaggression pact of August 1939 and he became alarmed by Moscow's actions toward Poland, Finland, and the Baltic states between 1939 and 1940, and after leading the planners on a survey of Soviet territorial aims in the spring of 1942, he more fully understood the implications of the Russians inevitably obtaining control over vast territories in Eastern Europe after the war.



While he recognized that Moscow's aims would clash with the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms, he continued to believe that *entente* with Moscow should remain paramount to all other considerations. After all, good relations with Moscow would be absolutely necessary to bring about the kind of world order he desired. With Britain so weakened by the war, and China still an uncertain player in the realm of world and regional leadership, an understanding with Moscow seemed vital. Welles and the State Department's planners had thus, by the end of 1942, moved away from a policy designed to block limited Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe on the grounds that there was little or nothing that the United States could do to prevent it. 1

As the planners continued their investigations, Welles grew more concerned that his conception of a new order hinged not so much on the creation of an international organization, or even upon the threat of upheaval in the colonial world, but rather on what the Kremlin would insist upon to achieve its security and how these Russian demands could be reconciled with Washington's. Welles and his fellow planners anticipated that difficulties might arise between the U.S. and the USSR, but their inability to find a way to resolve the impending crisis in Eastern Europe illustrated their inability to reconcile Washington's and Moscow's aims. The frustration they faced underscored the futility of extending their principles throughout the world. At the same time, it also demonstrated the willingness of U.S. officials to look the other way when faced with the compromise of their principles and foreshadowed the uncertain nature of the American response to Soviet intentions in the years after Welles's resignation.

During the 1930s, Welles had held ambivalent views toward the



Soviet Union. While often dubious of Moscow's sincerity, he usually supported closer relations, if only to promote U.S. interests. He often looked for ways that Moscow might aid American interests in the Far East. Even before Roosevelt's first inauguration he emphasized to the president the possibility of using Russian recognition as a means of putting indirect pressure on Japan, which was then engaged in the conquest of Manchuria. [2](#) He acknowledged that the Soviet Union had been prescient about the Nazi threat in the mid-1930s, and he thought Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet foreign minister (1930-1939) and later ambassador to Washington (1941-1943), a very capable statesman. Like Welles, Litvinov had labored to organize an international conference in 1938 to avert the impending world crisis. Curiously, despite Welles's praise, he opposed Litvinov's plan at the time; he did not believe Washington should put much stock in a plan devised in the Kremlin. [3](#)

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At the same time, Welles had poor relations with the State Department's Russia specialists, led by Robert Kelley, the head of the Eastern Europe Division (1926-1937) and an admirer of Czarist Russia who had supervised the training of George Kennan, Loy Henderson, and Charles Bohlen. During these years the administration contained opposing factions regarding Russian policy. One camp, consisting of Kelley, Kennan, and Henderson, had been schooled in Riga, Latvia, during the period of non-recognition, studying Russian language and culture and associating with Russian exiles, Baltic peoples, and other opponents of the Soviet system. [4](#)

The other faction consisted of Welles, U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Joseph Davies (1937-1938), Henry Wallace, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Welles believed that, despite all of the difficulties, Washington should seek better relations with Moscow and attempt to create the best relationship possible. Upon Davies's appointment, Welles told the new ambassador that, "friendly relations and cooperation should be restored particularly in view of the Chinese-Japanese situation and the possibility of world war starting in Europe." [5](#) Davies agreed, and was subject to constant criticism from the so-called "Riga camp," which believed Welles and Davies to be naive about Soviet ambitions. [6](#)

Loy Henderson, who had served William Bullitt in Moscow, often as acting chief of mission, warned his fellow Russianists that Welles was "extremely able and ambitious" and "impatient with any person or thing that might restrict his activities or block his advancement." Robert Kelley would discover this for himself in June 1937, when Welles, reorganizing the department, summoned Kelley to inform him that his job had been abolished, exiling him to a posting in Turkey. "We have been liquidated," Kelley lamented to his colleagues. [7](#)

The Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of August 1939 had shattered most of

the good will Welles had for the Russians. Hitler's "carrot" for Stalin in the pact included an opportunity for the Soviet Union to recover the western territories of the old Russian Empire lost during the First World War. These included Estonia and Latvia, the Romanian province of Bessarabia, and dominance in Finland (but not Lithuania). Stalin also made territorial gains at Poland's expense. [8](#)

Welles demonstrated his disapproval of Moscow's aggression against Poland during a tense and confrontational meeting with Soviet Ambassador Constantine Oumansky (1939-1941), who brought along the new counselor at the Soviet embassy, the dour Andrei Gromyko. Welles, angry about the Soviet invasion of Poland, sat in sullen silence as Oumansky nervously fumbled to make conversation. After the meeting, Welles reported that he had deliberately "adopted a completely negative attitude throughout the conversation, making it necessary for the Ambassador to take the initiative in any topics he brought up, even though conversation lapsed upon occasion for as much as a minute or two." [9](#)

The subsequent "Winter War" between the USSR and Finland in November 1939 further darkened Welles's mood, and for a time he considered recommending the severing of diplomatic relations. Moscow's subsequent actions in August 1940, swallowing up the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, also angered him and further chilled Washington's relations with the Soviets. He saw the terms of incorporation as completely contrary to international law. Only a year before, the Baltic states had been admitted to the League of Nations, thereby confirming their sovereign status. But the Nazi-Soviet Pact justified their absorption on the grounds that they were geographically and historically part of Russia. Fraudulent plebiscites held in each country in July called for their annexation to the Soviet Union. [10](#) In response, the State Department froze the assets of the Baltic nations, and Welles publicly called the elections "devious," adding that the tiny Baltic nations had been "deliberately annihilated" by a larger and more powerful Soviet Union that practiced "predatory activities" backed by "the use of force...." [11](#)

Welles advised the president that, while there was little they could do about the Soviet takeover, Washington should refuse to acknowledge its legality by continuing to recognize the Baltic diplomatic missions and consulates. [12](#) United States policy toward incorporation (as publicly articulated by Welles himself) remained clear: the United States would not recognize the disappearance of the Baltic states and would remain "opposed to any form of intervention on the part of one State, however powerful, in the domestic concerns of any other sovereign state, however weak." [13](#)

To demonstrate U.S. disapproval of Moscow's actions in the Baltic, the administration imposed a "moral embargo" to curtail trade with the Soviet Union. Washington placed numerous restrictions on imports from the Soviet

Union, and even more stringent prohibitions were placed on American exports to the USSR. Roosevelt also considered breaking off diplomatic relations. He had earlier complained to Welles about Moscow's "downright rudeness," and suggested that Welles tell Oumansky that, "the President honestly wonders whether the Soviet Government considers it worthwhile to continue diplomatic relations." By the summer of 1940, relations between the two nations were at their lowest point since recognition in 1933. [14](#)

Welles remained angry at Moscow's indifference to international standards and world opinion. To Welles, Moscow's desire for security and territory on its western frontier flew in the face of Wilsonian strictures about self-determination and territorial aggrandizement. He assumed the "moral embargo" would influence Soviet behavior, and he believed the United States so economically strong and Moscow so desperate for U.S. aid that such sanctions could influence the Kremlin's actions.

Yet he also thought relations between Washington and Moscow were not completely irreparable. He believed German expansionism far and away a greater threat to U.S. interests than Soviet aims, and he hoped the USSR could provide a powerful counterweight to Germany. He believed the nonaggression pact between Moscow and Berlin would prove incompatible with the long-term aims of both nations, and he became attuned to the prospect of dissension between them. He also suspected that France's abrupt defeat in June 1940 would alarm Stalin. After a meeting with British Ambassador Lord Lothian at the height of the German triumph in France, Welles noted that, "while there was no indication that the Soviet Union was as yet prepared to break away from her agreements with Germany, there was a very clear indication that increasing apprehension existed on the part of Mr. Molotov and of the Soviet Government with regard to the unexpected German victories and the strengthening of Germany's position vis-à-vis Russia as a result thereof." [15](#)

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Welles subsequently raised with the president the possibility of opening discussions with Ambassador Oumansky as a way to offer subtle inducements to improve relations with the Russians and to explore further the relationship between Moscow and Berlin. He expected no immediate shifts in Soviet policy, but may only have sought, as Thomas Maddux has argued, to keep Stalin "on the fence" by deterring Moscow from any alliance with Japan while at the same time encouraging any possible friction between the Soviet Union and Germany. [16](#) Welles may also have hoped that the reestablishment of high-level contacts would reassure Moscow of Washington's good faith. Furthermore, with France now out of the war and Britain cut off from the rest of Europe, he concluded that, whatever Washington's feelings about the regime in Moscow, the Soviet Union offered the only prospect of defeating Germany on the continent. [17](#)

Welles would hold twenty-seven meetings with Oumansky in the year between the fall of France and the outbreak of war between Germany and

the Soviet Union. Sometimes their discussions dragged on for hours, covering issues as specific as Moscow's requests for machine tools, and at times addressing matters as broad as the European balance of power. The Welles-Oumansky exchanges would have important consequences for later Soviet-American relations during the war, and would help lay the initial groundwork for the future Grand Alliance.

Welles also hoped such contacts might enable the United States to conduct discussions with Soviet officials without interference from London. He remained suspicious that the British would seek agreements with Moscow that might prove embarrassing to the United States. He reasoned that regular exchanges with the Russians would make it more difficult for London to go behind Washington's back to cut a deal with Moscow.

He also endeavored to use the talks to prevent a complete break in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. He urged caution when Roosevelt considered closing Soviet consulates and imposing additional restrictions on Soviet diplomatic activity in Washington. Welles told the president that such actions "would render futile the efforts which we are making just now in a continuing series of negotiations that are going on with the Soviet Ambassador to remove some of the obstacles that might permit an improvement of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union." He also aimed to pressure the Soviets to adhere to international standards. He thought he could achieve that aim by continuing the dialogue with Oumansky while maintaining recognition of the Baltic missions and consulates and keeping up the pressure of the "moral embargo." [18](#)

Initially, Welles and Oumansky discussed the Kremlin's need for export licenses for strategic items. He bluntly warned Oumansky that it would be difficult to fulfill any of his requests. Numerous points of contention still existed, such as U.S. outrage over the nonaggression pact with Berlin, the subsequent division of spoils in Poland, Russian absorption of the Baltic states, and the Winter War against Finland. He told Oumansky that, while their two nations might disagree over particular issues, such as the treatment of the Baltic peoples, they should "agree to disagree but that they would endeavor, so far as possible, to eliminate other points of disagreement between them." [19](#)

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Welles's discussions with Oumansky soon provoked opposition from the State Department's Russia specialists, who feared that an "accommodationist" like Welles would concede too much to the Russians. "I do not need to labor the point with you that this is the wrong approach to these people," Loy Henderson wrote to Lawrence Steinhardt, the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow (1939-1941). "[The Russians] are realists, if ever there are any realists in this world ... I personally have some grave doubts that our policy of so-called appeasement will get us any place." Welles, sensing a desire on the part of Henderson and Kelley to sabotage the talks, resolved to keep the specialists in the dark about the negotiations. [20](#)

Welles also emphasized to Oumansky the common interests of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Far East. He told Oumansky that Germany's pact with Japan posed a serious threat to the security of the USSR. He explicitly played the "Japan card" with the Russians, emphasizing that Japanese domination of China and the spread of Japanese power in the region were contrary to the interests of both Washington and Moscow. [21](#)

The Welles-Oumansky talks demonstrated the administration's willingness to seek better relations with the USSR despite the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, paving the way for the United States to one day grant Lend-Lease aid to Moscow in the not too distant future. For the Russians, the talks proved fruitful when Welles informed Oumansky in January 1941 that the United States would lift the yearlong "moral embargo." [22](#)

Around the same time, Welles obtained evidence that proved "beyond the shadow of a doubt" that a German attack on Russia would be launched in the spring. He convinced Roosevelt and Hull that this information should be passed to Oumansky at once. [23](#) In March, he received a memorandum from a Greek diplomat in Washington giving further evidence that Germany would soon attack Russia. The following day, he provided Oumansky with the latest evidence. Oumansky looked visibly stricken. "I fully realize the gravity of the message you have given me," the ambassador replied. "My government will be very grateful for your confidence and I will inform it immediately of our conversation." [24](#) In subsequent meetings Welles continued to press his point that Washington and Moscow had a commonality of interests in seeing Hitler stopped, telling Oumansky that the Axis invasion of the Balkans in early April 1941 "must inevitably prove to be profoundly disquieting to the Soviet Government." [25](#)

The Russians did little with these and other warnings about the impending German attack. Stalin may have thought that he could continue to finesse the diplomatic situation in Europe indefinitely, or perhaps the Russians thought such warnings merely a Western attempt to trick Moscow into war with Germany. [26](#) When the Germans finally attacked on June 22, 1941, Welles, as acting secretary of state, sensed an opportunity to underscore to the United States and the world the radically changed nature of the war. He and Roosevelt aimed to expand America's role as the German threat increased and wanted publicly to promise aid to the Soviet Union. [27](#)

