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Rethinking Stalin's Cold War

It is now commonplace to talk of a new Cold War between Russia and the West. This has arisen not just because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea but because of Russian 'expansionism' in the Arctic and its 'meddling' in Syria. It is therefore timely to revisit the post Second World War diplomacy which established both understandings and considerable misunderstandings between Stalin, the US and its Western allies. This paper provides a rethink of the views of those who actually met Stalin, without attempting to rehabilitate him. His obvious intelligence, wit and charm were all remarked upon by any number of Western diplomats, politicians and intellectuals. The paper traces the decline from Uncle Joe to pariah politician and links this to the historiography of Stalin and those around him. Amongst all of this, it considers the new age of atomic weapons and the manner in which the US under Truman utilised this considerable advantage during those early crucial years of unilateralism.