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Introduction by **Robert Jervis**

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**Introduction by Robert Jervis, Columbia University**

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**A**s our reviewers note, of all the members of the small set of people who have combined distinguished scholarship and a stint as a top policy-maker, Zbigniew Brzezinski is the least studied, especially in comparison to George Kennan and Henry Kissinger. Indeed, the volume under review is the first to be devoted to him, his thinking, and his role in government. Part of the reason is that at the time and for some years after, the Carter Administration seemed like a failure, and a fairly uninteresting one at that. But, as is so often the case, the judgment of history tends to be counter-cyclical and scholars are attracted both to revisionism and to areas that have not been adequately covered. More careful and perhaps less angry scholarship, combined with a reaction to the performance of more recent presidents, have made the Carter administration appear more interesting, balanced, and successful. New material also explains increased scholarly attention: Brzezinski's weekly memos to President Jimmy Carter, in addition to many other papers, are available at the Carter library.

The volume under review is unusual in that it combines scholarly essays with accounts by those who worked with Brzezinski as members of the National Security Council staff. Many, including the editor, Charles Gati, are friends of Brzezinski (truth in reviewing – Brzezinski was a colleague of mine for several years and we remain friends). But even taking possible biases into account, all reviewers judge that at minimum the essays succeed in debunking the stereotype of Brzezinski as a dogmatic thinker who was blinded by a rigid if not simple-minded opposition to the Soviet Union, perhaps in part because of his Polish origins. As Daniel Sargent notes, his views about the weakness of the Soviet domestic system were “prescient,” and his 1970s analysis of what he called the “technetronic revolution” was well ahead of its time. Both of these acute perceptions show Brzezinski's “amazing knack for understanding long-term trends,” according to Louise Woodroffe. For James Lebovic, the essays do a good job of “highlighting the complexities of an individual – and thereby also the contradictions that are inevitable in policy and policymaking.” For many observers, the fact that he was simultaneously a “hardliner” during the Cold War and a fierce critic of George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq may be puzzling, but these essays point to some of the strands of his thinking that render these positions consistent – e.g., an appreciation for the power stakes involved in conflicts and an understanding that societies rarely can be remolded from the outside.

The reviewers are not entirely uncritical, however. Indeed, the major question is whether the essays themselves are too uncritical, perhaps in compensation for the prevailing negative view. In particular, the reviewers note that Brzezinski deserves at least some blame for the debilitating infighting that characterized the Carter administration. Furthermore, there is no essay on Brzezinski's role in dealing with domestic politics and Congress, and Michael Brenes notes that “the authors seem to overlook the fact that many of Brzezinski's successes in the foreign arena were domestic failures.” As both Brenes and Lebovic note, the very fact that the essays are so insightful leaves Brzezinski somewhat of an enigma – and extends an invitation to further research.

**Participants:**

**Charles Gati** is Senior Research Professor, European and Eurasian Studies at Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He was a consultant and later a senior member of the Department of State's Policy Planning Staff in 1989-1994. His books include *Failed Illusions: Moscow, Washington, Budapest and the 1956 Hungarian Revolt* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Stanford University Press, 2006); *The Bloc That Failed* (Indiana University Press, 1990), and *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Duke University Press, 1986). He is the only two-time winner of the Marshall Shulman Book Prize.

**Robert Jervis** is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics at Columbia University. His most recent book is *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Cornell University Press, 2010). He was President of the American Political Science Association in 2000-01, received the National Academy of Science's tri-annual award for behavioral sciences contributions to avoiding nuclear war, and is the founding editor of the International Security Studies Forum.

**Michael Brenes** teaches courses in U.S. history at Hunter College, City University of New York. He recently received his Ph.D. in History from the Graduate Center, City University of New York. His most recent essay is forthcoming in the *Journal of Policy History* and he is working on a book manuscript entitled *For Right and Might: The Militarization of the Cold War and the Remaking of American Democracy*.

**James H. Lebovic** is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at The George Washington University. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Southern California. He has published widely on defense policy, deterrence strategy, military budgets and procurement, democracy and human rights, and international conflict. He is the author of five books including *Deterring International Terrorism and Rogue States: U.S. National Security Policy after 9/11* (Routledge, 2007), *The Limits of U.S. Military Capability: Lessons from Vietnam and Iraq* (Johns Hopkins University, 2010), and *Flawed Logics: Strategic Nuclear Arms Control from Truman to Obama* (Johns Hopkins University, 2013).

**Daniel Sargent** is assistant professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2008 and has held fellowships at the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard and International Security Studies at Yale University. He is a co-editor of *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*. His first book, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s*, will be published by Oxford University Press in late 2014.

**Louise Woodroffe** is a historian in the Office of the Historian at the U.S. Department of State, where she compiles *Foreign Relations of the United States* volumes on Africa. She received her Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science and is the author of *"Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden": the United States, the Horn of Africa, and the Demise of Détente*, published by Kent State University Press in 2013.

In his preface to *Zbig*, Charles Gati rightly criticizes the current state of scholarship on former National Security Adviser to Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski. Unlike his predecessor and fellow Harvard alumnus, Henry Kissinger, Brzezinski has no major biographer. Few historians have attempted to understand Brzezinski's decision-making process, tried to examine him as an international product of the Cold War, grappled with his 'realism' and overall grand strategy, or assessed his relationship to the President that employed him.<sup>1</sup> Brzezinski's papers, while accessible to scholars at the Library of Congress and the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, have not produced a major monograph on the man—until now. For this reason alone, Charles Gati's edited collection should be widely read by scholars of U.S. foreign relations. It is rare for any edited volume to be the first major historical work on a diplomat of the magnitude as Brzezinski, but with the publication *Zbig*, such is the case.