One day before the attack, the State Department's Division of European Affairs had prepared memoranda outlining what American policy should be in the event of war between Russia and Germany. The division continued its cautious approach toward Russia, warning that the United States should make no promise of aid. "We should steadfastly adhere to the line that the Soviet Union is fighting Germany does not mean that it is defending, struggling for, or adhering to, the principles in international relations which we are supporting." [28](#)

Welles rejected such views, despite the fact that many analysts predicted little more than three weeks of Soviet resistance. On the morning of June 23, he met with Roosevelt to show him a draft statement on the U.S. reaction to the German attack. Roosevelt approved of his suggestions: the United States would release Soviet economic credits at once and promise American aid under its policy of giving assistance to any nation fighting Axis aggression. This would prove significant to the outcome of the war and, in particular, to wartime U.S.-Soviet relations. [29](#)

Welles understood the symbolic importance of Washington's reaction to the German invasion. "If any further proof could conceivably be required of the real purposes and projects of the present leaders of Germany for world domination," he told a packed press conference later that day, "it is now furnished by Hitler's treacherous attack upon Soviet Russia." [30](#)

Welles's remarks were met with hostility. In Washington, there was widespread skepticism over the prospects for the Soviet Union's survival. Within the State Department, the Russia experts remained doubtful of Moscow's chances and even of Russia's suitability as a recipient of U.S. aid. "The Reds," exclaimed an editorial in Hearst's *New York Journal-American*, "are now a greater menace than ever to our well-being because of the virtual endorsement of Russia as a 'democratic' ally of the USA by the mouthpiece of the administration, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles." Ohio's Robert Taft told the Senate: "The victory of Communism in the world would be far more dangerous to the United States than a victory of Fascism," and Senator Burton Wheeler of Montana added, "I don't think the American people will stand for us to tie up with the Communists. ... Now we can just let Joe Stalin and the other dictators fight it out." John T. Flynn of the America First Committee declared, "If Germany wins, Russia will go Fascist. If Russia wins, Germany will go Communist. There is no chance for us at all. The question now is, are we going to fight to make Europe safe for Communism?" [31](#)

Welles nevertheless resolved to assist the Russian war effort in every way he could, ensuring that Moscow's orders for war materiel were expedited and proclaiming America's solidarity with the USSR. When Oumansky presented him with extensive shopping lists for war materiel, he sped the requests to the appropriate departments and agencies. [32](#) He became progressively more concerned about relations with the Kremlin than with Whitehall, primarily because Soviet aims seemed more crucial to future world stability. Central to the strategy of making Moscow an equal partner was Welles's inclination to address Russian aims by showing that he understood and respected Moscow's interests. Furthermore, he became particularly anxious to secure Stalin's approval of postwar plans. To Welles's way of thinking, Moscow had not yet blatantly contradicted the spirit of the Atlantic Charter (the Baltic states notwithstanding), and he held out hope that he



and the planners might come up with some means of redirecting or moderating Moscow's aims. [33](#)

Differences between Washington and London over how to respond to Russian territorial demands often set Welles at odds with British officials. He feared that any attempt by London to meet Russian demands in Poland or the Baltic states would undermine the chances for a peace based upon the principles of the Atlantic Charter. But the British had their own ideas about how the Russians should be approached.

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Two months before the beginning of Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the USSR, Foreign Secretary Eden had raised the possibility of recognizing Stalin's territorial acquisitions obtained between 1939-1940. [34](#) For some months after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Stalin sought British recognition of these spoils. [35](#) Churchill, Attlee, and other British officials were strongly resistant to any concessions, and for a time London refused to recognize the USSR's new boundaries. [36](#)

At the end of 1941, Stalin showed his hand to the British. He desired recognition of Russia's pre-Barbarossa frontiers, which incorporated the Baltic states, a large portion of Poland, part of Finland, and portions of Romania such as Bukovina and Bessarabia. [37](#) Eden and other Foreign Office officials worried that Stalin might try to obtain a separate peace with Hitler, so they decided that concessions should be made to Stalin to ensure he remained in the war. [38](#) Eden wanted to smooth relations with Moscow as much as possible, but he realized that any attempt to appease the Kremlin would be difficult to reconcile with the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Eden anticipated that the Americans, particularly Welles, would oppose any settlement contrary to the spirit of the charter. [39](#)

Welles indeed feared and anticipated that London would not hesitate to violate the principles of the Atlantic Charter in exchange for an accord with Moscow. Prior to the German attack on the Soviet Union, he warned Halifax of the dangers of recognizing Soviet gains. Halifax stunned Welles with his cynical attitude toward the Kremlin's aims, particularly in the Baltics. The ambassador described the Baltic region as populated with people whom he did not think deserved "very much respect or consideration" and whose fate might easily be exchanged for Stalin's future good will. Halifax reminded Welles that the Baltic peoples had only been independent of Russia for two decades. It therefore would not much matter if they once again lost their freedom. [40](#)

Welles angrily responded that recognizing Stalin's "loot" was hardly distinguishable from acquiescing to what Hitler had already done throughout much of Europe. He asked the British diplomat if such views extended to Finland, which had also achieved its independence from Russia at the end of

World War I. Halifax merely replied that he "did not have the same respect and regard for the Baltic peoples that he did for the Finnish people." [41](#)

Another significant obstacle to London's desire to mollify Stalin came from those nations that would be making the actual concessions to the Russians. Poland, for example, presented an obstacle to British efforts to appease Stalin's aims. The British also understood that the Americans would oppose any efforts to pressure the Poles to make territorial concessions. Welles, for one, had established close relations with the Polish government-in-exile, and he understood that Polish suspicions of Moscow's ambitions ran deep and were often stronger than their hatred of Germany. [42](#)

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Polish officials in exile, fearing an anticipated British effort to reach an accord with Moscow, appealed to Welles for help, warning that territorial concessions to Stalin would be contrary to American ideals. The Polish ambassador in Washington, Jan Ciechanowski, told Welles he hoped that "if and when Russia turned to the United States for assistance, [Washington would] insist that Russia agree to restore to the Polish people that portion of Polish territory which had been occupied by Russia as a result of the partition agreement with Germany." [43](#)

Through his extensive meetings with Oumansky, Welles had already experienced the depth of Russian paranoia over its western frontier, and he continued to worry that any Anglo-Soviet accord would violate several tenets of the Atlantic Charter. [44](#) He nonetheless reassured the Poles that their territorial integrity and their right to self-determination would be upheld under the charter. [45](#)

During subsequent meetings with Welles, Prime Minister Wladyslaw Sikorski, Ambassador Ciechanowski, and Foreign Minister Edward Raczynski warned Welles that Eden's efforts to sign a treaty with Stalin would not only completely undermine their independence, but might bring an abrupt end to their two-decades old revival as a nation state. Sikorski warned him that, if the British appeased the Kremlin by confirming Russia's pre-1941 borders, the traditional Russian hunger for territory would soon extend beyond eastern Poland to the Balkans, Iran, and even the Dardanelles. [46](#)

Welles told the Poles that the Atlantic Charter's call for disarmament of the aggressor nations, particularly Germany, would in all probability provide Moscow with sufficient security to avoid Soviet meddling in Poland or outright territorial annexations. The pace of events seemed to dictate otherwise. He nonetheless continued to cling to the belief that the Atlantic Charter could condition the behavior of Moscow, that the great power politics of the past would disappear in the new world order while regionalism would enable the great powers to eschew formal territorial annexations. [47](#)

While British officials hoped Roosevelt would accept an accord with Moscow, they feared that Welles would pose a serious obstacle. Welles worried that the British desire for a treaty with Moscow would destroy the principle of self-determination, and his continued discussions with Halifax did nothing to allay his concerns. Welles thought the British were reverting back to the "worst phase of the spirit of Munich." "Could it be conceivable," he asked Halifax in February 1942, "that any healthy and lasting world order could be created on a foundation which implied the utter ignoring of all of the principles of independence, liberty, and self-determination which were set forth in the Atlantic Charter? If that was the kind of world we had to look forward to, I did not believe that the people of the United States would wish to be parties thereto." [48](#)

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Some attention must be paid, Welles argued, to the wishes of the people in the areas in question. He was specifically concerned that a territorial agreement between Moscow and London so early in the war would be all too reminiscent of the secret treaties of the First World War. Why not let such issues wait until a peace conference, where everything could be put on the table? He told Halifax he "saw no hope for a stable and peaceful world in the future unless the new world order were built upon principles which could be maintained and to which adherence would be consistent. What peace could be envisaged if at this early stage in the war the British Government and ourselves agreed upon selling out millions of people who looked to us as their one hope in the future and if that new world order were based upon the domination of unwilling, resentful, and potent minorities by a state to which they would never give willing allegiance?" [49](#)

Welles warned Halifax that the president thought the British were acting "provincial." He said he believed any secret agreement with the Russians would violate the "sacred principles" of the Atlantic Charter in a "devious fashion" and might provoke "the most serious crisis" in relations between the United States and Great Britain. "The American people," he added, "would regard such an agreement as a shameful violation of one of the chief objectives for which they believed they were fighting." [50](#)



Welles thought London desired another Munich agreement—this time with Moscow over the Baltic. "The Baltic States had in fact been independent and self-governing republics," he lectured Halifax, adding that "it was unquestionably true that the vast majority of the peoples of those three nations did not desire domination, direct or indirect, by the Soviet Union; and the basic principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter would be violated if either Great Britain or the United States secretly agreed now to turn these peoples over to Russian domination." Halifax became alarmed when Welles hinted that Roosevelt desired direct discussions with Stalin over these matters, desiring instead to have Roosevelt talk to Ambassador Litvinov. [51](#)

Welles bristled when Halifax charged that he was not being "realistic." To mollify Welles, Halifax gave him Foreign Office memoranda explaining that Stalin should be placated to ensure a postwar equilibrium or "balance of power" in Europe. One memorandum accused the Americans of being "unduly optimistic in supposing that some other form of security in lieu of the reoccupation of the Baltic States will prove acceptable to M. Stalin." Halifax argued that Moscow had obtained territory in Finland, the Baltic states, Bessarabia, and Bukovina through legitimate treaties and plebiscites, thereby meeting the requirements of the Atlantic Charter. Halifax and his supporting documentation also warned that the alternative to appeasing Stalin would be "the establishment of Communist Governments in the majority of European countries." Halifax and Eden aimed to convince Welles that the Russians might seek a separate peace and would refuse to cooperate in the Far East. Furthermore, Foreign Office officials suggested that sacrificing the Baltic states might serve as a useful tradeoff for future Russian cooperation on territorial matters more vital to the British in the Dardanelles and the Persian Gulf. [52](#)

Halifax's comments, coupled with the Foreign Office's memoranda, did absolutely nothing to mollify Welles. Quite the contrary—Welles was outraged. He thought the British approach smacked of the worst excesses of "old diplomacy" where the great powers parceled out territory without ever considering the aspirations of the peoples affected. Yet he saw no contradiction between his criticism of the old diplomacy and his discussions in the planning committees about reordering the world in accord with U.S. interests.

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Eden's Private Secretary, Oliver Harvey, complained that Welles was "full of difficulties and objection" on the issue of Eastern Europe. Whenever Halifax approached him with proposals for concessions to Stalin, the under secretary protested that the principles of the Atlantic Charter must be strictly upheld. Halifax warned him that the ideals of the charter would have no future in Eastern Europe after the war unless Moscow felt secure with its postwar neighbors. Welles blandly responded that an Anglo-American pledge to contain Germany at the end of the war might be sufficient to satisfy the Kremlin's security concerns. [53](#)

In a March 1942 meeting between the president, Welles, and Admiral William Standley, the new U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union (February 1942-September 1943), Roosevelt warned that any secret agreements on the Baltic states "would be in violation not only of the Atlantic Charter but of the basic principles for which we are fighting." Roosevelt told Welles that he should "undertake to keep the British in line" and that perhaps after the war plebiscites might be held in the disputed territories to determine the true desires of the populations affected. Roosevelt repeated to Welles that such difficulties might magically disappear if only a personal meeting could be arranged between himself and Stalin. [54](#)

Eden explained to Churchill that London should immediately embark upon full discussions with Stalin on territorial matters: "... for such exchanges to take place with any chance of success," Eden wrote, "it is indispensable that we should first clear this frontier question out of the way. Otherwise Stalin will neither talk nor listen." Eden hoped that an immediate agreement on frontiers might restrain future Russian territorial ambitions. [55](#)

Churchill subsequently cabled Roosevelt, suggesting that "the principles of the Atlantic Charter ought not be construed so as to deny to Russia the frontiers which she occupied when Germany attacked her.... I hope therefore that you will be able to give us a free hand to sign the treaty which Stalin desires as soon as possible." Yet officials in London remained concerned that Welles would play the spoiler. Eden subsequently told Halifax to explain carefully to Welles that the war cabinet felt it "very desirable to have early discussions with the Russians on the whole conduct of the war in order, if possible, to find out what is on their minds. We are convinced that this will be impossible until Stalin's demands are got out of the way." [56](#)

In early April, Welles expressed to Halifax his disappointment that the rough outlines of the agreement between London and Moscow "contained nothing in the nature of any safeguard for the peoples of the Baltic republics." Welles proposed that measures be taken—such as population adjustments—to protect those who did not wish to be incorporated into the Soviet empire. He said that such safeguards would be "not only far more nearly in accord with the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, but would in my judgment, make it far easier for American public opinion to attempt to tolerate the transaction involved in the proposed treaty." [57](#)

