

appears as less a sponsor of homeownership than a promoter of finance capital. As a result, one can read the birth of international neoliberalism in the pages of Kwak's monograph.

This will be the definitive study of the power and ambitions of American housing aid programs. It also sets an agenda for future research. Kwak's book is a story of American aid and relies almost exclusively on American sources. As such, the voices of locals are muted and refracted through their American interlocutors. Future studies will examine what U.S. housing aid meant for the people who adapted and responded to these American policies.

ANNEMARIE SAMMARTINO
Oberlin College

SÖNKE KUNKEL. *Empire of Pictures: Global Media and the 1960s Remaking of American Foreign Policy*. (Explorations in Culture and International History, no. 8.) New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. Pp. xvi, 260. \$95.00.

JOHN A. THOMPSON. *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America's Global Role*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015. Pp. xiv, 343. \$29.95.

American foreign policy was built on the ruins of a world order that collapsed into two titanic world wars. The decisive moment of transition occurred in the 1940s, when the U.S. entered the war against Japan and Germany and then, in the war's aftermath, girded for battle against the Soviet Union and communism. The conventional rendering of this epochal change in policy, so different in its essentials from what preceded it, emphasizes that American security requirements made the change mandatory; critical appraisals, spearheaded by the Open Door interpretation of William Appleman Williams and his followers, saw it arising from a perceived dependence of the American economy and its capitalist system on open access to the world's markets and investment opportunities. According to John A. Thompson, however, neither of these interpretations pass muster. In *A Sense of Power: The Roots of America's Global Role*, Thompson focuses instead on the growing power of the U.S. and the sense of responsibility for world affairs that it inculcated.

Though the introduction and conclusion range more widely, the heart of *A Sense of Power* analyzes the debates over American foreign policy from the 1890s, when imperialism emerged as a rival to isolationism, to 1952, when the essentials of the transformation had been completed. He investigates both contemporary and historiographical disputes, noting how the latter arose directly from the former. Thompson writes at the outset that his book, twenty years in the making, was sparked even further back by his dissatisfaction at the time with dominant explanations for the war in Vietnam—one stressing the imperative security requirements of preventing a communist victory, the other the malign and expansive characteristics of American capitalism. Thompson set out to find alternative explanations; the result is an outstanding synthesis of scholarly interpretation and a fresh view of America's rise.

Thompson is most persuasive in analyzing the role that

"national security" had in prompting America's new conception of its world responsibilities. In the two most critical moments—the decisions to intervene in 1917 and 1940–1941—Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt are seen as acting on bases quite incompatible with a single-minded emphasis on security. It was Wilson's unyielding position on submarine warfare that drove intervention in 1917. Contrary to Walter Lippmann's famous thesis—that it was the threat to physical security prompted by a possible German victory that underlay the decision for war—Thompson writes that the great majority of Americans, including Wilson, "remained confident that geography and the nation's own power would keep it safe from attack whatever the outcome of the war" (107). The "ambitious goal" of reconstructing the international order was "the consequence rather than the cause of the decision to go to war" (108).

Thompson suggests that the outstanding anomaly in U.S. policy lay in the relationship between national security and world order goals, what Arnold Wolfers once called "possession" and "milieu" goals. If American power was sufficiently great to achieve the latter, it might be assumed, it would be perfectly ample to achieve the former. Yet, in a sort of shell game, this was frequently denied by proponents of intervention. Thompson brilliantly explores this disjunction at various points in his work. The need to show that national security was imperiled was paramount domestically; the political attractions of making the argument were (and remain) sufficiently great as to lead to its widespread adoption, despite being inapplicable in the circumstances. FDR appealed to national security because he felt he had to, but it was much more his unwillingness to countenance living in a world dominated by gangsters, contemptuous of the basic principles governing the life of states, that explains the policy he adopted from 1939 to 1941.

If national security and perceived economic imperatives are discounted, what remains is America's growing sense of power. A broad public reluctance to make the sacrifices entailed by worldwide commitments was rooted in an often perceptive analysis by the isolationists of America's security and economic requirements. However, America's security and prosperity in isolation also made the costs of a much greater role more bearable. With half the world's wealth underwriting a potentially massive expansion of its latent military strength, the "sense of power" also conferred, critically, a sense of responsibility, making its failure to act morally culpable. But none of the interventions, from 1898 onward, were based on a necessity rooted in physical security; they were "wars of choice" (xi).

