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INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT JERVIS, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Building on and revisiting their acclaimed study of German unification and the end of the Cold War,¹ in *To Build a Better World* Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice set this subject in a broader framework. They draw not only on their own perspectives as policy-makers, but on contemporary accounts and documents from multiple countries, and look not only at the tumultuous events of 1989-91, but the subsequent reconstruction of the international system. Our reviewers find that some of this account gives too much praise to the policies of George W. Bush, but agree that the book is more than that: Zelikow and Rice are scholars as well as participants, and they seek to explain as well as describe what happened.

Looking backwards, much of the course of the end of the Cold War may look inevitable, but Zelikow and Rice stress what they note in their subtitle: these were choices, and ones made by individuals whose relations with and understandings of each other were important. Most political science accounts of negotiations and international relations put aside not only the individual characteristics of leaders, but their relationships. Historians tend to pay more attention to these dimensions, but participants like Zelikow and Rice do so even more. As Stephen Sestanovich (himself a former diplomat as well as a scholar) stresses, one value of the account is the portrait of the trust that developed among the national leaders, in part as a product of their frequent and intense face-to-face meetings.² Relatedly, as Deborah Welch Larson (a student of relations between the US and the Soviet Union/Russia) approvingly notes, the book brings out the different working styles of the individual leaders and how they could create complications or facilitate cooperation depending on the circumstances.

More controversial is the claim, included in the subtitle, that Bush and his colleagues sought to join with their international partners in creating a global commonwealth. Sestanovich questions the extent to which new institutions were successfully created, or even were central to American policy. Did NATO change as much as the authors claim? Russian leaders certainly were skeptical, and I think many scholars would agree with them.

James Goldgeier, a scholar with significant government experience, is more critical of the book's parallel claim that, contrary to the standard understanding, Bush and his colleagues, especially Secretary of State James Baker, were not slow to understand the depths of the changes in the Soviet Union and the opportunities for fundamental change that were presented. He argues that on this question, the fact that the authors were key participants inevitably introduces biases as well as insights.

In their response, Zelikow and Rice expand on and defend their arguments. Their book and this Roundtable open the important if unanswerable question of whether alternative policies by the U.S. or others could have brought us to a better outcome. On the one hand, we must be forever grateful for the peaceful end of the Cold War; on the other hand, the early 1990s seemed to have held out the possibility of a much more cooperative pattern of world politics. Maybe this was simply an illusion, but it is a question we will be discussing for the foreseeable future.

Participants:

Philip Zelikow is the White Burkett Miller Professor of History and J. Wilson Newman Professor of Governance at the Miller Center of Public Affairs, both at the University of Virginia. He has served at all levels of American government and

¹ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995)

² For general arguments along these lines, see Marcus Holmes, *Face-to-Face Diplomacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Nicholas Wheeler, *Trusting Enemies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). For H-Diplo/ISSF Roundtable Reviews of these books see <http://issforum.org/to/ir10-30> and <https://issforum.org/to/ir11-4>.

held federal positions in five administrations. Both Zelikow and Rice served on the staff of the National Security Council from 1989 to 1991.

Condoleezza Rice was the sixty-sixth US secretary of state. Prior to that, she served as the national security adviser to President George W. Bush. She is a professor at Stanford University and directs the University's Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace.

Robert Jervis is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics at Columbia University and Founding Editor of ISSF. His most recent book is *How Statesmen Think* (Princeton University Press, 2017). He was President of the American Political Science Association in 2000-01 and is the founding editor of the International Security Studies Forum. He has received career achievement awards from the International Society of Political Psychology and ISA's Security Studies Section, the Grawemeyer Award for the book with the Best Ideas for Improving World Order, and the National Academy of Science's tri-annual award for behavioral sciences contributions to avoiding nuclear war.

James Goldgeier is a Robert Bosch Senior Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution and Professor of International Relations at American University's School of International Service, where he served as dean from 2011-2017. He has written widely on U.S. foreign policy, including three books on the 1990s: *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1999); *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2003), co-authored with Michael McFaul; and *America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008), co-authored with Derek Chollet. He served at the State Department and on the National Security Council staff in 1995-1996.

Deborah Welch Larson is professor of political science at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include the role of status concerns in influencing foreign policy, trust, and the use of social psychology to explain American foreign policy decision making. She most recently published *Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), with Alexei Shevchenko.

Stephen Sestanovich is the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis professor of international diplomacy at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and George F. Kennan senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. From 1997 to 2001 he was the U.S. State Department's ambassador-at-large for the former Soviet Union, and from 1985 to 1987 was senior director for policy development at the National Security Council. He is the author of *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama* (Knopf, 2014).