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The British decided that the need for an accord with Moscow was so great that they should comply with most of Stalin's territorial demands in the Baltic, without regard to any of the stipulations Welles desired. He deplored the impending treaty between London and Moscow. "In my own judgment," Welles wrote to Berle, "the treaty violated the clear terms of the Atlantic Charter and is indefensible from every moral standpoint, and equally indefensible from the standpoint of the future peace and stability of Europe." He told Berle that he felt more strongly about the agreement than any other matter that had come before him in recent years. "The attitude of the British Government is ... not only indefensible from every moral standpoint, but likewise extraordinarily stupid," he wrote. "I am confident that no sooner will this treaty have been signed than Great Britain will be confronted with new additional demands for the recognition of the right of the Soviet Union to occupy Bucovina, Bessarabia, and very likely eastern Poland and northern Norway." [58](#)



The final version of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty stipulated that neither side would sign an armistice with the Axis powers without the consent of the other. As Welles had feared, London accepted Russia's territorial gains prior

to June 22, 1941, with the exception of eastern Poland, the question of which was for now left in abeyance. The two powers also agreed not to seek territory as the spoils of war and to avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other nations. [59](#)

Yet for all this, the treaty also illustrated the limits of Anglo-American solidarity. Welles remained angry. He harbored serious doubts about the future of Poland, and feared that the British were too willing to give the Russians a free hand in Eastern Europe and the Baltic region just so long as Moscow would respect Britain's more vital interests elsewhere. He worried that the British had only appeased Stalin's minimum aims, and he declared he was in "full accord" with Adolf Berle's characterization of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty as a "Baltic Munich." [60](#)

One week after the signing of the treaty, the British Minister in Washington, Sir Ronald Campbell, sought to persuade Welles that it really was in accord with the aims of the Atlantic Charter. [61](#) Despite British reassurances, Welles remained antagonistic to the treaty, which he continued to fear had set a dangerous precedent for Allied cooperation.

Nevertheless, the United States did have some leverage over the British and could easily have put up a more vigorous protest, or pressured London in some other way. Welles may have secretly felt that Washington could offer no viable alternative to the treaty. He may also have secretly feared that it was the best outcome possible under the circumstances and that it was better to let the British take the lead in making concessions to Stalin. [62](#)

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Whatever the case, Welles soon became animated by a desire to have the United States make its own way in its relations with the Soviet Union. He thought that as a preliminary step the postwar planning committees should explore Soviet war aims in more detail. Hence, in the wake of the controversies raised by the Anglo-Soviet Treaty,

Welles led the postwar planning committees on a detailed examination of Soviet foreign policy aims.

Welles's involvement in the postwar planning process significantly shaped his views about Soviet-American relations. The planning process also influenced the numerous members, many of whom would continue to shape American opinion and policy in the years to come. [63](#) Their discussions of the Kremlin's aims were based on a number of assumptions. First, they believed that Moscow must be a full partner in building the postwar world and an active participant in the new world organization. They also assumed that after the war the USSR would demand the recognition of its pre-1941 boundaries, thereby posing a number of political problems for those who sought to have the Soviet Union embrace the spirit of the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter. The planners felt it had been difficult enough to

urge London to apply the charter within the British Empire; Moscow's objectives would pose another problem altogether. [64](#)

The planners also had come to believe that, despite the prospect of postwar economic aid, the U.S. might not possess enough leverage to counter Soviet ambitions in Eastern Europe. Welles and his colleagues thus began their investigations with some understanding of the realities of the region. Welles believed some means must be found to subordinate particular differences with the Soviets while emphasizing the larger cause of Grand Alliance harmony. Yet, for all this, he understood that, as Moscow's aims in Eastern Europe became clearer, the task of soothing U.S. public opinion would become more difficult. [65](#)

Welles wanted the planners to find some formula to resolve these problems. The divergence between Soviet and American war aims was uppermost in their minds and, as early as December 1941, the department's planning staff sought to find areas where the great powers agreed on the various subjects treated in the Atlantic Charter. [66](#) With regard to the charter's article pledging the allied powers to forgo territorial aggrandizement during the war, the planners noted that the Soviets had not yet expressed any dissent over this pledge, but they also recognized that it would be difficult to influence Soviet actions in places like the Baltic states or the rest of Eastern Europe without the presence of U.S. troops in the region, a prospect they knew the Russians would never allow. [67](#)

Welles initiated discussions about the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe by emphasizing the root of the problem that would plague American policymakers throughout the war: while Moscow's statements and actions regarding its future intentions in Eastern Europe and the Baltics were highly dubious, Washington must continue to emphasize the need for good relations. He believed Moscow's lack of confidence in Washington to be one reason why the USSR sought its own security through territorial acquisition. He assumed relations with Moscow might be strengthened if the American government unequivocally reassured the Kremlin that it would cooperate in maintaining the peace of the world after the war. [68](#)

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Harmonious relations with Moscow would be necessary to ensure a stable postwar order, but Welles also acknowledged that the pursuit of better relations with Moscow would inevitably contradict numerous Wilsonian and Atlantic Charter principles such as self-determination and free trade. While he remained uncomfortable with the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, which he thought was nothing more than a spheres of influence backroom deal, he understood that a lack of Anglo-American troops in Eastern Europe at the end of the war would mean that Moscow would have a free hand there anyway. "If we recognize settlements," he told the planners in March 1942, "by which certain people are to remain under a sovereignty or system they do not desire, would we not in effect be approving conditions which would eventually undermine the peace?"

69

Welles defined this dilemma as the most serious challenge facing the planning committees. Yet he also recognized that, even if the United States could reach an agreement with the Soviet Union, there was no guarantee that Moscow would honor its pledges. When Adolf Berle reassured him that the Soviet Union had already informally agreed to much of the Atlantic Charter, Welles retorted that that had been the easy part, "but the tragedy is that while we can get acceptance, it will not mean that the principles will be carried out." 70

Welles and the planners, with their abhorrence of secret treaties, initially believed that Washington should avoid premature agreements with the other members of the Grand Alliance. In the course of their discussions they soon reversed themselves. Some matters might have to be decided prior to the end of the war, before all chance for an equitable settlement was lost forever. Within weeks of re-launching the postwar planning process, Welles had come around to the position that many agreements with the other members of the Grand Alliance must be reached sooner rather than later. He no longer feared that agreements between Moscow and the Western Allies would be reminiscent of the secret treaties of the First World War. He now worried that, if agreements securing the interests of the Soviet Union's neighbors were not reached during the war, it "would be of no avail to them to appeal in a few years to some international authority for a change, because it would probably not be possible to help them or alter the action." 71

Welles and his fellow planners moved gradually toward accepting the existence of a Soviet-controlled sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. They still resolved to apply universal principles to other parts of the world, but the realities of power politics in Eastern Europe undermined their efforts. Nearing the end of a planning meeting in March 1942, Welles told the committee that their discussions had "raised a fundamental problem of whether it was conceivable that the 'Four Freedoms' could be placed in effect all over the world—actually." 72

Welles expressed his concern that the United States might eventually have to endorse a restoration of the "old unsteady balance of power" in Europe. He acknowledged that this would be an admission of failure because it would abandon millions to subjugation by Moscow. He feared that if the United States went ahead with plans to disarm Germany and France but failed to erect an East European Union or come up with some other security system for the region, the void at the center of Europe would inevitably be filled by the Soviet Union. As a palliative, he hoped the police powers of a new world organization might partially contain Russian ambitions, and he continued to seek the restoration of some postwar German entity that might serve as a check on future Russian aggression. Nonetheless, the planners acknowledged that there appeared to be no easy way to shield Eastern Europe from Soviet domination. 73

Welles also feared that the Soviet Union might have greater territorial ambitions than merely a restoration of its pre-1941 frontiers. He and the other planners were particularly concerned with the fate of Poland. Stalin's ruthless partition of Poland in October 1939 (and the subsequent incorporation of eastern Poland into the Soviet Union) led many to believe that the Kremlin once again favored the permanent disappearance of Poland as an independent state. [74](#) Welles and the planners assumed the Russians would most likely take a portion of eastern Poland, and that there was very little the United States could do to change Moscow's mind. They accepted the fact that the Red Army would probably control most of Eastern Europe at the end of the war and that, unless the United States was willing to fight the Soviet Union in a "Third World War," some concessions to Soviet demands would have to be made. They also concluded that many of these questions would best be settled during the war, while the United States still had some means of putting pressure on the Soviet Union. [75](#)



In the spring of 1942, Welles received further warning about Soviet aims. Former Ambassador to Moscow Laurence Steinhardt warned him that the Russians had extensive territorial ambitions. Steinhardt, now posted in Turkey, warned Welles that Moscow also had territorial designs to the southwest, and that Turkish mistrust and hatred of the Soviet Union "is unmistakably stronger than their fear of Germany." Steinhardt predicted that Moscow would emphasize its military contribution to the war to obtain territorial concessions. "In my opinion," he wrote to Welles, "they will leave no stone unturned to obtain possession of the Straits and the mouth of the Danube. I believe they are already laying their plans in that direction." [76](#)

Throughout the summer and fall of 1942, Welles and the planners discussed specific problems in Eastern Europe. With regard to Finland, a consensus emerged that an attempt should be made to persuade Moscow to accept the 1940 boundary established in the wake of the Winter War. Welles suggested that the best way to preserve Finland's postwar survival would be for the committee to call for an international "neutral zone" separating Finland and Russia, but he feared that, regardless of whatever measures might be taken, the Soviet Union would do as it pleased with Finland. [77](#)



The planners also recognized that, while the Baltic states wished to be independent, the Kremlin would probably be unwilling to discuss any future for them except as part of the Soviet Union. Yet Welles continued to seek a solution to the Baltic problem that did not so obviously violate the principles of the Atlantic Charter. He suggested that plebiscite privileges might be granted to the peoples of the region, with those who did not wish to live under Russian rule free to emigrate. [78](#) Anne O'Hare McCormick replied that most of the people of the Baltic region, given the choice, would most likely prefer to live under German rule.

79

While it appeared the Soviet Union wished to reabsorb the three Baltic states, the committee members, in a desperate effort to find a solution, hoped that a quasi-independent Baltic Federation (under Soviet influence) might be acceptable to Moscow. They hoped that, if the Kremlin allowed cultural and religious freedoms within such a federation, the peoples of the Baltic states would be more amenable to Russian supervision. Yet this assumed a high degree of Russian tolerance for the cultural and political diversity of its neighbors to the west. 80

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The more the planners discussed the complexities of Eastern Europe, the more they began to move away from their earlier rigid adherence to Wilsonian principles. As early as the fall of 1942, the subcommittee began to conclude that the Soviet Union's claims to the Baltic states could not be put off indefinitely and would eventually have to be acknowledged. This only further underscored the problem of how to reconcile the principles of the Atlantic Charter with the political and military realities of Eastern Europe.

Only six months before, Welles had warned Halifax that the Anglo-Soviet Treaty would violate the "sacred principles" of the Atlantic Charter. Now he and the other planners were confronted with the raw facts of power politics in Eastern Europe. They might not approve of Moscow's desire to swallow the Baltic states, but they felt powerless to prevent it. The USSR continued to do most of the fighting—roughly fifty Red Army soldiers were being killed in combat for each American—and it began to dawn on Welles and the planners that Moscow held most of the leverage in the relationship, and that considerations like Lend-Lease and the promise of postwar reconstruction assistance might have little influence on the Kremlin. 81

It became ever clearer to the planners that the peoples of the Baltic states, as well as others in the region, would never willingly revert to Russian rule. The planners understood that the very fate of the peoples of Eastern Europe hung in the balance and that they were every bit as threatened by Moscow as by Berlin. They learned that the USSR had "killed off or dispersed" most of the intelligentsia and the upper classes in the Baltic states, and Loy Henderson had already warned Welles that Stalin displayed a "vindictive spirit" toward the peoples of Eastern Europe, particularly the Ukrainians of eastern Poland. 82 Stalin, Henderson reminded Welles, had already threatened that these Ukrainians "would be exterminated and the Ukrainian problem permanently liquidated." According to documents in Welles's possession, as many as 4.5 million Ukrainians lived perilously in eastern Poland, their fate uncertain. 83



Welles and the other planners remained gravely concerned about Russian intentions. During a meeting in late November 1942, Welles delivered a presentation about the aims of Soviet foreign policy. He based this briefing

on what he had learned from the previous nine months of postwar committee meetings, but also from discussions with other diplomats in Washington and his understanding of Moscow's demands, which he obtained from his contacts with the various exile governments.