In addition to offering an accessible introduction to the diplomacy and statecraft of Brzezinski, the essays in Gati's book also uncover fresh insights into his background, motivations, and legacy. The chapters of the book are nicely organized, each grappling with various aspects of Brzezinski's extended career in public and private service. Essays by Justin Vaïsse on the relationship between Brzezinski and Kissinger, and David Engerman on Brzezinski's academic contributions to the concept of totalitarianism are among the most rewarding for their reliance on archival sources, and in Vaïsse's case, Brzezinski's papers.<sup>2</sup> Others are absent footnotes altogether, including flattering essays by Brzezinski's former colleagues William Quandt, Robert Hunter, and James Thomson—which offer interesting anecdotes about their time spent working for Brzezinski—as well as Francis Fukuyama's 'appreciation' for Brzezinski. No matter the length or the source material, the premise behind each of the essays is that the dominant interpretation of Brzezinski in the 'orthodox' scholarship on Carter's foreign policy is wrong, as the authors provide little evidence to indicate that Brzezinski was unilaterally self-serving, bullying with his adversaries (including Secretary of State Cyrus Vance), and myopic in his aversion toward the Soviet Union. Brzezinski was forceful in making his opinions known to Carter, but was never inflexible, they argue. There is no credence given to the portrayal of Brzezinski as a hard-liner, or being involved in any capacity toward pushing Carter to the right on foreign policy. In Gati's volume, Brzezinski emerges a complex thinker, malleable in his philosophy on foreign affairs, and open to opinions that diverge from his own. And as National Security

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<sup>1</sup> These works on Kissinger include Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Jussi Hanhimaki, *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, M.A.: Belknap Press, 2007); Mario Del Pero, *The Eccentric Realist: Henry Kissinger and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Justin Vaïsse, "Zbig, Henry, and the New U.S. Foreign Policy Elite" in Charles Gati, editor, *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 3-26; David Engerman, "The Fall of Totalitarianism and the Rise of Zbigniew Brzezinski," in *ibid*, 27-41.

Advisor, Brzezinski successfully ensured the interests of U.S. national security and made the world safer in the long term. In addition to being a much-needed work on Brzezinski, Gati's book is thus an important contribution to the revisionist school of historiography on Jimmy Carter's foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

One of the many strengths of the book is that the essays defy the reductionist labels applied to Brzezinski during his tenure at the National Security Council—and after it ended in 1981. The notion of Brzezinski as Cold Warrior, or of Brzezinski as an appeaser of communism are wholly false. Both the liberal and conservative critics of Brzezinski have failed to understand the complexity, intelligence, and nuances of his strategic thinking toward America's role in the world. The authors are persuasive in this regard, each showing how Brzezinski should not be placed in ideological boxes that misrepresent his worldview—the corollary of which is to underestimate his significance to shaping U.S. foreign policy. This is the sole focus of Robert Pastor's essay "The Caricature and the Man." Pastor shows that while Brzezinski was skeptical of Soviet leaders, he was not dogmatic in his dealings with the country. It was not Brzezinski who made Carter alter his approach to U.S.-Soviet relations in 1979, but the Soviet Union's interventions in southern Africa and Afghanistan. The Soviets deserve the blame for Carter's abandonment of SALT II and détente. The contribution by Warren Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker on Brzezinski's China policy proves that Brzezinski was not soft on communism, as critics such as Jeanne Kirkpatrick argued in 1979, but that he saw better relations with China as necessary for the demise of America's ultimate enemy, the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> Tucker and Cohen argue that Brzezinski's affinity for China led to a multifaceted strategy for greater leverage in the United States' dealings with the Soviet Union. Tucker and Cohen also demonstrate how Brzezinski modified his support for a foreign policy centered on human rights with his realism toward China, leading to interesting contradictions and policy outcomes. None of this means that Brzezinski was an unequivocal hawk on foreign policy.<sup>5</sup>

Brzezinski is also depicted a prescient sage and a prognosticator of the Cold War's end. In the essays by Mark Kramer ("Anticipating the Grand Failure") and Martin Strmecki ("Witnessing the Grand Failure in Moscow, 1989"), Brzezinski emerges as another George F. Kennan — one who recognized the eventual implosion of Soviet communism. David Rothkopf goes even further, saying that Brzezinski's and Carter's policies led to the downfall of the Soviet Union. Rothkopf writes in "Setting the Stage for the Current Era" that "Carter and Brzezinski not only anticipated the decline of the Soviet Union but helped accelerate it with their tough stand in Afghanistan" (83). In his essay "Brzezinski and Iraq," James Mann argues that Brzezinski predicted the outcome of the 2003 Iraq War. Mann

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of this literature, see Scott Kaufman's contribution to the H-Diplo roundtable on Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, H-Diplo Roundtable Review, Volume XII, No. 6 (2011), 1 March 2011, <http://h-diplo.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XII-6.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Jeanne Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary*, November 1979.

<sup>5</sup> Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Beijing's Friend, Moscow's Foe," in Gati, *Zbig*, 85-103.

posits that Brzezinski was a rare member of the foreign policy establishment who quickly realized the fallacies behind George W. Bush's involvement in Iraq before the invasion. More than other Democrats, Brzezinski was an early and outspoken critic of the war, transforming him into a foreign policy "dove" who favored an early end to the war and a timetable for leaving the region (161).