REVIEW BY JAMES GOLDGEIER, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Authors of a highly acclaimed study on German unification,³ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, who were participants in the momentous changes of the George H.W. Bush years, go even further in their new book to lay out a broad framework for understanding their mindset and that of their colleagues during this extraordinary period in world affairs and American foreign policy. The combination of their first-hand insights and use of multi-nation archival materials is significant.

While their own work on these subjects is important, it is not clear why they are so derogatory in tone when discussing the scholarship of this period. Take their approach to the role of American power in those years. “[I]t is a bit disorienting for us,” they write, “to read contemporary scholarly arguments about these years, accounts perhaps colored by knowledge of what happened after 1990 and 1991, that see in this diplomacy an offensive American master plan to attain ‘preeminence’ or ‘hegemony’ in Europe (or some other imperious-sounding term currently in academic fashion) (268).” They argue that since the United States was downsizing its military and reducing its presence in Europe, it could not have been pursuing preeminence or hegemony.

The term academics have often used to describe U.S. efforts at the end of the Cold War and after is “primacy.”⁴ Some of that stems from the leaked 1992 Defense Planning Guidance that did, in fact, focus on ensuring American global preeminence vis-à-vis potential peer competitors and aspiring regional hegemony, whether adversaries or allies. But one does not need to look across the river at the Pentagon for such views. Zelikow and Rice quote their National Security Council (NSC) boss Bob Blackwill, as he prepared to leave the White House in the summer of 1990, describing the outcome of the Two Plus Four negotiations on German unification “as the product of U.S.-directed policy” (288). They take issue with that assessment because of the role they see others playing. But Blackwill was simply noting the obvious role that U.S. power played, both in ensuring that the Germans did not stray from American goals and keeping the Soviets from upsetting the applecart. Acknowledging American power does not take away from American diplomacy, but helps us understand how the former enabled the latter. Zelikow and Rice and their colleagues did amazing things in those years, and they are welcome to critique arguments they find wanting. But at a time when expertise is so often scorned in our political discourse, there is no need to take unnecessary digs at academics.

In Europe, it made great sense that President Bush and his team sought to ensure American dominance over the continent’s security after the end of the Cold War. As Timothy Andrews Sayle has written in his brilliant history of NATO, “When American officials considered their response to changes in Europe, they looked to Europe’s past. And the past was not promising.”⁵ The lessons of the twentieth century seemed clear. The United States abandoned the continent after World War I, and another world war erupted two decades later. The United States remained after World War II and enabled a prosperous, free, and peaceful Western Europe to develop. Using a term like “primacy” to describe U.S. policy after the end of the Cold War (a policy many in Europe eagerly sought from Washington) seems helpful for understanding trends rather than sounding imperious.

The authors are similarly dismissive of academic discussions of the transition from the Ronald Reagan years to the George H. W. Bush administration: “There is a large historical commentary about the so-called policy ‘pause’ in the first half of

³ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁴ Hal Brands, “Choosing Primacy: U.S. Strategy and Global Order at the Dawn of the Post-Cold War Era,” *Texas National Security Review* 1:2 (March 2018): 8-33, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15781/T2VH5D166>.

⁵ Timothy Andrews Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 224.

1989. The argument fits preconceptions, including partisan ones, about a supposedly much too cautious and unimaginative president.” And they go on to suggest that “most of the literature on the ‘pause’ tends to ignore [Secretary of State James] Baker” (451).

Outgoing Secretary of State George Shultz expressed his concerns that the new team failed to understand that the Cold War was already over. The incoming Bush administration’s attitudes certainly left Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev fuming. As Jeffrey Engel writes, “[H]e understood that Bush’s prospective pause would consume the one commodity he could ill afford to lose: time. The longer Bush waited to endorse *perestroika*, and the longer foreign governments and investors waited to send aid and extend credit, the less likely his prospects for success.”⁶

Zelikow and Rice turn the notion of a pause on its head. It wasn’t that Bush and Baker did not understand where Reagan and Shultz left things, it was that the policies they inherited in January 1989 were not “very interesting or promising” (113). And they cite Dennis Ross, who had been with Bush during the 1988 campaign and knew Bush wanted to “dream big dreams.” As incoming director of policy planning at the State Department, Ross wrote a note to Baker in December 1988 arguing that “We’re entering a period that is really unlike any we’ve seen throughout the whole post-war era, and this is not the time to put our thinking in a strait-jacket” (109). The authors argue that “Bush’s and Baker’s instincts were about the same.” They refer to the “so-called pause” because they suggest that “While there were a couple of doubting voices about Gorbachev in the new Bush administration, Bush and Baker were not among them” (112). While they do go on to describe a range of views within the administration, they argue that Bush was not in the middle, as “his views were practically identical to Baker’s” (173).