Welles warned the committee that the Kremlin's ambitions went well beyond the Baltic states and that Stalin had taken a "hectoring, insulting attitude" toward several other nations. Stalin threatened Sweden, for example, because of her interest in a political union with Finland. He said Russia would probably demand Petsamo from Finland at the end of the war, and he warned he had "never yet found the Soviet Government willing to discuss having something less than it once had." He feared that Stalin might demand more, such as the incorporation of all of Finland into the Soviet Union "through some phony plebiscite." He proclaimed that an independent Finland was "of vital importance to the future world order." In the rest of the Baltic region, he warned that the Russians would seek to give their conquests legitimacy by once again holding "some phony kind of plebiscite [that] would be rigged to indicate the desire of the people to return to Soviet rule." [84](#)

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On the question of Poland, Welles predicted the Russians would promise part of East Prussia to the Poles in exchange for other territory that would be taken from the Poles in the east and incorporated into the Soviet Union. He added that the Polish and Czech governments-in-exile had discussed the possibility of a postwar Polish-Czech union, and that President Benes thought the Soviet Union was "not adverse to the setting up of regional federations in principle." But he feared the Russians might look upon such an arrangement with suspicion. [85](#)

Welles suspected the Kremlin might set up its own governments-in-exile which would be responsive to Stalin's aims. He also warned the planners that Russia's chief territorial aspirations appeared to be largely concentrated in the north: the Baltic states, eastern Poland, Bessarabia, possibly Finland, and perhaps parts of northern Norway. As for other areas of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, he told the planners that the Soviets might aim for "a political and economic preponderance rather than territorial acquisition." He warned that once the Red Army crossed national borders it would be impossible to ensure freedom in those areas. [86](#)

At the beginning of 1943, James Shotwell warned Welles that "it is true that Russia has officially followed a policy, in its dealings with Western Europe, which has grown less menacing, but this cannot be counted upon, especially with reference to [its western frontiers]." [87](#) Shortly thereafter, Isaiah Bowman reinforced these concerns when he offered his own analysis of Russia and the prospects for postwar planning. Bowman told Welles and the rest of the planners that secrecy and bad faith had marked Soviet actions, and he added that the planners should not expect "frank dealing and good faith" to characterize future relations with the Kremlin. "We are waiting in

vain if we suppose that a great wave of appreciation for our help will suddenly sweeten the Soviet temper if we but help enough," he said, adding, "will Russia stop permanently on the Danube because we have proclaimed the wickedness of territorial aggression?" Bowman thought steps should be taken to forestall serious conflict. "We will not fight Russia for an abstract principle. We will not fight to stop her on the Riga line in the interest of Poland. We will not fight her to give Finland the port of Petsamo. ... Our meanings must be clear when we proclaim high principles. ... Will we promptly negotiate the agreements that will reverse the present trends of power or will we wait until it is too late to control the mechanical monster that our enemies have forced us to create?" [88](#)

The planners had thus far conducted two multi-week examinations of the impending collision between the Soviet Union and its neighbors to the west. The first series of meetings in the spring of 1942 had alerted the members to the need to apply Wilsonian principles to Moscow's foreign policy aims. The second series of meetings, held in the late fall of 1942, had further confirmed the worst fears of the planners, particularly when Welles departed from his usual duties as chairman to deliver his detailed presentation about Soviet aims. Perhaps more importantly, these autumn discussions initiated a move away from the rigid Wilsonianism of the previous spring. Welles's aim of implementing an American-led democratic internationalism around the world henceforth became more problematic.

Welles and his colleagues began to fear that the Kremlin's territorial appetites might be even larger than the planners anticipated. They began to conclude that some Soviet territorial gains might have to be recognized as a matter of practical realism. [89](#) A premium should be placed on good relations between Washington and Moscow for the sake of creating a new world order. Thus, "lesser" issues such as the fate of the Baltic states and eastern Poland should not be allowed to interfere. In any event, an early confrontation with Moscow over Eastern Europe would do nothing to advance self-determination for the region. The members of the postwar planning committees, which included a bipartisan group of at least eight senior members of the House and Senate committees dealing with foreign affairs, had concluded that the location of the Red Army would most likely determine the postwar status of Eastern Europe. This undermines later claims that Stalin's control of the region came about due to naiveté, presidential illness, or a treasonous conspiracy to "sell out" or "enslave" Eastern Europe. [90](#)

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Nonetheless, Welles's private comments about the realities of power in Eastern Europe—and America's inability to do much to change those realities—stood in stark contrast to his public Wilsonian rhetoric, which continued to hint at a dawning "new order" for the region. And, as Welles and the other planners made exceptions to their plans for a new order in Eastern Europe, it gradually became more difficult to imagine the extensive social, economic, and political changes that they desired for the region. This would be particularly true for Poland, which was rapidly becoming the most

explosive issue facing the planners.

The Polish-Soviet frontier continued to be a source of heated acrimony between the Russians and the Poles. Sikorski and the other Polish officials in London were also anxious to learn of the whereabouts of the thousands of Polish prisoners of war who had fallen into Soviet hands, about whom nothing had been heard since early 1940. ⁹¹ Welles's many meetings with the Polish exiles confirmed his worst fears about Soviet intentions.



In late 1942, Sikorski warned Welles that he thought Stalin would first take back the Baltic states, and then attempt to incorporate Finland into the Soviet Union, demand Bessarabia, and seek "hegemony" over other states in the region. "It does not follow at all that the 'leadership' in that part of Europe should be left to Russia," Sikorski told Welles. "Such a solution would be as harmful as acquiescence to German ambitions." ⁹²

At the beginning of 1943, Welles conducted a series of detailed discussions with the leadership of the Polish government-in-exile. He reaffirmed America's desire to see Poland reconstituted under Article Three of the Atlantic Charter, which promoted the restoration of independence and sovereignty. ⁹³ Yet, for all this, it was becoming increasingly clear to him that the Polish-Soviet problem would simply not go away, and that it would grow more explosive as the war continued. In early 1943 it had become apparent that the Soviet Union would seek substantial territory from Poland. He thought Poland deserved to be truly independent after the war, but he acknowledged that the future looked bleak in the region and that the committee could probably hope for nothing more than "the best of a series of bad bargains." ⁹⁴



Welles endeavored to subordinate the problems of Eastern Europe to the larger aim of U.S.-Soviet postwar cooperation. He wanted to be careful to avoid anything that might resemble a *cordon sanitaire* directed against the Soviet Union. ⁹⁵ He continued to tell the Poles he would work for the restoration of Poland "as a powerful European state," but he told the Polish Ambassador that President Roosevelt wanted Poland "to keep its shirt on" and be patient, and reminded him that Washington retained the right to be "the only judge" of what could be done to resolve the Polish-Soviet impasse. ⁹⁶ Welles feared that a serious break loomed between the Polish government-in-exile and the Kremlin. Ciechanowski had earlier warned him that Moscow demanded Polish recognition of Russia's future sovereignty in "White Russia and the western Ukraine." Ciechanowski thus pressed Welles to publicly proclaim his pledge that the Atlantic Charter would safeguard Poland's future. ⁹⁷

Shortly thereafter, in February 1943, Welles reported to the planners that relations between the Soviet Union and the Polish government-in-exile had

reached a breaking point. In what he described as "a serious and disquieting development," he told the committee that the Russians now considered any Poles in Ruthenia and the Ukraine to be Soviet nationals. He told the planners that when the Russians entered these areas in 1939, a large number of Poles had been "liquidated" and many others deported. [98](#)

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The larger crisis Welles had feared erupted in April 1943 when the Germans discovered numerous mass graves in the Katyn forest near Smolensk, which they claimed to be those of Polish officers murdered by Stalin's secret police. [99](#) Hitler proposed an international investigation of the site, a call immediately seconded by the London Poles. The Kremlin, calling the Poles fascist and reactionary, broke off diplomatic relations. Stalin moved immediately to promote his Russian-backed Union of Polish Patriots, a group of communist Poles in Moscow (later based in Lublin) who sought to organize a postwar Poland along Stalin's desired lines. [100](#)

The massacre of the Polish officers must have come as no surprise to the planners in Washington. They had for some time been discussing Moscow's aims in the region and had heard a number of intelligence reports about various atrocities carried out by the Russians. [101](#) Welles told Anthony Biddle, the U.S. Ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile, that he would seek to reestablish relations between the London Poles and the Russians, but he warned that any attempt to change the composition of the Polish government-in-exile in London to suit Stalin would be ill-advised. "While some changes might prove advantageous after the restoration of relations," Welles wrote to Biddle, "we do not feel that it would be proper for us to bring pressure on Sikorski to change the composition of the Polish Government in order to satisfy the Soviet Government. In our opinion it would be unfortunate for a precedent to be established under which the government of one United Nation could successfully force changes in the composition of another government of the United Nations." [102](#)

At the same time, Welles wanted to be careful not to antagonize Stalin over Eastern European issues that were not vital to American interests. In Welles's estimation, Poland was not a vital interest, and was quickly becoming an impediment to America's quest for better relations with Moscow. He believed that postwar cooperation with Russia should be the primary consideration, and he resolved to render anything that might derail Washington's evolving relationship with the Kremlin subordinate to that ultimate goal. [103](#)

Poland would remain a thorny and intractable problem, and Welles may have reasoned that, since the United States had not participated in the prewar guarantees to Poland, it was therefore not morally bound by them. To Welles, the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Declaration sought to grant sovereign rights to the peoples of the world. Certainly this pledge also applied to Poland, but he seems to have convinced himself that it did not

commit the United States to any specific course in Eastern Europe. [104](#)

"The principles for postwar policy laid down by the Atlantic Charter provided an altogether desirable pattern," Welles wrote after the war. "Yet they constituted a pattern, and nothing more. They gave no slightest indication, for example, of the justice or injustice of a given settlement covering eastern Poland." He believed that Moscow might plausibly claim that its aspirations in Poland did not violate the Atlantic Charter. "Agreement upon the broad principles of the Atlantic Charter," he wrote, "would never in itself prevent future bitter controversies over frontiers and zones of influence." [105](#)

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Welles and the planners had once again looked the other way when Moscow evaded their professed principles, and they rationalized that maintaining good relations with Moscow was paramount to defending the welfare of Russia's western neighbors. While it was becoming increasingly apparent that their claims to be defending high principles were rapidly being undermined, Welles and the planners still hoped that the creation of an "East European Federation" might help extricate them from this moral dilemma.



In response to the moral and political problems presented by Russian objectives in Eastern Europe, as early as March 1942 the planners had begun discussing the possibility of creating a political federation for the region. [106](#) The idea fit nicely into Welles's belief that regional institutions and New Deal-style planning could help contain the potential for upheaval in Eastern Europe. The nations of the region were precariously situated between Germany and the Soviet Union and had achieved their independence at a time when both powers had been weakened by the Great War. With Germany and Russia now recovered, the fate of these small states looked precarious. The planners believed a union or federation might furnish those nations with the strength of numbers. The idea had first been presented to Welles by Polish Ambassador Jan Ciechanowski (a fact Welles tactfully concealed for fear of arousing Russian suspicions), and Welles's first advisory committee had first discussed the concept back in the spring of 1940, and again in 1941. [107](#)

Welles hoped that a number of problems might be resolved if the United Nations could construct and impose its own version of an East European Federation. Hitler had already set a precedent for just such a scheme with the Reich's attempt to erect a new economic order in Eastern Europe. Berlin wanted the entire Danube basin to serve as a provider of labor and raw materials to the German economy. Prior to 1919, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had partially filled the void in much of the region. Despite its many weaknesses and periodic instability, Welles thought the Habsburg Empire had given the region a degree of unity and coherence while at the same time providing a much-needed buffer between the aspirations of Germany and Russia. He hoped the Russians might see U.S. relations with its Latin

American neighbors as a model for future Russian relations with it's the states on its western frontier and that a federal solution in Eastern Europe might help avoid potentially destructive clashes among the Allies over territorial and ethnic matters. After all, he pointed out, the Russians had the troops to enforce their will in Eastern Europe and would most likely do whatever they pleased regardless of British and American protests. [108](#)

From the earliest discussions of planning for a federation Welles had emphasized that one of its chief functions would be to serve as "a counterpoise to both Russia and Germany." [109](#) Alongside traditional fears of Russian imperial aims, many of the nations of the region also had historic hatreds toward one another, and the planners feared it would be difficult to contain these competing antagonisms under one roof. Welles reasoned that their mutual hatred of Russia might serve as a common bond. He surmised that, while the Russians might dominate the nations of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, Russian influence in those nations would be balanced within a federation by including "anti-Russian" nations such as Poland, Hungary, Austria, and Romania. He assumed that the nations of the region could not be expected to establish such an arrangement on their own, but would have to "be told how to do it." [110](#)

Welles and the planners hoped a federation would promote economic and political stability in the region. The subcommittee recommended that an economic union should first be pursued and later extended to political integration. Welles feared that if the Russians forcibly removed the Baltic region and Eastern Europe from postwar plans for a worldwide liberal economic system, European reconstruction would be much more difficult and efforts at creating a new order would be dealt a serious setback. He also hoped the creation of a federation would prove advantageous to the economic and security interests of the United States, not only through the promotion of free trade but also by checking the territorial, political, and economic aspirations of Germany, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain. A federation might even help facilitate the rebirth of the Baltic states as fully functioning, independent republics. [111](#)

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The creation of an East European Union as a buffer against Soviet expansion seemed to run contrary to some aspects of Welles's Wilsonian ideals. After all, he claimed an international organization should be sufficient to allay Moscow's security concerns. But his attempts to create a federation seemed calculated to avoid the appearance of the cynical recognition of what many assumed was likely to become a political *fait accompli* in the region: namely, a Soviet sphere of influence.