As a whole, the essays are thoroughly convincing in their communication of Brzezinski's importance to U.S. foreign policy. The attempts to rescue Brzezinski from caricature are necessary and appreciated, and will force future scholars to avoid pigeonholing Brzezinski with anachronistic terms. Many of the essays, however, could focus more on the discontents of Brzezinski's diplomacy, rather than his achievements. Gati states he did not want to edit a "*Festschrift*," (xiv) and sought to eliminate "ill-mannered criticism or excessive praise," (xv) but at times, his admiration for Brzezinski overwhelms healthy criticism. The essays are far from hagiographic, but each one downplays Brzezinski's shortcomings.

One of the main weaknesses of the book is the inability of many of the authors to assess the limits of Brzezinski's foreign-policy making, particularly the role of domestic politics in hampering the human rights agenda of Carter and Brzezinski. Carter's foreign policy was an admirable one. It offered Americans a way out of the Cold War that combined the best aspects of Kissingerian *détente* and Wilsonian idealism, but the domestic repercussions of a recession, combined with global instability, led Americans to support a resurgence of militarism after 1976, leading to a 'Second Cold War.' Indeed, the authors seem to overlook the fact that many of Brzezinski's successes in the foreign arena were domestic failures. More than any president in the second half of the twentieth-century except Lyndon Johnson, Carter's foreign policy consistently proved a liability in his poll ratings and prospects for re-election. As Adam Clymer has recounted, the ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty ignited vociferous and unrelenting opposition among the American right, opposition that contributed to Ronald Reagan's election in 1980.<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to consider the Panama Canal Treaties an unqualified "triumph" (71) if their passage led to a rejection of Carter's entire foreign policy (and Carter himself) three years later. Carter's efforts to negotiate the SALT Treaty were also fodder for conservative Republicans in 1979. Carter's pursuit of SALT II while the country was mired in gasoline shortages, rising unemployment, and crippling inflation rates made the President appear detached from reality, or at least, attempting to escape problems at home. And as Rothkopf points out, foreign affairs was Carter's "passion, his legacy, and his undoing (although skyrocketing inflation and a lousy economy sure didn't help)" (69). Despite the political climate of Carter's foreign policy, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that Brzezinski was largely unconcerned about congressional and public opinion on certain foreign events. His memoirs are dotted with references to domestic politics, but at the outset of negotiations over the Panama Canal

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<sup>6</sup> Adam Clymer, *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence: University of Press of Kansas, 2008).

Treaties, he treated domestic issues as a nuisance.<sup>7</sup> Brzezinski only later realized how increasingly intertwined domestic and international issues were during the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> But in his interview with Charles Gati at the end of the book, Brzezinski also states that sometimes a foreign policy maker, like President Obama, has to disregard domestic considerations to “take a chance and do what you think is right” in foreign policy (227).

An examination of domestic politics within the context of U.S. foreign policy also might provide insight as to why Brzezinski is neglected within the scholarship on U.S. foreign relations in the 1970s. By the ‘crisis of confidence’ speech by Carter in July 1979, the Camp David Accords were the distant past. Carter had expended enormous political capital with SALT II and the Panama Canal Treaties, and Americans could not yet see the benefits of normalized relations with China. The energy crisis at home and the Iranian hostage crisis abroad overshadowed Brzezinski’s earlier accomplishments in the foreign arena. By 1979, Brzezinski appeared to be part of the problem, if not *the* problem, with the Carter administration. This conclusion is not fair, and Gati’s book makes this readily apparent, but there is not an attempt to interrogate these issues in a more comprehensive manner. This history is implied, rather than fully examined.

One final point on the ‘intermestic’ nature of Brzezinski’s and Carter’s foreign policy. In making the case for Brzezinski as “The Strategic Thinker,” Adam Garfinkle suggests that what partly makes someone like Brzezinski a brilliant strategist on foreign affairs is one’s ability to see “the big picture that breaks through the ultimately artificial barrier between “foreign” and “domestic” (198). I am not convinced that this is the best criteria by which to assess Brzezinski’s qualifications in conducting statecraft. David Ignatius’s essay on Brzezinski’s role in the Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement shows that while Brzezinski recognized the importance of domestic politics in the settlement he “was not a smart political player” (186).<sup>9</sup> Which is not to say that the caustic domestic backlash against his diplomacy and decisions on foreign policy prohibit Brzezinski from being deemed an expert in statecraft, but rather that his greatness in constructing U.S. foreign policy was achieved despite the domestic forces that aligned against him and the Carter administration, not because he managed them well.

This reviewer therefore finished Gati’s book still wrestling with the question of how to assess the legacy of Zbigniew Brzezinski. At the end of the book, Brzezinski remains an enigma, or at least intriguing to the point of requiring further scrutiny. Gati’s book is ultimately the first of what should (hopefully) be many more books on an extraordinarily fascinating and influential figure in American foreign policy.

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<sup>7</sup> Clymer, *Drawing the Line*, 43-44; Kevin Mattson, “What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?": Jimmy Carter, America’s “Malaise,” and the Speech that Should Have Changed the Country (Bloomsbury: New York, 2009), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1983), 532.

<sup>9</sup> David Ignatius, “Solving the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” in Gati, *Zbig*, 179-191.

Charles Gati brings Zbigniew Brzezinski into focus, both as professor and National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, with a fascinating collection of essays that offer an overwhelmingly sympathetic, occasionally affectionate, and consistently revealing portrait of a towering figure within the U.S. foreign policy establishment. Although the authors tend to close with personal tributes or stretch their praise, the book presents a provocative and engrossing study of the reflections and intellect, drive and commitment, “blunt and often feisty personality” (xi), and contributions of a public scholar and policy practitioner. Weighty assessments of his academic work is balanced nicely with personal remembrances, anecdotes, behind-the-scene storytelling, and a good deal of intrigue as when describing Brzezinski’s relationship to Pope John Paul II and his intermediary role in the events that would bring down the Communist regime in their native Poland. As is appropriate, perhaps, this insightful book also leaves Brzezinski somewhat of an enigma.