Though now distant in time, much of the contemporary controversy over foreign policy falls within the grooves marked out by these earlier debates. But there is one vital difference. The post–World War II resolution created powerful standing military institutions (together with influential allies and a homegrown intellectual elite) that would become entrenched as never before. Is the persistence and growth of the national security apparatus no longer the consequence, but now really the cause of

America's world role? Thompson is illuminating, but noncommittal, on the question, which this reviewer would resolve in the affirmative. Joseph A. Schumpeter drew attention to the age-old dynamic: sustaining imperialism was a war machine that, "created by wars that required it . . . now created the wars it required" (*Imperialism and Social Classes: Two Essays* [1951], 25). Though endlessly touted as indispensable to "national security," the dubious character of the claims made on establishing that nexus between world order and American security remain yet more prominent as a feature of the debate today. The power of world capital, discounted by Thompson, seems by contrast much stronger than in the days of Wilson and FDR. Thompson suggests persuasively that it is the abundance of American power that best explains the outward thrust; not needs, but wants, drove U.S. conduct. This also helps account for fluctuating tendencies toward engagement and withdrawal by the U.S., which was driven more by ideological whimsy than strategic necessity. Serious students of America's world role will profit greatly from Thompson's exemplary work.

Very different in focus and method from Thompson's study is Sönke Kunkel's *Empire of Pictures: Global Media and the 1960s Remaking of American Foreign Policy*, a perceptive and well-researched tour of how political leaders realized the utility of the picture and made conscious efforts to take advantage of its power. The virtues evoked in pictures are, to the political actor, just an instrumental means to improve appearances, and thus continually illustrate and emphasize the distinction between appearance and reality. Kunkel's work, in effect, gives rulers a useful history of how to keep up appearances and exposes their machinations for what they are (reminiscent of the "black" and "red" interpretations that hovered around readings of Machiavelli from the outset). The uses to which John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon put these new media arts are summarized, as are U.S. diplomatic efforts to reach populations in West Germany, Argentina, India, and Tanzania. State officials employed films, newsreels, television programs, exhibits, and picture magazines to get foreign peoples to identify with the U.S. They tried to adapt to the rapid emergence of visual media as the kingpin of communication; they did not slight its importance. As Nixon told H. R. Haldeman, "the American president received [on TV] by a million Chinese is worth a hundred times the effect of the communiqué" (36).

In the 1960s, visits of foreign statesmen were elaborate affairs, of intended benefit to both host and visitor, and required logistical operations comparable "to mounting a Pacific Island invasion and, as a spectacle, to staging a De-Mille epic," as journalist Russell Baker put it (62). They sometimes had quite a transformative effect—Deng Xiaoping's visit in the early 1970s convinced the Chinese leader that he wanted for China what the U.S. offered. But Deng's trip, notes Kunkel, was one of the last to be transformative—today such visits are "routine" and "hardly noticed anymore" (77). Big efforts were put into showcasing the American way of life, holding out the prospect that poor peasants in India and Tanzania might

yet aspire to the swimming pools, televisions, and Corvette Stingrays featured in American exhibits, or providing the lesson that imitating U.S. agricultural techniques was an answer to food insecurity. Evidence of the good works of the U.S., however, was ultimately overwhelmed by pictorial representations of the violence it was inflicting in Vietnam. The usually positive portrayal of the American effort in U.S. media in the early years of the war was almost from the outset accompanied by a highly negative treatment abroad, showing the devastation inflicted by U.S. arms. The result was paradoxical, exhibiting the overwhelming military power the U.S. possessed while gravely disaffecting world public opinion from U.S. purposes. Ultimately, the episode shows the limits of official attempts to craft emotionally satisfying versions of reality through pictures, a conclusion in tension with the author's emphasis on the power that pictures conferred on the empire. Pictures are a part of the "veil of power" and are artfully pursued by officialdom as such, but they also display an inordinate power to disrupt official rationalizations and a strong tendency to slip beyond the control of their purveyors.

DAVID C. HENDRICKSON
Colorado College

LARRY BLOMSTEDT. *Truman, Congress, and Korea: The Politics of America's First Undeclared War*. (Studies in Conflict, Diplomacy, and Peace.) Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016. Pp. xvi, 305. \$50.00.

Between the repeated efforts to legislate neutrality during the 1930s and the Democratic Party's attempt to restrain Richard Nixon during the latter stages of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Congress rarely played a leading role in foreign policy. This was the era of World War II and the early Cold War consensus, the era of the so-called imperial presidency, when legislators largely bowed to the White House's wishes. The Korean War erupted in the middle of this period, and it fit the pattern perfectly. Harry S. Truman sent American troops to Korea without asking Congress for a declaration of war. Thereafter, he rarely faced any effective opposition on Capitol Hill to his war policies. Even the high-profile congressional hearings after the president fired Douglas MacArthur turned out to be more noise than substance. Congress's impact on policy remained minimal.

Despite this lack of influence, historians have been repeatedly attracted to Congress's actions during the Korean War. From Ronald J. Caridi's early efforts to explore the Republican Party's actions to David Kepley's analysis of the rise and fall of bipartisanship, from Michael J. Hogan's dissection of the era's competing political ideologies to my own work on how Truman sold his policies through Congress, Korea has become one of the more robust areas in the generally neglected field of Congress and foreign policy.

In *Truman, Congress, and Korea: The Politics of America's First Undeclared War*, Larry Blomstedt's central achievement is to add more depth and detail to a familiar story. He sets the scene well, analyzing the strength and

Copyright of American Historical Review is the property of Oxford University Press / USA and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.