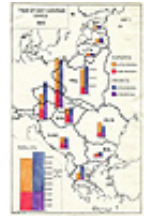
Welles first offered the political subcommittee a detailed outline of his vision for an East European Federation in the spring of 1942. His belief that the ideas of Wilsonian universalism and the Atlantic Charter could be transplanted everywhere led him to seek to impose on the region the concepts of free markets and free trade and, where suitable (Czechoslovakia,

for example), democracy and individual rights. He explained that the nations of the region might be bound together by "Articles of Confederation" which would include guarantees of individual rights and personal freedoms. The political structure of the federation would feature an American-style judicial system, a federal diet, customs union, and an intra-regional military force.

[112](#)

As Welles explained it, the federation would consist of the entire Eastern European region, comprising the twelve states situated between Germany and the Soviet Union, including Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and, perhaps with some optimism, the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. The planners hoped to promote a federation by emphasizing its economic advantages as well as its potential for fostering collective security. Failing that, the planners thought a union might have to be forcibly imposed on Eastern Europe. [113](#) Adolf Berle warned that the Russians had previously opposed similar efforts at regional union, but Welles thought that the scheme might be successfully sold to Moscow through a kind of geopolitical reverse psychology, packaged as a "buffer" to defend Russia against a postwar Germany, or even as a vast market for Russian manufactured goods and commercial opportunities in the postwar era. [114](#)

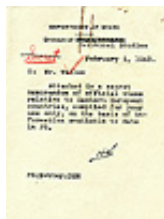
At Welles's direction, the State Department's Special Research Staff crafted a number of detailed outlines for a possible union. Their drafts demonstrated the degree to which they accepted the belief that New Deal-style planning on a global scale—coupled with the careful application of the principles of free trade and free markets—would greatly reduce the potential for trouble in the region. They drew up plans for the modernization of the region's agriculture, the expansion of Eastern European industries, the coordination of national export policies, and monetary union. The planners also drew up schemes for a regional development agency, a regional agricultural administration, and a transportation department to oversee and coordinate shipping, railroads, and highways. [115](#)



But by early 1943, after a revival of Russia's prospects following the Red Army's success at Stalingrad, it became apparent to the political subcommittee that the Soviet Union might oppose all efforts to construct a federation. Stalingrad proved to be an important turning point in Moscow's political relations with other nations. It emboldened the Russians to take a harder line in their relations with the Poles and other exile governments, and it stiffened the Kremlin's opposition to any attempts to create a federation in Eastern Europe. Welles had recently received a warning from exiled Czech officials in Washington that an East European Federation could not, under any circumstances, succeed if it were seen as an anti-Soviet endeavor. The Soviets feared, with good reason, that a federation would be directed against them. [116](#)

Welles was not deterred. Furthermore, Churchill and Eden's continued enthusiasm for a regional solution in Eastern Europe encouraged Welles to continue with the committee's investigations. He believed Moscow's tentative opposition to federations underscored the importance of reaching agreements with the Kremlin on such matters at the earliest date possible, and he hoped that Moscow might be approached with a formal proposal for a federation scheme sometime in 1943.

Welles's naiveté about Soviet willingness to support an American-designed federation may have stemmed from his underestimation of the deep and abiding suspicion the Russians had toward the West. He hoped that, even if the plans for a federation were stillborn, Washington would have sufficient time to improve its relationship with Moscow, perhaps by convincing the Russians that the containment of Germany, coupled with the potential power of an effective international organization, would be sufficient to protect Soviet interests in Eastern Europe. Contrary to what he himself had shared with the planners, he also labored under the delusion, widely shared in Washington, that the Kremlin might be heavily dependent on American assistance for its reconstruction after the war. He hoped that Moscow, not wanting to jeopardize the prospect of postwar aid, would seek to avoid a breach over matters like the creation of a regional federation. He thought that Lend-Lease had established a useful precedent for using American economic largess to promote its political and military aims. [117](#)



Welles and the political subcommittee further investigated the question of federations in February 1943. Welles repeated his warnings that the Kremlin still appeared opposed to the scheme. He had an attentive audience, including five senators and three members of the House of Representatives. He delivered a lengthy presentation on the proposed federation and underscored its importance for the security of the postwar world. He claimed that a federation would fill the void in the region left by the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He also expressed his fear that Moscow might only accept a federation in exchange for support for their territorial aims in the Baltic and Eastern Poland. [118](#)

Responding to Welles's presentation, Representative Charles Eaton said he was alarmed by the high degree of mutual suspicion between Moscow and Washington. Eaton said Welles had outlined one of the most difficult challenges confronting the committee. "Russia has a distinct and well-thought-out line of policy," Eaton said. "What resources have the rest of the United Nations to meet that claim? Will we fight Russia, and will Russia back down? ... Will we sprinkle rose water on her, or will we show our teeth?" Norman Davis suggested they might recognize Russian claims to Bessarabia in exchange for Moscow's acceptance of a federation. Welles feared that, much like the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942, Davis's suggestion would merely serve to appease Stalin's *minimum* aims, and thus encourage additional demands.

Isaiah Bowman thought the Russians might be more flexible in a few months, after the Germans reestablished their lines on the Eastern Front. Welles disagreed. He thought the German lines in the east might never be stabilized and that the Red Army would methodically creep westward. The promise of a disarmed Eastern Europe, he suggested, might win Moscow's acceptance for the idea of a federation. Anne O'Hare McCormick observed that, although the disarmed countries in Eastern Europe would not present a threat to the Russians, the prospect of a defenseless swath of states from the Baltic to the Balkans would be too tempting for Moscow's territorial appetites and might induce the smaller nations of the region to band together in a coalition directed against the USSR. Welles agreed, describing the situation as an insoluble vicious circle. [119](#)

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Nevertheless, Welles's plans for a federation received an important boost when Churchill seemingly endorsed them during the May 1943 luncheon he hosted at the British Embassy for senior American officials interested in postwar planning. Churchill, too, felt something had to take the place of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the region. Eden also continued to support the idea, but by June he began to privately express his concern that the Russians would never accept a fully integrated and capitalistic federation along the lines advocated by Welles. [120](#)

Welles feared the planners needed a fallback plan in the event of the failure to erect a federation. He and Roosevelt subsequently returned to their favorite Wilsonian cure-all for the complex problems of the region: plebiscites. [121](#) At a meeting of the political subcommittee in February 1943, it was suggested that plebiscites, despite their less than satisfactory track record after the First World War, might effectively carry out the principles of the Atlantic Charter in Eastern Europe. For any chance of success, they would have to be held under the supervision of the United Nations. At the very least, plebiscites would provide the United States with a "cover" that the principles of the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter were being upheld. [122](#) Roosevelt discussed with Welles his enthusiasm for plebiscites at some length, claiming they might settle once and for all the enmities between many Eastern European and Balkan peoples, particularly the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. [123](#)

In any event, Welles ultimately failed in his efforts to construct a federated solution for Eastern Europe. While he understood that the Soviet Union would control the region at the end of the war, he underestimated the degree of domination they would insist upon. He had hoped the Russians might abide by a kind of Good Neighbor Policy [124](#) for Eastern Europe, where Moscow would achieve regional hegemony without meddling too much in the internal affairs of its neighbors. [125](#)

The Kremlin steadfastly opposed the federative approach and complained that the American enthusiasm for federations and multi-national unions in

Eastern Europe was reminiscent of the policy of the *cordon sanitaire* that had been directed against the Soviet Union in the years before the war. Anthony Eden proposed a federal scheme at the Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference in October 1943, but it met with a chilly response from Cordell Hull, who generally opposed all regional schemes. [126](#) Welles, who had been the leading advocate of regionalism, did not accept Roosevelt's invitation to represent the United States at the conference. Had he attended, Eden might have found more support for his initiative.

To Welles, the Kremlin's tentative opposition to federations further emphasized the need for consultation among the Big Three. He thought it urgent that the Anglo-American allies begin conferring with Moscow on postwar plans. The first half of 1943 saw a number of preliminary exchanges between British and American officials over the future shape of the postwar world, but the Anglo-American allies had not yet approached the Russians with their proposals for an international organization and other specific postwar matters. Welles thought the United States should immediately learn Russia's attitudes and then seek to induce Moscow to cooperate with Washington's plans. [127](#)

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Roosevelt had held a brief meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov in the spring of 1942, but discussions about the postwar world were merely cursory. The British took another step in this direction in April 1943, when the war cabinet instructed British Ambassador to Moscow Sir Archibald Clark Kerr to discuss postwar matters with senior Soviet officials. The Russians, like the British, had been largely preoccupied with the military prosecution of the war and had devoted far less time to postwar matters than U.S. officials. But during his talks with Molotov, Kerr referred to Welles's recent speeches, explaining that the under secretary's pronouncements demonstrated a genuine desire on the part of the West to settle, prior to an armistice, the outlines of the postwar settlement. [128](#)

In the spring of 1943, as Roosevelt and Welles traveled together to Mexico City to meet with Mexican President Avila Camacho, they discussed their hopes and fears about the prospects of creating a new postwar order. Welles was struck by Roosevelt's concern and uncertainty about how Stalin would react to their aims, as the president lamented that much of their work on the postwar world might come to nothing if the Russians remained obdurate. Roosevelt still hoped Washington could remove many of the obstacles to full cooperation, perhaps by demonstrating a commitment to better relations with Moscow, as well as by promising U.S. participation in the new international organization. [129](#)

In this vein, Welles sought to maintain smooth relations, as

was indicated by his response in the spring of 1943 to Ambassador Standley's public charge that the Russian people had been kept ignorant of the many services the United States had rendered the Soviet Union, such as Lend-Lease and Red Cross relief. Welles held a press conference countering Standley's comments, instead emphasizing that a large degree of mutual trust and understanding existed between Washington and Moscow, and thus between the American and Russian people. Yet he knew otherwise from his discussions on the postwar planning committees. He had also recently been confidentially warned by Soviet Ambassador Litvinov that Stalin's postwar aims remained dangerously vague, and that the Soviet leader had no understanding of, or regard for, U.S. public opinion. [130](#)



In the months leading up to his resignation, Welles had begun to devote more attention to Soviet-American relations. He understood that if Washington desired any kind of postwar relationship with the Soviet Union, the problems of Eastern Europe would have to be subordinated to the larger goal of better relations with Moscow. Like President Roosevelt, Welles seems to have reluctantly conceded that the United States could do little to prevent Stalin from dominating Eastern Europe and, as the Red Army continued to move west, the plight of the peoples of the region would become a *fait accompli*. He and the planners had increasingly disregarded any initial desire to halt the expansion of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe for the simple reason that there was nothing the United States could do about it. Thus the very presence of the Red Army on the ground, rather than duplicity, treason, or ineptitude in Washington, had given Stalin control of Eastern Europe, and U.S. policymakers had begun to understand this as early as 1942.

Welles wanted the peace to be arranged along Wilsonian lines, but his realization that Washington remained impotent to do anything to halt Soviet aims in Eastern Europe, and his willingness to look the other way in the face of Moscow's territorial aspirations, made it less and less likely that the peace would develop along lines other than spheres of influence and great power politics. Whereas much of his wartime rhetoric emphasized new and universal approaches to the practice of world politics, the outcome he was increasingly accepting in Eastern Europe and the Baltic more closely resembled traditional *realpolitik*.

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Furthermore, Welles had placed a high priority on relations between Moscow and Washington, and he was willing to accept an Eastern Europe under Soviet domination if it meant holding the wartime alliance together after the war. He hoped his regional approach to the postwar organization might allow a certain degree of great power autonomy within their spheres of interest, but he failed to understand that federations would do absolutely nothing to extend the ideals of the Atlantic Charter to the peoples of Eastern Europe. In addition, his public rhetoric about the extension of freedom and democracy and the abolition of spheres of influence did not cease, and one

cannot help wondering what effect this had upon Soviet perceptions and actions. [131](#)

While he had maintained cordial relations with Russian diplomatic representatives throughout the war, Welles realized that the Alliance was, in many respects, nothing more than a coalition held together by mutual opposition to Germany. Nevertheless, he understood that good relations between Moscow and Washington were absolutely essential to the success of his concept of a postwar order. He optimistically hoped that the two countries could use the new world organization to work out any political or economic differences that existed between them. He felt strongly that the United States would best be able to secure good relations with the Soviet Union under the aegis of the new world organization. This view was shared by the president, who at times suggested that many of the wartime political problems would mysteriously resolve themselves after the war through the new world organization.

One of Welles's greatest failures may have been his contribution to raising unrealistic expectations about the potential of the war to reform the world and bring about a new system of relations among nations that would abandon old notions of the balance of power. He left the administration in September 1943, and henceforth never had to officially confront the realities of postwar Eastern Europe. During the war he sought to use his influence with the leading members of the House and Senate to alert them to the problems that might emerge in Eastern Europe. He did an effective job of heightening public expectations about the new world order and America's responsibilities therein, but he did little to prepare the public for the day of disillusionment that he secretly feared might follow the war.