What is clear from the book is that Brzezinski was driven first and foremost by policy, with the Soviet Union as his prevailing focus. Thus, the academic world could not contain his ambitions. He sought to identify “real-world” problems – “the Soviet Union as a menace” (208) – to understand the forces that challenged and provided solutions, and, later, to fight the bureaucratic battles in Washington and engage in the international diplomacy to address the problems, as he defined them. Of course, he was not alone in this: Henry Kissinger, a recurrent character (who as professor and National Security Advisor to President Richard Nixon followed a similar track), emerges as Brzezinski’s collegial nemesis (forgive me, ‘frenemy’) in the book, with frequent comparisons drawn between the two. Their common European origins, initial outsider-status, liberal Establishment affiliations, personal ambitiousness, professional trajectory, and grand strategic visions make such comparisons irresistible and maybe even destined the two to compete. Yet, the differences between these same-generation, academics-turned-policymakers are also sharp and compelling: in policy, Kissinger was the more willing to compromise with the Soviets; in his rise to the top, Kissinger spread his political affections liberally, hitching his fortune in 1968 to candidates “in three campaigns, across party lines” (13), whereas Brzezinski invested his supportive energies early in the one candidate who had impressed him, Jimmy Carter, a little-known longshot.

No less strikingly, Brzezinski himself emerges as a study in contrasts. He appears in the successive essays as: a) a subtle and complex thinker who sought to understand the inner-workings of the Soviet political system but had little use for the methodologies and basic theorizing of the political science discipline; b) a relentless Russophobe with strong Polish sympathies who was relatively unsympathetic to those who would tie U.S. interests in the Middle East to Israeli national-security goals; c) a man with “an instinctive sense of danger and the possibility of tragedy” (194) who was possessed of an optimism – indeed, idealism – that pushed him to persevere; d) a human rights proponent who would nonetheless prioritize building strong interstate relations with China (and was willing to throw a more-democratic Taiwan ‘under the bus’); e) a staunch advocate of pressuring the Soviet Union

for fundamental change who recognized that slow change was necessary to avoid instability; f) a realist practitioner of big-power politics who understood that governments work effectively – or very ineffectively – within societal and technological contexts; g) a ‘street-fighter’ in the world of Executive-branch politics who proved less-than-adroit in selling his policies to a larger (Congressional) audience; h) an advocate of the belief that the oppressive Soviet bureaucracy was fundamentally resistant to change who predicted that it would eventually change from social pressure; i) a staunch anti-Communist who saw virtue in engaging *some* Communist countries; j) a Carter-era champion of the idea that the Persian Gulf is a region of U.S. vital interest who would emerge as a harsh public critic of the hawkish policies of the George W. Bush administration throughout the Middle East, and especially in Iraq; and k) a Cold-War advocate of confronting the Soviets who would eventually champion global engagement.

Beyond highlighting the complexities of an individual – and thereby also the contradictions that are inevitable in policy and policymaking – the book provokes a critical question: how do you judge the overall ‘success’ of a policy, and thus the lifetime record of a policymaker? The authors presume to know, by implication, as many find much to praise in Brzezinski efforts. To be sure, the book serves as a useful reminder of the much-maligned Carter administration’s wealth of foreign policy accomplishments that include the negotiation of the SALT II Treaty, the Camp David Accords, and the Panama Canal Treaty. But the answer depends, ultimately, on the criteria, time-horizon, branches of the causal tree, and net analyses by which success is determined and the allowances that are made for uncertainty, unknown unknowns, and extant political and policy demands. Relevant here is that Brzezinski supported the Vietnam War, reluctantly embraced the Nixon administration’s opening to China, and continues to defend the arming of the Mujahideen when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 despite the seeds that were sown that would later provoke a U.S. invasion of that country. The answer depends further on the allowances that are made for policymakers whose policies work out though based on false premises. Ultimately, Brzezinski’s confrontational policies toward the Soviets – like those of the Reagan administration to follow – assumed that the Soviet government would not concede power. Conversely, it depends on the breaks that are cut for policymakers whose policies are supposedly right on principle but do not deliver as promised. Brzezinski is judged correct on the Palestinian issue by one of the contributors despite having little to show for his policies: “Had he succeeded then on the Palestinian-Israeli front, the region would have been a very different place and American interests would have been well served” (115). Even my own efforts on that front would look good, if that were the standard.

Despite its breadth of coverage, the book could have devoted additional attention to some issues. More could have been said about the Carter administration’s handling of arms control and, specifically, the administration’s poor management of the SALT II ratification process, the abysmal handling of the decision to undercut US NATO allies on the neutron bomb, the NATO decision to deploy Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe, the linkage of arms control to Soviet actions around the world, and the doctrinal turn toward nuclear war-fighting that anticipated the frightening policy departures of the Reagan administration. More could also have been said about the reasoning behind the political management of the Iranian hostage crisis, which is often seen – fairly or not – as

the defining foreign-policy challenge of the Carter administration. How Carter managed to turn himself into the 53<sup>rd</sup> American hostage, elevating the political value of the hostages through self-banishment to the White House, deserves scrutiny. Still, the editor should be commended for putting together an excellent team of contributors, minimizing redundant content in the volume, maintaining a good flow, providing an assortment of perspectives on Brzezinski's professional relationships and academic writings, and ultimately delivering an illuminating and entertaining volume. The book places a man and his time in useful historical perspective. Indeed, it serves as a pleasant reminder of a bygone era in which the academic route to 'fame and fortune' in the policy world involved a trickling down – from scholarly works to op-ed pieces – not appealing first to the lowest common denominator of opinion with instant analysis in a blog page – or tweet.

