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Dane Cash’s “History Has Begun a New Chapter...” analyzes debates over U.S. foreign policy that emerged in popular political opinion journals as a result of the Korean War.1 From the pages of The Nation and The New Republic on the left, The New Leader and Commonweal on the hawkish left, and The Freeman and The American Mercury on the right, the author explains how the war led to arguments for and against U.S. containment policy and revealed growing “ideological fault-lines” among prominent commentators on all sides of the American political spectrum (395, 415). Cash assesses in particular three groups that emerged—and often overlapped—in their analyses of the war and its consequences: “hawkish liberals” who called for rollback; “left liberals” who lambasted U.S. support for Republic of Korea (ROK) President Syngman Rhee and criticized U.S. containment policy (396-7); and conservatives who castigated the “de facto pro-Communist” policies of the Truman administration, as well as the decision to intervene in Korea in the first place (402).

In isolating these intellectual threads, Cash offers two overarching arguments about how the Korean War shaped the intellectual environment of the early Cold War and, ultimately, the future of American politics. The conflict, he contends, energized hawkish American liberals whose arguments foreshadowed the emergence of a neoconservative

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movement over the following two decades. Additionally, he argues that searing conservative criticisms of the Truman administration's foreign policy represented an important origin of the New American Right.

In this regard, this article offers a much-needed contribution to the historiography that sheds further light on the long-term implications of the Korean War for domestic American politics. Historians, like Paul G. Pierpaoli, have long noted that the conflict served as a “multifaceted watershed” that led to the militarization of Truman’s containment policy; the rise of the “imperial presidency”; and an enduring military-industrial complex. But Cash’s scholarship details how the Korean War provided fertile ground for growing domestic divisions over U.S. foreign policy that in part originated in influential political opinion journals. The conflict, the author thus demonstrates, was an event that dramatically shaped how American intellectuals imagined their country’s place in a Cold-War world.

“History Has Begun a New Chapter...” is organized around six discussions that emerged in U.S. opinion journals during the Korean War: The issue of U.S. support for Syngman Rhee; the Truman administration’s “timidity” in East Asia (399); Korea as a needed opportunity for a “global crusade” against the Soviet Union (407); the failings of U.S. containment policy and the need for economic and humanitarian strategies; conservative outrage over the United States’ intervention in Korea; and questions over the constitutionality of Truman’s “police action” (413).

By assessing how influential publications responded to these issues, Cash demonstrates that the Korean conflict blurred ideological lines and exacerbated growing divides among diverse commentators. Left liberals—like Freda Kirchwey of The Nation and William Costello of The New Republic—soberly expressed their support for U.S. intervention in Korea, but deplored Syngman Rhee and criticized the failings of U.S. containment policy. However, hawkish liberals like David J. Dallin and William Henry Chamberlin of The New Leader (proto-neoconservatives in a sense) applauded U.S. support for the ROK President

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and portrayed the Korean War as a valuable opportunity to confront the Soviet Union in an international showdown—“the beginning of the end of the Soviet menace,” as Dallin put it (399). Conservative writers for *The Freeman* agreed and found common cause with those hawkish liberals in ridiculing the Truman administration. Indeed, even as Dallin and Chamberlin agreed with their conservative counterparts about little in domestic policy, they “marched in lock step” when it came to foreign affairs and “seemed,” as the author notes, “much more at home in the pages of conservative publications than they would have in the leading liberal weeklies...” (403).

At the same time, liberals of all stripes, from the pages of *The New Leader* to *The Nation*, disagreed with the arguments of prominent conservatives in *The Freeman* and *The American Mercury* that Truman’s “police action” was a violation of the constitution. Likewise, hawkish liberals found no common ground with *Freeman* co-editor Henry Hazlitt’s condemnations of the Korean intervention as a tragic mistake. Hazlitt’s arguments, Cash notes, represented “lingering conservative isolationism, discomfort with working through the UN, and bitterness at having had to endure nearly twenty years of Democratic rule in Washington”—sentiments that energized the American Right (411).

The war, as this brief overview makes clear, led to wide-ranging debates in opinion journals that defied any bi-polar categorization of left versus right. What is missing from Cash’s discussion, however, is the recognition that the Korean War was the occasion as much as the cause for these debates. If the conflict foreshadowed coming ideological movements in the U.S. political spectrum and exposed divisions among prominent publications, those debates—with few exceptions—had nothing to do with the divided Korean peninsula or its civil complexities outside of the Cold War. For many American commentators, the war was a convenient opportunity—indeed a needed crisis as U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson understood it—that allowed them to articulate their own vision for U.S. foreign policy at a moment of great consequence. Those debates were much more about a broader ideological struggle for the future of U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union than the fate of Korea and its people. The conflict was—to use the words of Bruce Cumings about Acheson’s perspective—“...not a Korean War, it could have happened anywhere.”

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Regardless, Dane Cash’s article heightens our understanding of the intellectual trends that coalesced around the Korean War with long-term implications for American political history. The author underscores the need for further research on the earliest origins of neo-conservatism and the New American Right and demonstrates yet again how the Korean War presaged a new era in the United States’ relationship with the world. History had begun a new chapter, indeed.

Brandon K. Gauthier graduated from Elon University in 2006 with a B.A. in political science and completed his M.A. in history at Fordham University in 2010. He is presently a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) in American history at Fordham University. Specializing in U.S. foreign relations, his dissertation examines the history of U.S.-DPRK relations from 1948 to 1996. Gauthier’s research specifically historicizes competing cultural and political visions of North Korea in American society and explains the process through which integrated links between culture, identity, and foreign policy shaped U.S.-DPRK diplomatic history. He has previously written for the Atlantic.com, Yonsei Journal of International Studies, The Oral History Review, Shreveport Times, and NKnews.org.

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