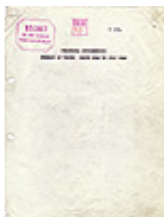
Welles continued to believe, well into 1945, that the new world organization might create some magic formula to ameliorate tensions with Moscow. Furthermore, even if he assumed, as he seemed to have concluded during the planning committee's investigations, that Stalin's domination of Eastern Europe was the price to be paid for Russian postwar cooperation, he never explained this view in his extensive lectures or writings in the years after 1943.

In the wake of repeated briefings from Welles and other members of the planning committees, Roosevelt, too, accepted that it was the fate of Eastern Europe to remain in the hands of the Kremlin at the end of the war. But he hoped that the Russians would not create a situation in Eastern Europe that might antagonize domestic opinion in the United States. By the time Roosevelt arrived at the Teheran Conference in November-December 1943, he seemed prepared to concede the fate of Eastern Europe, just so long as Stalin would give him some political cover on the question of self-determination by accepting vague plebiscite privileges for the area. [132](#) This was precisely the conclusion Welles and the planners had reached and had passed along to the president in the summer of 1943. Even earlier, one of Welles's chief objections to the April 1942 Anglo-Soviet Treaty stemmed

from his fear that the treaty had offered no rhetorical protections against the charges that the agreement was little more than a "Baltic Munich." [133](#)

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As Welles and the planners had anticipated, Stalin put forward extensive claims to Polish territory at the Teheran Conference. [134](#) Churchill was receptive to moving Poland's borders westwards after the war and, while the Americans attempted to delay the matter, they had in fact long ago given their tacit approval to most of Stalin's claims. In July 1943, for example, Welles's political subcommittee had reported to the president that they had "accepted the fact that Soviet military forces would probably be in control of the contested areas at the close of the war and that unless the United States were willing to fight against the Soviet Union, some concessions to Soviet demands would have to be made." Welles and the planners had further suggested that "many of these problems might best be settled during the war period, while this Government had some means of bringing pressure on the Soviet Union...." [135](#)



In the case of the Baltic states, for example, Welles and the committee had abandoned their "no compromise" position taken during the winter-spring 1942 negotiations over the Anglo-Soviet Treaty. Back in May 1942, the committee had initially concluded that the Baltic states should have the right to determine their own futures. [136](#)



Yet by July 1943 there had been a startling reversal of opinion. Welles's committee now "recognized that while these states wished to establish their right to independence, they themselves realized that they were not viable as states, due to their economic position." [137](#)



By the summer of 1943, Welles and the planners recommended that the "historic ties between Russia and the Baltic States" be taken into account, and therefore "the Soviet Union's claims to the Baltic States should be recognized." Additionally, in Bessarabia and Bukovina, Welles and the planners decided to concede most of the Kremlin's demands. [138](#)

Maintaining good relations with Moscow would take precedence over the Atlantic Charter. [139](#)

As for Poland, the committee initially reaffirmed its desire to uphold the principles of the Atlantic Charter, such as self-determination, as well as its desire to see Poland's prewar boundaries restored, but the planners ultimately suggested that "Eastern Poland might constitute an area where departure from this principle was justified." Welles and the members conceded that Eastern Poland "was of less significance" than other areas of Europe. The planners recommended that, while a perfunctory attempt might be made to induce the USSR to return to its prewar boundaries, a compromise based on the acceptance of almost all of Moscow's aims would not necessarily jeopardize U.S. interests or the prospects for creating a new world order elsewhere. [140](#)

By the time of the February 1945 Yalta Conference, the position of the Red Army had already made the fate of Poland and much of Eastern Europe a de facto reality. The conference's "Declaration on Liberated Europe" rhetorically reaffirmed the principles of the Atlantic Charter for Eastern Europe, but it lacked any enforcement machinery, thereby implying that no one expected compliance with its terms. This was perfectly consistent with Welles's recommendations to Roosevelt back in the summer of 1943. By July 1945, recognition of the London-based Polish government-in-exile was cynically withdrawn by the United States and Great Britain, further confirming that the great powers accepted the fate of Poland and, for all intents and purposes, much of the rest of Eastern Europe. [141](#)

Welles had long sought to minimize the differences between Moscow and Washington over Poland, the Baltic states, and Romania for the sake of alliance harmony. He thought such harmony was not only important during the war, but was also particularly crucial during the transitional peace period immediately following the cessation of hostilities. When the war ended, there appeared to be less and less urgency for the Allies to cooperate, yet U.S. officials persisted in the assumption that they could wring concessions out of Stalin by threatening to cut off postwar economic aid. As was demonstrated by the planners' discussions throughout 1942-43, there was never really any prospect for such a strategy to succeed, and it is difficult to see, particularly in light of what Welles and his fellow planners knew as early as the fall of 1942, how events in Eastern Europe and the Baltic could have possibly turned out other than they did.

Notes:

Note 1: Eduard Mark, among others, has made the case that from the moment it became apparent that the USSR would survive the war, officials in Washington anticipated Moscow's hegemony in Eastern Europe. Mark writes: "American efforts in Europe, consequently, represented neither a utopian scheme to rid the continent of spheres of influence nor a Faustian bid to dominate it, but a search for stable spheres of a kind consonant with the interests of the principal victors of World War II." See Eduard Mark, "American Policy toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 68:2 (September 1981): 314. [Back.](#)

Note 2: Welles to Roosevelt, January 12, 1933, box 149, folder 1, Welles papers, FDRL. By the end of 1933, Roosevelt formally recognized the Soviet regime, sending William C. Bullitt as ambassador. For an account that Moscow and Washington came together out of mutual distrust of Japan, see Robert L. Morris, "A Reassessment of Russian Recognition," *Historian* 24:4 (August 1962): 480-482. For an account arguing that Welles opposed Russian recognition, see Robert E. Bowers, "Hull, Russian Subversion in Cuba, and Recognition of the U.S.S.R.," *Journal of American History* 53:3

(December 1956): 542-554. [Back.](#)

Note 3: Memorandum of conversation, by Welles, March 23, 1938, *FRUS: The Soviet Union, 1933-39* (Washington D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 541; Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision* (New York: Harper, 1944), 318-320. He also notably ignored Moscow during his 1940 mission to Europe. Welles instead arranged to have Soviet specialist George Kennan meet him in Italy to offer advice. But upon arriving in Italy, Welles ignored Kennan and left him stranded in Rome. George Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 115-116. [Back.](#)

Note 4: Thomas R. Maddux, "Watching Stalin Maneuver Between Hitler and the West: American Diplomats and Soviet Diplomacy, 1934-1939," *Diplomatic History* 1:2 (Spring, 1977): 142-143; Daniel F. Harrington, "Kennan, Bohlen, and the Riga Axioms." *Diplomatic History* 2:4 (Fall, 1978): 424. [Back.](#)

Note 5: Thomas Maddux, *Years of Estrangement: American Relations with the Soviet Union, 1933-1941* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1980), 90. [Back.](#)

Note 6: During Davies's tenure, which coincided with the height of the Moscow show trials, he sent Welles numerous "back-channel" communications, recounting his "great admiration" for Stalin and praising the Soviet dictator for having done so much "for the benefit of common men." Davies to Welles, June 28, 1937, Welles to Davies, July 23, 1937, box 40, folder 5, Welles papers, FDRL; Davies to Welles, March 1, 1938, box 45, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL; Davies, "Interview with Stalin and Molotov," June 9, 1938, box 166, USSR files, folder 1, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 7: H. W. Brands, *Inside the Cold War: Loy Henderson and the Rise of the American Empire 1918-1961* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 78-79, 111; Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: the Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 34. [Back.](#)

Note 8: Memorandum by Welles, November 17, 1939, *FRUS, The Soviet Union, 1939*, 794-795; T document 228, "Soviet Rule in Eastern Poland, 1939-1941," January 23, 1943, box 62, Notter Files, Record Group 59, National Archives [all planning documents and minutes are from the Notter files, Record Group 59, National Archives, unless otherwise noted]. [Back.](#)

Note 9: Memorandum by Welles, November 17, 1939, *FRUS, The Soviet Union, 1939*, 794-795. [Back.](#)

Note 10: Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision*, 169; "Statement respecting the Baltic Republics by Acting Secretary of State Welles, July 23, 1940," *Department of State Bulletin* III (1940), 48. For the absorption of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union see, for example, David Kirby, "Incorporation: the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact," in Graham Smith, ed., *The Baltic States: The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 78-80. Stalin seems to have

concluded that mere protectorate status for the Baltic states did not meet Moscow's security needs vis-à-vis Germany. See, for example, Jonathan Haslam, "Soviet War-Aims," in *The Rise and Fall of the Grand Alliance: 1941-1945*, ed. Ann Lane and Howard Temperley (London: Macmillan, 1995), 29. [Back.](#)

Note 11: Press statement by Welles, July 23, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1940, 401-402. [Back.](#)

Note 12: Welles to Roosevelt, August 19, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1940, 424-425. [Back.](#)

Note 13: Statement by Welles, July 23, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1940, 401-402. Welles had apparently forgotten his proconsulships in the Dominican Republic and Cuba in 1933. [Back.](#)

Note 14: Roosevelt to Hull and Welles, December 22, 1939, *FRUS, The Soviet Union*, 1939, 868-869; Welles memorandum of conversation with Oumansky, July 27, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1940, 327-331. [Back.](#)

Note 15: Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 169-171; Welles memorandum of conversation, June 18, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1940, 321-322. [Back.](#)

Note 16: Maddux, *Years of Estrangement*, 128-129. [Back.](#)

Note 17: Welles memorandum, August 19, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1940, 424-425; Welles memorandum, December 10, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1940, 534-535. [Back.](#)

Note 18: Memorandum of conversation between Welles and Oumansky, August 1, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1940, 340-348; Welles to Roosevelt, August 19, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1940, 424-425. [Back.](#)

Note 19: Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 169-171; Welles memorandum of conversation with Oumansky, July 27, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1940, 327-331; memorandum of conversation between Welles and Oumansky, August 7, 1940, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1940, 358-361. [Back.](#)

Note 20: Brands, *Inside the Cold War*, 96-97. [Back.](#)

Note 21: Welles memorandum of conversation with Oumansky, January 15, 1941, box 166, USSR files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; Welles memorandum of conversation with Oumansky, March 20, 1941, box 166, USSR files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 22: Welles to Roosevelt, January 9, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 685-686; Brands, *Inside the Cold War*, 97; Welles to Oumansky, January 21, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 696. [Back.](#)

Note 23: Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 170. [Back.](#)

Note 24: Memorandum by Welles, March 20, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 723; Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 171. [Back.](#)

Note 25: Memorandum by Welles, April 9, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 735-736. [Back.](#)

Note 26: Lloyd C. Gardner, *Spheres of Influence: The Great Powers Partition Europe, From Munich to Yalta* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1993), 87. Stalin's suspicions perhaps had some basis in fact. Only a few hours after the German invasion of Russia, Halifax told Welles that he felt optimistic that, if Germany quickly defeated Russia, "Hitler would then present a plausible peace proposal based upon the fact that he had defeated communism and established a new order in Europe and was no longer anxious to continue hostilities against Great Britain, or undertake them with the United States." See memorandum of conversation between Welles and Halifax, June 22, 1941, box 163, Great Britain files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. For the view that the German invasion did not catch Stalin completely by surprise, see, for example, Louis Rotundo, "Stalin and the Outbreak of War in 1941," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24:2 (April 1989): 277-299. [Back.](#)

Note 27: Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 171-172. [Back.](#)

Note 28: "Policy with Regard to the Soviet Union in the Case of the Outbreak of War Between the Soviet Union and Germany," by the Division of European Affairs, June 21, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 766-767. [Back.](#)

Note 29: William Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War: 1940-1941* (New York: Harper, 1953), 336-43. [Back.](#)

Note 30: Welles to Steinhardt, June 23, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 767-768; original drafts of Welles's statement on German invasion of Russia, June 23, 1941, box 166, USSR files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 31: New York Journal American, August 4, 1941; Langer and Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, 542; Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 39, 22. [Back.](#)

Note 32: Welles, "Why Help the Soviet Union?" *American Federation Clubwoman*, November 1941 Acheson to Welles, July 8, 1941, box 166, USSR files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; Oumansky to Welles, July 29, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 798. [Back.](#)

Note 33: Welles, "Why Help the Soviet Union?" *American Federation Clubwoman*, November 1941; Welles to Loy Henderson, July 16, 1941, box 166, USSR files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; memorandum of conversation between Welles and Litvinov, February 23, 1942, February 23, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 693-694; P document 34, "Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on Political Problems," August 12, 1942, box 56, Notter files; Welles, "Free Access to Raw Materials," October 8, 1942, speech files,

box 195, folder 7, Welles papers, FDRL; Political Subcommittee Minutes, meeting 4 (P minutes 4), March 28, 1942, Notter files, National Archives; Welles, *The Time For Decision*, 306-335. [Back.](#)

Note 34: FO 371/29464 Eden to Cripps, April 17, 1941, British Public Record Office (PRO). [Back.](#)

Note 35: These initial war aims seem to have been concluded in vague outline in Stalin's mind during the period prior to Barbarossa. See, for example, Jonathan Haslam, "Soviet War Aims," in *The Rise and Fall of the Grand Alliance, 1941-1945*, ed. Ann Lane and Howard Temperley (London: Macmillan, 1995), 22-39. [Back.](#)