Zbigniew Brzezinski counts among the most prolific of American statesmen. Author of almost twenty books, he has written much about the world scene and America's place in it. Unusually among U.S. statesmen of the Cold War era, Brzezinski speaks Russian and knows Russia; as a result, his perspective on the USSR rivals that of George Kennan. Yet historians of American foreign policy have paid to Brzezinski only a small fraction of the attention they have lavished upon Kennan. The disregard of Brzezinski owes in part to timing. Kennan was present at the Cold War's creation. Brzezinski participated in a subtler remaking of U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War's mid-phase. Still, timing alone will not explain the relative neglect of Brzezinski. His near-contemporary Henry Kissinger is the subject of numerous biographies and an object of perennial fascination, having achieved a celebrity that Brzezinski appears not to have craved. Yet historians, who know that celebrity is not synonymous with significance, are rethinking Brzezinski, his contributions, and his legacies. If *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* is any indication, we may be on the cusp of a Brzezinski revival.

In *Zbig*, editor and longtime Brzezinski colleague Charles Gati has gathered an eclectic group of essays, which range in style, scope, and approach. Each chapter adds real value to the collection, but the nature of the contributions varies. The chapters by David Engerman, Mark Kramer, David Rothkopf, Warren Cohen and Nancy Tucker, Patrick Vaughan, James Mann, and David Ignatius are historical, elucidating important themes in Brzezinski's thought and career.<sup>1</sup> Justin Vaïsse's terrific chapter is both exemplary of this approach and especially intriguing insofar as it previews a project that promises to be field-defining.<sup>2</sup> Read together, these chapters establish the contours of a historical interpretation and put some old canards to rest. Other chapters collect the reminiscences of students and colleagues, from the Carter administration and beyond. These include contributions from Robert Pastor, William Quandt, Robert Hunter, James Thomson, Martin Strmecki, Stephen Szabo, and Francis Fukuyama.<sup>3</sup> Adam Garfinkle's chapter takes a somewhat different approach; it offers not historical interpretation so much as an argument as to why

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<sup>1</sup> David Engerman, "The Fall of Totalitarianism and the Rise of Zbigniew Brzezinski," 27-41; Mark Kramer, "Anticipating the Grand Failure," 42-62; David Rothkopf, "Setting the Stage for the Current Era," 63-84; Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Beijing's Friend, Moscow's Foe," 85-103; Patrick Vaughan, "Brzezinski and the 'Plot' to Free Poland," 125-142; James Mann, "Brzezinski and Iran: The Makings of a Dove," 161-78; and David Ignatius, "Solving the Arab-Israeli Conflict," 179-191

<sup>2</sup> Justin Vaïsse, "Zbig, Henry, and the New U.S. Foreign Policy Elite," 3-26.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Pastor, "The Caricature and the Man," 104-111; William C. Quandt, "Dealing with the Middle East," 112-115; Robert Hunter, "Working Hard, Having Fun at the NSC," 116-119; James Thomson, "The Evening Report," 116-119; Martin Strmecki, "Witnessing the Grand Failure in Moscow, 1989," 143-60; Stephen F. Szabo, "The Professor," 207-14; and Francis Fukuyama, "An Appreciation," 215-217.

Brzezinski still matters—a point that Brzezinski’s concluding self-assessment, made in conversation with Charles Gati, makes self-evident.<sup>4</sup>

Prominent among *Zbig’s* accomplishments is to euthanize the view that Zbigniew Brzezinski’s analyses of world politics have been superficial or unserious, a notion that Brzezinski’s intellectual proclivity may have encouraged. Consider John Gaddis’s *Strategies of Containment*, one of Cold War historiography’s few bona fide classics. Citing a contemporary critique of Carter’s National Security Advisor, Gaddis dismisses Brzezinski’s “unbecoming reliance” on “intellectual cliché” and concludes that he lacked Kissinger’s intellectual “depth”<sup>5</sup> Still, Gaddis wrote at a time when the Carter administration’s repute was at low ebb and when many critics accorded to Brzezinski, as historian Gaddis Smith did, primary responsibility for the bureaucratic infighting within the administration.<sup>6</sup> With the passage of time, however, an alternative view has emerged, stressing both the seriousness of his Brzezinski’s analyses and the substantive nature of his achievements as national security adviser.

Several contributions to *Zbig* make clear the seriousness of Brzezinski’s analyses of world politics and the perceptiveness of his insights, especially with regard to Communism and the Soviet Union. Here, the pair of essays from David Engerman and Mark Kramer offer much to readers. Whereas Kissinger worked as a historian, Brzezinski, both chapters explain, was by conviction and method a comparative social scientist who fixated on the question of how to comprehend the Soviet Union’s social system. To this end, he mobilized ideas about totalitarianism, bureaucratization, and ‘technetronic’ society, the last a concept of his own coinage. Brzezinski got some things wrong, but he retreated from his overreaches and proved, in the end, a notoriously prescient analyst of “the political and socioeconomic failure of the Soviet system” (52-3). It was not only Kennan whom the USSR’s demise vindicated but also Brzezinski.