Note 36: FO 371/32875 "Policy Toward Russia," by Anthony Eden, January 28, 1942, PRO; Memorandum of Conversation between Welles and Halifax, February 18, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 512-514; FO 371/32877, Eden to Churchill, March 6, 1942, PRO; Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, Vol.2, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), 236. [Back.](#)

Note 37: "First," Stalin cabled Churchill, "there is no definite understanding between our two countries concerning war aims and plans for the post-war organization of peace, secondly, there is no treaty between the USSR and Great Britain on mutual military aid against Hitler. Until understanding is reached on these two main points, not only will there be no clarity in Anglo-Soviet relations, but, if we are to speak frankly, there will be no mutual trust." See Gardner, *Spheres of Influence*, 108; and Albert Resis, "Spheres of Influence in Soviet Wartime Diplomacy," *Journal of Modern History* 53:3 (September 1981): 431. [Back.](#)

Note 38: Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy*, 239, 244; Vojtech Mastny, "Stalin and the Prospects of a Separate Peace in World War II," *American Historical Review* 77:5 (December 1972): 1367. "On balance," Mastny writes, "any Russian efforts to come to terms with Germany before Stalingrad may be dismissed as mere products of anxious imagination" (1369). For the view that Washington was more concerned about a separate peace than London, see, for example, Keith Sainsbury, *Churchill and Roosevelt at War: The War they Fought and the Peace they Hoped to Make* (London: Macmillan Press, 1994), 142. [Back.](#)

Note 39: FO 371/32875 "Policy Toward Russia," by Anthony Eden, January 28, 1942, PRO; Winant to Hull, January 19, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 494-503. [Back.](#)

Note 40: Welles memorandum of conversation with Halifax, June 15, 1941, box 163, Great Britain files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 41: Welles memorandum of conversation with Halifax, June 15, 1941, box 163, Great Britain files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 42: For example, prior to the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939, Polish

officials told Welles that they opposed the possibility of an Anglo-Russian joint guarantee for fear of Russian domination of Poland. Memorandum of conversation between Welles and Polish Ambassador Potocki, "General European Situation," August 22, 1939, box 165, Poland, folder 1, Welles papers, FDRL. Poland and the other nations of Eastern and Central Europe had good reason to fear Russia's territorial appetite. The 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the subsequent peace had led to the independence of much of Russia's western empire, with the loss of many of the Czarist possessions which had been amassed during the previous two centuries. Stalin had shown his desire to regain these territories in his 1939 pact with Hitler. See Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War*, 5-11; Gardner, *Spheres of Influence*, 58-59. [Back.](#)

Note 43: Welles memorandum of conversation with Ciechanowski, June 26, 1941, *FRUS*, vol. I, 1941, 237-238. Loy Henderson, analyzing a Moscow meeting between Polish Prime Minister General Wladyslaw Sikorski and Stalin in December 1941, further warned Welles that a "number of outstanding difficulties between Sikorski and Stalin were apparently found to be insoluble. Discussion of some of them was postponed to the indefinite future, others were left in an unclarified state and will undoubtedly give rise to considerable friction." Henderson to Welles, April 8, 1942, box 165, Poland files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 44: When, in the spring of 1941, Welles broached the possibility of extending Red Cross relief to Soviet-occupied Eastern Poland, Oumansky flatly rejected such aid by charging that Moscow could not allow any "foreign agents" in Soviet-controlled territory. Welles indignantly replied that Oumansky's recalcitrance would hardly "promote a closer interchange" between Washington and Moscow. See Welles memorandum of conversation with Oumansky, April 9, 1941, box 166, USSR files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 45: Welles to Roosevelt, February 19, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 107-108; memorandum of conversation by Welles, March 6, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 114-116. [Back.](#)

Note 46: Memorandum of conversation, by Welles, March 6, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 114-115; memorandum of Welles conversation with Sikorski, March 25, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 123-133. [Back.](#)

Note 47: Memorandum of Welles conversation with Sikorski, March 25, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 123-133. [Back.](#)

Note 48: Welles memorandum of conversation with Halifax, February 18, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 520. [Back.](#)

Note 49: Welles memorandum of conversation with Halifax, February 18, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 520. [Back.](#)

Note 50: Memorandum of conversation with Halifax, "British-Soviet negotiations," February 20, 1942, box 166, USSR files, folder 3, Welles

papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 51: Memorandum of conversation with Halifax, "British-Soviet negotiations," February 20, 1942, box 166, USSR files, folder 3, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 52: "Aide-Memoire by the British Foreign Office," February 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 524-525; "Substance of telegram "B" from the Foreign Office to Lord Halifax," February 1942, box 166, USSR files, folder 3, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 53: FO 371/32876, Halifax to Foreign Office, February 20, 1942, PRO; Anthony Eden, *The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning* (London: Cassell, 1965), 323-24. [Back.](#)

Note 54: Memorandum of conversation between Welles, Standley, and Roosevelt, March 5, 1942, box 166, USSR files, folder 3, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 55: FO 371/32877, Eden to Churchill, March 6, 1942, PRO. [Back.](#)

Note 56: FO 371/32877, Churchill to Roosevelt, March 7, 1942, PRO; FO 371/32877, Eden to Halifax, March 7, 1942, PRO. [Back.](#)

Note 57: Memorandum of conversation with Halifax, by Welles, April 1, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 538. [Back.](#)

Note 58: Welles to Berle, April 4, 1942, box 164, Great Britain files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL. Even Alexander Cadogan thought that Eden was too willing "to throw to the winds all principles." See Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War*, 45. [Back.](#)

Note 59: Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, 194-196. [Back.](#)

Note 60: Welles to Berle, April 4, 1942, box 164, Great Britain files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; Berle Diary, March 28, 1942, box 213, Berle papers, FDRL. President Roosevelt told Welles that an American endorsement of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty "would mean that I tear up the Atlantic Charter before the ink is dry on it. I will not do that." Nevertheless, Roosevelt subsequently told Molotov that he had no serious objections to the Anglo-Soviet Treaty. See memorandum of conversation among Molotov, Roosevelt, and Hopkins, May 29, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 569. [Back.](#)

Note 61: Memorandum of conversation with Ronald Campbell, by Welles, containing text of Foreign Office telegram, June 1, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 583-585. [Back.](#)

Note 62: Other members of the administration may have felt similarly. When Welles told Berle that the Anglo-Soviet Treaty was presenting Washington with a *fait accompli* in Eastern Europe, Berle confided in his

diary: "I am afraid this is true. I am also afraid that every British politician will get behind us and insist that we, in substance, did it." Berle Diary, April 4, 1942, box 213, Berle papers, FDRL [Back](#).

Note 63: It bears repeating that this formidable roster included Senators Tom Connally, Warren Austin, Walter George, Wallace White, and Elbert Thomas; Representatives Charles Eaton, Sol Blum, and Luther Johnson; administration figures such as Dean Acheson, Adolf Berle, and eventually Cordell Hull himself; and other shapers of public opinion such as Anne O'Hare McCormick, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Isaiah Bowman, James T. Shotwell, and Archibald MacLeish. [Back](#).

Note 64: Leo Pasvolsky, "Memorandum on Official Statements of Post-War Policy," January 3, 1942, Postwar Foreign Policy Files, box 190, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; P document 23, "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," June 10, 1942, box 56, Notter files; P document 121, "Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on Political Problems," (March 7-October 10, 1942), October 22, 1942, box 56, Notter files; P minutes 11, May 16, 1942; "The Atlantic Charter and National Independence," November 13, 1942, Atlantic Charter File, box 13, Notter files. [Back](#).

Note 65: P minutes 2, March 14, 1942; P minutes 11, May 16, 1942; P document 137, "Background Information on the Soviet Union," November 13, 1942, box 56; P document 121, "Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on Political Problems," (March 7-October 10, 1942), October 22, 1942, box 56. [Back](#).

Note 66: "Official Statements of Postwar Policy," by Notter and Rothwell, January 2, 1942, box 190, Postwar Foreign Policy Files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; P minutes 2, March 14, 1942, Notter Files. [Back](#).

Note 67: P minutes 2, March 14, 1942; P minutes 44, February 6, 1943; Memorandum of conversation between Notter and Rothwell, "The Possibilities of Revolution During and Immediately Following the Present War," August 30, 1941, box 8, Notter Files; P minutes 5, April 4, 1942. [Back](#).

Note 68: P minutes 2, March 14, 1942. [Back](#).

Note 69: P minutes 2, March 14, 1942. [Back](#).

Note 70: P minutes 2, March 14, 1942; P minutes 5, April 4, 1942. [Back](#).

Note 71: Welles, "Political Cooperation During the War: A Lost Opportunity," 127-129. [Back](#).

Note 72: P minutes 2, March 14, 1942. [Back](#).

Note 73: P minutes 19, July 18, 1942; P minutes 7, April 18, 1942; P minutes 8, April 25, 1942; P minutes 9, May 2, 1942. [Back](#).

Note 74: T document 2, "Polish Population," April 1, 1942, box 60, Notter files; T document 13 "A Note of the Eastern Provinces of Poland," June 26, 1942, box 60, Notter files; T document 16 and P document 190, "Boundary Problems of the East European Region," June 1942, box 60, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 75: P minutes 11, May 16, 1942; P minutes 12, May 23, 1942; P minutes 13, May 30, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 76: Steinhardt to Welles, April 24, 1942, box 83, folder 15, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 77: P minutes 35, November 28, 1942; P document 134, "Official Russian Statements, July 1941-November 1942," November 28, 1942, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 78: Welles did not specify the nations to which they would emigrate. P document 193, "The Baltic States," February 4, 1943, box 57; "The Atlantic Charter and National Independence," November 13, 1942, Atlantic Charter File, Notter files, box 13; P minutes 2, March 14, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 79: P minutes 2, March 14, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 80: P minutes 13, May 30, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 81: P minutes 35, November 28, 1942; P document 121, "Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on Political Problems," (March 7-October 10, 1942), October 22, 1942, box 56, Notter files; P document 151, "Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on Political Problems," (March 7-December 5, 1942), December 7, 1942, box 57, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 82: P minutes 35, November 28, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 83: Henderson to Welles, April 8, 1942, box 165, Poland files, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; Poland: Map II, May 21, 1942, box 191, Postwar Foreign Policy Files, Eastern Europe: Postwar, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 84: P minutes 35, November 28, 1942. At one point in the discussion, Isaiah Bowman warned that territorial problems in the region might have repercussions at home, pointing out that a substantial number of Finns inhabited Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. [Back.](#)

Note 85: P minutes 35, November 28, 1942. Isaiah Bowman later told Welles that Benes thought a middle way might be found for the future of Eastern Europe through the promotion of a socialistic "guided revolution." The Czech leader would reassure Welles that "Czechoslovakia would never become communistic." See Memorandum of conversation between Bowman and Benes, May 19, 1943, box 87, folder 2, Welles papers; memorandum of conversation between Welles and Benes, May 17, 1943, box 161, Czechoslovakia file, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 86: P minutes 35, November 28, 1942; memorandum to Welles by Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "Note on Alternative Soviet Policies in Europe," box 191, Postwar Foreign Policy Files, Eastern Europe: Postwar, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 87: Shotwell to Welles, January 15, 1943, with enclosure, box 192, Postwar Foreign Policy Files, folder 8, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 88: Isaiah Bowman, "Memorandum on Russia," March 6, 1943, box 87, folder 2, Welles papers, FDRL; P minutes 46, March 6, 1943, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 89: Some scholars have argued that in 1943 American and British officials tolerated Moscow's aims in Eastern Europe because they remained concerned about the prospects of a negotiated peace between Moscow and Berlin. See, for example, Vojtech Mastny, "Stalin and the Prospects of a Separate Peace in World War II," 1388. Welles and the planners, however, never expressed any concern about a negotiated peace between Berlin and Moscow, and instead sought to appease Stalin's aims because they sought the friendship and cooperation of Moscow, but also because they believed they had no other alternative [Back.](#)

Note 90: For accounts arguing that U.S. policy blunders or duplicity led to Stalin's control of Eastern Europe see, for example, William C. Bullitt, "How We Won the War and Lost the Peace," *Life* (August 30, 1948): 82-97; Robert Nisbet, *Roosevelt and Stalin: The Failed Courtship* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 1988); Frederick Marks, *Wind Over Sand: The Diplomacy of Franklin Roosevelt* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988); Amos Perlmutter, *FDR and Stalin: A Not So Grand Alliance, 1943-1945* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993). As early as March 1943, after briefings from Welles, Roosevelt told Eden that he would not force the USSR to give up the Baltic states and he would not oppose Moscow's demands on Finland. Nor did the president oppose the Curzon Line as the starting point for discussions on the future Polish-Soviet border. See FO 371/35365, Eden to Churchill, March 17, 1943, PRO. [Back.](#)