The Soviet Union remained a fixation until its demise, but Brzezinski’s intellectual interests roamed beyond the USSR and the Communist milieu. During the 1990s, Brzezinski became an impassioned spokesman for strategic realism and a sharp critic of American foreign policy when its makers failed to meet his own (admittedly high) standards for strategic sagacity. James Mann’s terrific chapter on Brzezinski and the George W. Bush administration’s Iraq War draws a compelling portrait of Brzezinski as outsider-critic. While Brzezinski was never the dove that the antiwar left sought, he emerged after 2003 as the perhaps the Iraq War’s leading critic within the foreign policy elite. That he did so, Mann argues, was unsurprising: embroiling the United States in a fractious region and

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<sup>4</sup> Adam Garfinkle, “The Strategic Thinker,” 192-206; and Zbigniew Brzezinski (in conversation with Charles Gati), “A Self-Assessment,” 218-234.

<sup>5</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 346.

<sup>6</sup> Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986)

destabilizing the regional balance of power, the Iraq War violated Brzezinski's strategic convictions, which espouse cautiousness amidst complexity, especially in the absence of a Soviet threat. Still, Mann's excellent chapter opens a question that *Zbig*, for all the volume's many qualities, does not quite engage. This is: how did Brzezinski see the world beyond the superpower competition, especially before the Cold War's end? For all its focus, Brzezinski's preoccupation with the USSR was never singular, especially not in the 1970s, when his profile and influence peaked.

Indeed, Brzezinski inaugurated the 1970s with the publication of *Between Two Ages*, a book that evoked an international system in the throes of globalization and a post-industrialization, developments that created what he called a "technetronic revolution."<sup>7</sup> Clunky as Brzezinski's nomenclature was, his insights were prescient. What he grasped in his own times was a historical and institutional crisis of the nation-state (but not necessarily of political nationalism) amidst the rise of interdependence and the stirrings of a "global city." Brzezinski's technetronic concept elaborated upon the insights of dreamers and visionaries like Marshall McLuhan, and it anticipated the disruptive effects of what would, fifteen years hence, become known as globalization. For Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages* prefigured a purposeful effort to bring order to a fractious and integrating world through the Trilateral Commission, which proposed inter-elite cooperation as a solution to the crisis of governance that globalization produced. Among the contributors to the volume, Adam Garfinkle calls *Between Two Ages* "perhaps his best book overall," but *Zbig* might nonetheless have said more about Brzezinski's career in the 1970s (199). Fuller elaboration of the Trilateral years might have underscored Brzezinski's breadth as a strategic thinker, confirming that Brzezinski's preoccupation with the Soviet Union was not so singular as some might imagine.

Brzezinski's capacity for engaging complex issues in tandem was a hallmark of his time as National Security Adviser, a phase to which *Zbig*, appropriately, devotes considerable attention. Here Justin Vaïsse sets the scene in an essay that characterizes Kissinger and Brzezinski as the harbingers of a new foreign policy elite, an elite more meritocratic but also more careerist than the wise men of the high Cold War. As transitional figures, Vaïsse argues, Kissinger and Brzezinski sustained some of the values of the old elite, notably its discretion and its bipartisanship. Besides offering a compelling sociological framework with which to understand Brzezinski's career, Vaïsse lays to rest some misconceptions, including the notion that Brzezinski and Kissinger were rivals and foes. Other contributors lay to rest other misapprehensions. Robert Pastor insists that the common identification of a Vance-Brzezinski's rivalry as the motor of Carter's foreign policy is an exaggeration, a point that David Rothkopf echoes when he notes that historians have "overstated" the rivalry (75). Rather than disagreement between Vance and Brzezinski driving U.S. policy, it was the international circumstances that the administration encountered, the contributors to this volume seem to concur, that strained relationships within the administration, including that of Brzezinski and Vance.

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<sup>7</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew. *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era*. New York: Penguin Books, 1970.

Overall, the contributors to *Zbig* offer a favorable assessment of Brzezinski's career as National Security Adviser. Rothkopf, in a broad essay, credits Brzezinski and Carter for engaging a host of issues that would define the post-Cold War world. Warren Cohen and Nancy Tucker salute Brzezinski's vigorous pursuit of normal diplomatic relations between the United States and China, the success of which they call "the greatest achievement of Brzezinski's career" (101). Refocusing on Europe, Patrick Vaughan credits Brzezinski's efforts to undermine Soviet influence in Poland at the end of the 1970s. Embracing Pope John Paul II as a Cold-War ally, Brzezinski and Carter formulated a tough policy during Poland's Solidarity Crisis in 1980-1981, a posture that helped to ensure that the Soviet Union did not intervene in Poland with its own forces. While the valedictory function of the volume presumably precluded the inclusion of more critical essays on more contentious subjects, the case that *Zbig* makes for Brzezinski's positive accomplishments—and legacies—at the National Security Council is persuasive on its own terms.

Beyond its reevaluation of Brzezinski's career as both doer and thinker, *Zbig* makes a powerful argument to the effect that Brzezinski still matters—more, perhaps, now than ever before. This is a point that Adam Garfinkle makes in an essay that salutes Brzezinski's mastery of realistic statecraft, his orientation towards 'the big picture,' and his acute historical sensibility. These are qualities, Garfinkle suggests, that may be less evident in U.S. foreign policy today than in Brzezinski's time. Still, for all the perspective that the contributors to *Zbig* offer, it remains difficult to say just what made Brzezinski such an effective strategic thinker. The answer may, in part, have to do with the contradictions. Suspicious of both ideology and theory, as several contributors note, Brzezinski is practical, not programmatic, in his approach to foreign policy. As a result, he resists easy classification. An idealist who asserts the strategic imperatives of promoting human rights in the face of what he calls a "global political awakening," Brzezinski eschews the utopianism of Wilsonian idealism. A realist who rejects the realist assumption that international politics begin and end with the machinations of powerful nation-states, Brzezinski remains a paradox without a natural constituency. His has nonetheless been a constructive—and principled—influence on American foreign policy since the early 1970s, a point to which historians are at last rallying to attest.

Following Zbigniew Brzezinski's trip to China in May 1978, one of his aides wrote him:

“One of our major objectives was to give the Chinese some exposure to you and your views, and thereby inform them of the quality of a man whose policy preferences are of great consequence to them. You made a favorable impression simply by being yourself. The Chinese admire people who think strategically and conceptually, and you clearly demonstrated those qualities.

On the negative side, by no means outweighing the positive side, I suspect you came across as somewhat vain, perhaps overly confident, and somewhat prone to verbosity.”<sup>2</sup>

Brzezinski originally made his name as a specialist on the Soviet Union, but he would become a truly global thinker as his career progressed, educating himself in subjects such as China and the Middle East, as he moved seamlessly between academia, government service, and think tanks. His focus on the Soviet Union and the Cold War infused his early thinking on the other regions of the world, yet even with the end of that conflict, his ideas remained relevant and often remarkably prescient. Because of the numerous and diverse issues that Brzezinski affected, an edited volume addressing them separately works very well.

The strengths of this compilation are the chapters that trace the evolution of Brzezinski's thinking and those that demonstrate the prominent role he played in many of the major foreign policy events of the last forty years. The short essays by former National Security Council staffers are similar to each other in their determination to break down stereotypes of the former National Security Advisor. It is unlikely that these series of anecdotes will change the minds of those who can attribute no nuance to Brzezinski, but they do add color to the book. Likewise, the blend of formal academic writing and informal essays provides something for everyone.

One anecdote from the book that stands out as a great example of Brzezinski's combination of strategic mind and rather forthright style of statecraft occurred in 1989, as the Cold War neared its end. As Marin Strmecki describes it in his chapter “Witnessing the Grand Failure in Moscow, 1989,” Brzezinski responded to an optimistic Soviet presentation on the future of an integrated Europe supported equally by the United States and the Soviet Union. He

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<sup>1</sup> The views presented here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the United States Government.

<sup>2</sup> Memorandum from Michel Oksenberg of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski), 25 May 1978, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China*, Document 112.

quickly disabused the Soviets of this notion, arguing that “the present situation is based on the division of Europe, and the military presence of the superpowers is the key index of their relative positions. With the fading of the confrontation in Europe, the importance of their military presence will diminish. As a result, the importance of other factors—such as ideology, culture, communications, politics, and economics—will rise. In every one of these areas, the United States holds superiority—and a growing superiority—over the Soviet Union” (153). From the mouth of another American, the Soviets may have brushed this statement off as arrogance, but Brzezinski’s status as an immigrant from Eastern Europe likely contributed to its sobering effect. Indeed, Adam Garfinkle, in his chapter, argues that Brzezinski’s international background is an essential requirement to his status as a true “strategic thinker” (194).

Brzezinski’s effectiveness as a strategic thinker derives from his ability to combine a broad view of international affairs with a superb memory for detail. His big picture stance has a built in flexibility that has allowed him to retain a certain consistency of thought over the years, critics’ accusations that he flipped from a hawk to a dove notwithstanding. As James Mann argues, “yet a closer look at the evolution of Brzezinski’s stance on Iraq shows that it grew out of the same concerns he expressed during the cold war—among them the importance of multilateralism, the strategic importance of oil, and the need for a Middle East peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. Opposition to the war in Iraq did not reflect a new Brzezinski, but the old one, cast in a different role” (161). Not long after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Brzezinski wrote a memorandum to President Jimmy Carter that provides an excellent example of his multi-lateral and big-picture approach to world events. This document outlines his ideas for a “Carter Doctrine” and he begins with this assessment of the problem: “The Soviet action poses a test involving ultimately the balance of power between East and West. Our response will determine how several key states will adjust their foreign policy and particularly whether they will accommodate themselves to the projection of Soviet military power.”<sup>3</sup> The memorandum then lays out a multi-faceted approach to dealing with the issue regionally and globally. This was always Brzezinski’s way of thinking about issues ranging from the Soviet Union to the Middle East to China and to Poland. Thus, even when dealing with subjects that had emotional resonance with him, Brzezinski could step back and take the wide view.

Several chapters address the role of Brzezinski as prognosticator. In particular, Mark Kramer’s contribution, titled, “Anticipating the Grand Failure,” traces Brzezinski’s writings on the Soviet Union and his understanding of the systemic weaknesses that would ultimately bring about its disintegration as a state. Kramer points out several instances in which Brzezinski’s predictions did not come to fruition, but acknowledges that he got his most important ones mostly right, writing, “even though he underestimated how rapidly and decisively communism would collapse in Eastern Europe, his diagnosis of the emerging crisis in the region and its connection with the fundamental crisis in the USSR held up well

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<sup>3</sup> “Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) to President Carter, January 9, 1980.” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union*, Document 256.

overall” (55). Indeed, Brzezinski has had an amazing knack for understanding long-term trends. Even when his policy recommendations came from a Cold-War focus, they often proved correct. Warren Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker explain Brzezinski’s outmaneuvering Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on the Carter Administration’s China policy as an anti-Soviet strategy (89). Alliances that are formed on the concept that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” rarely survive, yet the administration’s decision to normalize relations with China has proved essential for managing the relationship today. Likewise, early in his career, Brzezinski viewed the Arab-Israeli conflict as a Cold War proxy, yet he was among the first in U.S. foreign policy circles to advocate a two-state solution, which decades later has become part of the conventional wisdom in Washington (180-181).