Note 91: Richard C. Lukas, *The Strange Allies: The United States and Poland, 1941-1945* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 8. Welles to Roosevelt, April 7, 1941, box 151, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 92: Sikorski memorandum to Welles: "The Problems of Central and Southeastern Europe," December 7, 1942, box 165, Poland files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 93: Memorandum of conversation with Sikorski, by Welles, January 4, 1943, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 314-318; Welles to Roosevelt, January 5, 1943, and enclosure: Welles's draft of Roosevelt to Sikorski, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 319-320; T document 228, "Soviet Rule in Eastern Poland, 1939-1941," January 23, 1943, box 62, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 94: P minutes 41, January 16, 1943. [Back.](#)

Note 95: Memorandum of conversation with Sikorski, by Welles, January 4, 1943, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 314-318. [Back.](#)

Note 96: Memorandum of conversation by Welles, January 30, 1943, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 325-326; "Annex: Memorandum on Polish-Soviet Relations," January 30, 1943, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 326-327; Memorandum of conversation by Welles, February 5, 1943, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 328-329; P document 192, "Poland," February 4, 1943, box 57, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 97: Welles memorandum of conversation with Ciechanowski, January 30, 1943, box 165, Poland files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL; Welles to Roosevelt, February 18, 1943 with Ciechanowski memorandum, box 152, folder 3, Welles papers, FDRL; Welles memorandum of conversation with Ciechanowski, March 1, 1943, box 165, Poland files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 98: P minutes 45, February 20, 1943. [Back.](#)

Note 99: The massacre, which included the execution of more than 4,000 Poles, had been carried out under the direct orders of Stalin and the Soviet Politburo and had virtually eliminated the cream of the Polish officer corps. See Allen Paul, *Katyn: The Untold Story of Stalin's Polish Massacre* (New York: Scribners, 1991); and Vladimir Abarinov, *The Murderers of Katyn* (New York: Hippocrene, 1993). [Back.](#)

Note 100: CAB 66/36 WP(43) 175, "Russo-Polish Relations" by Churchill, April 26, 1943, including Churchill to Stalin, April 24, 1943, PRO. [Back.](#)

Note 101: P minutes 45, February 20, 1943; T document 228, "Soviet Rule in Eastern Poland, 1939-1941," January 23, 1943, box 62, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 102: Welles to Biddle, June 16, 1943, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 431. Welles had apparently forgotten his many attempts during the past year to depose de Gaulle as leader of the Free French. [Back.](#)

Note 103: Welles memorandum of conversation with Gromyko, June 15, 1943, box 166, USSR files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. An immediate showdown with Stalin over Poland was further delayed when Sikorski's Liberator aircraft was mysteriously blown up after taking off from British Gibraltar in July 1943. For the impact of Sikorski's death on Anglo-Polish relations, see Anita J. Prazmowska, *Britain and Poland, 1939-1943: The Betrayed Ally* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 180-185. For an account that Sikorski's death was convenient to the British, see Piotr S. Wandycz, *The United States and Poland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 269. [Back.](#)

Note 104: "Try as they might," Lloyd Gardner has written, "Roosevelt and his advisers could neither escape the ideas of the charter nor the reality of Great Power politics." See Lloyd C. Gardner, "The Atlantic Charter: Idea and Reality, 1942-1945," in *The Atlantic Charter*, ed. Douglas Brinkley and David Facey-Crowther (London: Macmillan, 1994), 53. [Back.](#)

Note 105: Sumner Welles, *Seven Decisions That Shaped History* (New York: Harper, 1950), 127. [Back.](#)

Note 106: The most thorough account of U.S. interest in an East European federation can be found in Geir Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy Towards Eastern Europe, 1943-1947* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1978), 347-393. [Back.](#)

Note 107: Minutes for the Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations, May 7, 1940, box 191, Postwar Foreign Policy Files, Postwar: 1940-41, folder 7, Welles papers, FDRL; Welles to Roosevelt, April 7, 1941, box 151, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. Starting in the fall of 1939, the British Foreign Office had held vague internal discussions about a regional federation of some sort for Eastern Europe. But dating back to the end of World War I, the Poles had been the leading proponents of a supranational federation in Eastern Europe. In November 1940 the exiled Poles reached a preliminary agreement with Benes and his Czech government-in-exile over a postwar confederation for the region. Eden even went to Moscow in December 1941 with a proposal for a similar scheme. The British Foreign Office feared that, unless some solution was found for the future of Eastern Europe, the Russians would dominate the region after the war. At the time, Stalin seemed receptive to plans for a regional federation, and he did not rule out the possibility of some sort of supranational organization. In January 1942, Poland and Czechoslovakia repeated their desire to unite in some form of federation, and Greece and Yugoslavia followed with similar declarations. See, for example, Piotr S. Wandycz, *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers, 1940-1943* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979); as well as Gardner, *Spheres of Influence*, 111-112; Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War*, 56; and P document 205, "Interlocking Confederations in East-Central Europe," February 19, 1943, box 57, Notter files [Back.](#)

Note 108: P minutes 10, May 9, 1942; P minutes 11, May 16, 1942; P document 24, "An East European Union," February 18, 1942, box 56; P document 16, "Plan For Central European Union," May 27, 1942, box 56. [Back.](#)

Note 109: P minutes 10, May 9, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 110: P minutes 17, June 27, 1942; P document 46, "Proposals for the Political Reorganization of Eastern Europe," August 19, 1942, box 56. [Back.](#)

Note 111: P minutes 11, May 16, 1942; P minutes 14, June 6, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 112: P minutes 12, May 23, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 113: P minutes 12, May 23, 1942; P document 191, "Eastern Europe: Regional Factors," box 57; P document 16, "Plan For Central European Union," May 27, 1942, box 56; P document 46, "Proposals for the Political Reorganization of Eastern Europe," August 19, 1942, box 56; P minutes 23, August 22, 1942; memorandum of Welles conversation with Sikorski, December 4, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 199-202. [Back.](#)

Note 114: P minutes 14, June 6, 1942; P minutes 13, May 30, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 115: P document 204, "The Feasibility of an East European Union," February 10, 1943, box 57. During an August 1942 meeting between Welles and Richard Law of the British Foreign Office to discuss postwar planning, Law enthusiastically endorsed creating a federation, calling it a "Tennessee Valley Authority" for the Danube River basin. Welles warned Law that while such a scheme represented a small step in the right direction, a TVA for the Danube would not nearly go far enough to resolve the region's ills, which, he added, had been exacerbated by centuries of local hatreds and great power politics. See memorandum of conversation between Welles and Richard Law, "Postwar Problems," August 25, 1942, box 164, Great Britain files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 116: P document 202, "Secret Official Commitments Regarding the East European Countries," February 5, 1943, box 57; P minutes 44, February 6, 1943; P minutes 45, February 20, 1943; P document 206, "Soviet and British Attitudes," February 18, 1943, box 57; P document 135, "Official Russian Views on Postwar Settlements," November 11, 1942, box 56; Welles memorandum of conversation with Czech Minister Hurban, "Proposed Federation between Poland and Czechoslovakia," December 2, 1942, box 161, Czechoslovakia file, Welles papers, FDRL; T document 200a, "Soviet War Aims as Presented by Soviet Sources," September 14, 1943, box 61, Notter files. [Back.](#)

Note 117: P document 191, "East Europe: Regional Factors," February 4, 1943, box 57; P document 202, "Secret Official Commitments Regarding the Eastern European Countries," February 5, 1943, box 57; P minutes 44, February 6, 1943, box 57. [Back.](#)

Note 118: P minutes 45, February 20, 1943. The Poles, too, had enthusiastically backed plans for a federation, which they hoped might succeed in containing both a postwar Germany and the Soviet Union. "Poland would be the anchor in the north and Turkey the anchor in the south," Sikorski told Welles. (Memorandum of conversation with Sikorski, by Welles, January 4, 1943, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1943, 317). Welles told the planners that Turkey would also play a crucial role in the security of the region, and he read a recent message from Turkish officials that explained that they would enthusiastically support a truly independent federation but would vigorously oppose one controlled by Moscow. According to Welles, the Turks were particularly nervous about the future of the Black Sea straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, which, along with Constantinople, the Allies had promised to the Czar in 1915. Welles warned the planners that the Soviets had once again begun to show greater interest in the straits.

"Every move which Turkey is making has, of course, the position of Soviet Russia in mind," Welles explained. He further added that Turkey desired a reaffirmation of the 1936 Straits Convention signed at Montreux, desiring a new treaty that would be backed by the United States and Great Britain. See P minutes 45, February 20, 1943. [Back.](#)

Note 119: P minutes 45, February 20, 1943. [Back.](#)

Note 120: Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 4 (London: Cassell, 1948-1954), 717; FO 371/35435, Eden to Churchill, June 16, 1943, PRO. [Back.](#)

Note 121: Welles to E. R. Graves, April 13, 1948, box 133, folder 1, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 122: P minutes 44, February 6, 1943, box 57; P document 206, "Soviet and British Attitudes," February 18, 1943, box 57; "The Atlantic Charter and National Independence," November 13, 1942, Atlantic Charter File, box 13, Notter files; see also Sumner Welles, "Political Cooperation During the War: A Lost Opportunity," in Kimball, *Roosevelt and the World Crisis*, 131. [Back.](#)

Note 123: Welles himself would later admit that "Roosevelt was occasionally apt to rely too greatly upon a few favorite panaceas for problems that were actually too basic and far-reaching in their origins and nature to admit of any easy solutions," and that the President "was even more wedded to the idea that plebiscites are a universal remedy than Woodrow Wilson had been." See Welles, *Seven Decisions*, 136. [Back.](#)

Note 124: Welles, *Time for Decision*, 332-334. For the contrary view that Washington did not consider the Good Neighbor Policy as a model for Moscow's relations with its neighbors, see, for example, Lynn E. Davis, *The Cold War Begins: Soviet-American Conflict over Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 143. [Back.](#)

Note 125: For an account of how Washington sought to make distinctions between Moscow's potential influence on the foreign policies of its neighbors and its influence on their internal policies, see, for example, John Vloyantes, "The Significance of Pre-Yalta Policies Regarding Liberated Countries in Europe," *Western Political Quarterly* 11 (June 1958): 215, 226-28. [Back.](#)

Note 126: Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1990), 102-103; Gardner, *Spheres of Influence*, 196. [Back.](#)

Note 127: P minutes 38, December 19, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 128: P document 34, "Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on Political Problems," August 12, 1942, box 56; Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, vol. 2, 550; P document 206, "Soviet and British Attitudes," February 18, 1943, box 57. [Back.](#)

Note 129: Welles, *Seven Decisions*, 189; FO 371/35435, Halifax to Foreign Office, June 29, 1943, PRO. [Back.](#)

Note 130: Keith Eubank, *Summit at Teheran* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 66-67; Welles memorandum of conversation with Litvinov, May 7, 1943, box 166, USSR files, folder 4, Welles papers, FDRL. [Back.](#)

Note 131: A few years after Welles's departure from the administration, his admirers claimed that his continued presence in Washington might have helped to produce an outcome other than the Cold War. The case was made, by the columnist Drew Pearson among others, that Welles's resignation in September 1943 may well have been a significant moment for Eastern Europe, as well as for the prospects for postwar *entente* between Washington and Moscow. [Back.](#)

Note 132: Welles, *Seven Decisions*, 189; Charles Bohlen Notes on Roosevelt-Stalin Conversation, December 1, 1943, *FRUS: The Conferences at Cairo and Teheran*, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 594-595. [Back.](#)

Note 133: P document 34, "Tentative Views of the Subcommittee on Political Problems," August 12, 1942, box 56; P document 236, "Political Subcommittee Summary of Views: March 1942 to July 1943," box 57; memorandum of conversation between Welles and Halifax, April 1, 1942, *FRUS*, vol. III, 1942, 538. [Back.](#)

Note 134: Nonetheless, Stalin's wartime territorial aims turned out to be relatively modest when compared to what Welles and the planners assumed he might seek. [Back.](#)

Note 135: P document 236, "Political Subcommittee Summary of Views: March 1942 to July 1943," box 57. [Back.](#)

Note 136: P minutes 13, May 30, 1942. [Back.](#)

Note 137: P minutes 13, May 30, 1942; P document 236, "Political Subcommittee Summary of Views: March 1942 to July 1943," box 57. The statement that the Baltic states "themselves realized that they were not viable as states" was untrue. Armed resistance to Soviet rule continued until 1952. See, for example, Aleksandras Shtromas, "The Baltic States as Soviet Republics: Tensions and Contradictions," in *The Baltic States: The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*, ed. Graham Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 87-92. [Back.](#)

Note 138: P document 236, "Political Subcommittee Summary of Views: March 1942 to July 1943," box 57. [Back.](#)

Note 139: The argument has been made that London should have adhered to Washington's stance against an Anglo-Soviet Treaty confirming Stalin's

territorial aims. See, for example, Steven Merritt Miner, *Between Churchill and Stalin: The Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the Origins of the Grand Alliance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). This assessment overlooks the fact that in the wake of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty U.S. officials quickly abandoned their rigid stance against wartime territorial settlements. [Back.](#)

Note 140: P document 236, "Political Subcommittee Summary of Views: March 1942 to July 1943," box 57. [Back.](#)

Note 141: "Suggested United States Policy Regarding Poland," *FRUS, Malta and Yalta*, 230-234; Yalta Conference Communiqué, February 12, 1945, *FRUS: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 977-978. [Back.](#)

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