This volume paints a largely positive picture of Brzezinski and certainly his strengths are numerous. However, it is perhaps too uncritical. David Rothkopf touches upon some of the conflicts within the Carter administration’s foreign policy team and includes Vance’s perspective by referring to the opinions of State Department officials, but he withholds judgment on their disagreements (75). Brzezinski played an outsized role in some of the missteps that the administration made. His China strategy was good for the future of Sino-American relations, but hurt Soviet-American détente; likewise his over-reaction to Soviet involvement in the Horn of Africa hurt détente on an issue in which the United States had no leverage. The Soviets’ involvement in Angola, the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan contributed to the failure of the US Senate to ratify SALT II, but Brzezinski’s public opposition to Soviet behavior continually asserted to the American public and Congress that the Soviets were not to be trusted with an arms treaty. Leaving aside whether or not the failure of détente hastened the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev and the fall of the Soviet Union, ratifying SALT II was a stated goal of the administration. Finally, his conflict with Vance, whether or not it was as bad as the media suggested, heavily impacted the perception that Carter was weak on foreign policy and that his administration couldn’t even speak with one voice in the realm of world affairs, despite the President’s numerous foreign policy successes.

Still, this book fills a long overdue gap in the literature on great U.S. foreign policy minds. Zbigniew Brzezinski’s influence has been, and indeed continues to be in his ninth decade, vast and incisive. The United States is fortunate that he chose to become an American.

Author's Response by Charles Gati, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

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I thank Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse for initiating and editing the roundtable; Robert Jervis for his introduction; and Michael Brenes, James H. Lebovic, Daniel Sargeant, and Louise Woodroffe for their invariably fair-minded and discerning reviews. I am grateful for their compliments, and I agree with all of their important critical comments.

A difficult question for future biographers has to do with Zbigniew Brzezinski's consistency or lack thereof. In a nutshell: Was he a hawk during the Cold War and a dove since, especially in this century? It seems to me that all analysts will have to take into account the fact that Brzezinski was a Democrat (even if he tended to be a rather 'independent' one). Almost all Democratic presidential candidates in the 1960s and 1970s approached him for advice: John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, even Senator 'Scoop' Jackson, among others. While it is also true that some Republicans respected him as well (notably President Ronald Reagan), the essential point is that the political as opposed to the intellectual wing of the Democratic Party considered him highly and invited him for consultation and advice. And since Democrats, on the whole, were less hawkish than the Republicans, my sense is that he was never far from the center of Washington's foreign policy consensus. To demonstrate the importance of this observation, I should have included in *Zbig* a more extensive discussion of his advocacy of peaceful engagement in Eastern Europe in the early 1960s. Opposing the Republicans' promotion of 'liberation' and 'rollback,' on the one hand, and the lingering idea of abandoning Eastern Europe for the sake of great-power détente with the Soviet Union, on the other, Brzezinski promoted closer contact with at least some of the region's Communist regimes in order to drive a wedge between Moscow and its satellites; concurrently, however, he also promoted contact with opponents of the communist regimes. Under the name of 'differentiation,' Brzezinski's idea – not the brainchild of a hawk or a dove -- was embraced by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

If not quite a simple hawk as some of his critics depicted him during the Cold War, Brzezinski certainly has not been a simple dove since then either. True, he was an early and determined critic of the Iraq war in 2003. Even more importantly, he has been an opponent of Washington's reliance on the military instrument of foreign policy. Yet in the current debates on how to respond to Russian aggression against Ukraine, for example, Brzezinski has proposed a solution that would be acceptable to Russia ('Finlandization,' probably meaning 'yes' to Ukraine's eventual membership in the European Union and 'no' to membership in NATO) while also arguing for far more U.S. help for Ukraine's struggling military. He seeks more assistance to Ukraine than that advanced by most European countries and more than what President Barack Obama appears to favor, although it is a lot less than what Republican neo-conservatives like Senator John McCain would like the United States to do. Brzezinski appears to take a rather centrist position.

But what makes Brzezinski especially different from other policymakers, I think, is his decidedly global outlook. In his view, the American interest entails at least a modicum of global stability. Already in the mid-1970s he penned an incisive essay titled “America in a Hostile World.”<sup>1</sup> More recently, he has kept pointing to a ‘global awakening’ – a revolutionary trend of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that signifies growing political participation by an ever-larger part of formerly silent publics throughout the world. Under the circumstances, he seems to believe that it is futile and short-sighted for Washington to deal only with elites. He does not always have an easy or practical answer as to *how* the U.S. can respond to new global undercurrents, but his more recent books and articles offer genuine insights and useful approaches that could be translated into specific policies.

A final point. The criticism that Brzezinski did not pay enough attention to the domestic environment of foreign policy is, I think, valid. As I did not ask him about this in the conversations that form the book’s last chapter, I can only guess that he did not believe it was his job to keep the Carter administration’s congressional and intellectual critics informed – or pacified. If he had reached out to the political class, including some of these critics, it is quite possible that *Zbig* would not be the first scholarly book about Zbigniew Brzezinski. As it is, I share everyone’s observation here that much more needs to be done to study Brzezinski’s contributions as an academic focusing mainly on the Soviet Union and Communism and as a foreign policy maker and commentator.

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<sup>1</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, “America in a Hostile World,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 23 (Summer 1976): 65-96.