There is deeper reflection in the footnotes regarding what is a more complicated issue than it seems from the main text. While they may not have wanted to break up the flow of the narrative, analyzing the varying attitudes across the top level of the Bush administration remains important for how we understand those years, and how we understand policy formulation. The issue is not just a bunch of partisan academics with preconceptions who are suggesting the Bush team was putting the brakes on after Reagan and Shultz declared the Cold War to be over. The protagonists in fact suggested this themselves in later conversations. As Bush’s National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft put it: “When the Bush administration came into office, there was already a lot of talk that the Cold War was over....But to me, you know, my life spent in the Cold War, the structures of the Cold War were still in place. The rhetoric was different, but almost nothing else was different. And having been in the Reagan and Ford administrations and through *détente*, I thought, you know, once burned, twice shy.” He stated on a separate occasion, “I was not sure in 1988 and 1989 that we were seeing a sincere change on the part of President Gorbachev or whether this was a return to *détente*.”⁷

Derek Chollet and I have argued that over the course of 1989, different individuals in the administration came to the realization that Gorbachev’s changes were truly a departure from the past at different periods of time. This was largely dependent on how much personal interaction they had with the Soviet leader and his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze. Baker was the one who had the most contact, and so he was the first top official to see things more clearly and was central to the story we told. But even that was not a smooth process. In May 1989, Baker was angered on his first trip to Moscow by what he saw as Gorbachev trying to score points: “He [cut] the legs right out from under me by throwing this wonderful propaganda initiative on the table.” And as for Baker’s recollection of that period: “I want to tell you: I was

⁶ Jeffrey Engel, *When the World Seemed New: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 87.

⁷ Cited in Derek H. Chollet and James M. Goldgeier, “Once Burned, Twice Shy? The Pause of 1989,” in William C. Wohlforth, ed., *Cold War Endgame: Oral History, Analysis, Debates* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003): 141, 153.

almost a voice in the wilderness” on being able to do business with the USSR. “The Defense Department, the CIA, many people in the NSC including my buddy here [indicating Scowcroft], were all somewhere else.”⁸

Earlier, in February 1989, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney asked Bush and Baker “when it would be possible for the United States and other Allies to say that there had been such big changes in the Soviet Union that we could move toward reductions in our own defense forces.” The declassified memorandum of conversation records Baker as responding, “We will never know whether fundamental changes have taken place in the USSR that would enable us to make equally far-reaching changes in our own posture.”⁹

Over the course of the year, Baker strongly influenced Bush, but the multiplicity of voices, including Scowcroft’s, were important. As Baker tells it, “Malta was where President Bush formed the close personal bond and relationship with President Gorbachev that frankly I had formed in September with Minister Shevardnadze, and there was no doubt in anyone’s mind after Malta what the direction I think of the policies of the two countries was going to be.”¹⁰ The Malta summit was in December 1989.

The authors argue, based on a paper Zelikow wrote during his time in the administration, that they were trying then and later to build a “global commonwealth of free nations” (400). It is true that there was such a hope in Europe, the area they were responsible for in the George H.W. Bush years. The path toward inclusion of most of Central and Eastern Europe into NATO and the European Union that occurred largely between 1999-2004, created a great deal of optimism about what was possible. But even in the new Europe, neither the West nor Russia found a place for the latter, except possibly as junior partner to the United States, a prospect that did not hold appeal in Moscow.

It is highly unlikely that the world will ever become in its entirety a global commonwealth of free nations. And even if it is a worthy aspiration to articulate (and has been since at least the time of Immanuel Kant), what policies should that lead the United States to follow? It is understandable when the authors write, “Neither of us wish to use this book to go over the historical issues about the war in Iraq that began in 2003” (399). It is difficult to read their enthusiasm for promoting a global commonwealth of free nations and not reflect on the impulses that lay behind that war and the failed efforts to promote democracy in Iraq by military force.

We all benefit from having individuals who were placed in such key historical moments willing to go back and try to make sense of the events they participated in. But using adjectives like “imperious-sounding” to discuss the work of others, or suggesting that analyses of the pause of 1989 stem from partisan rather than scholarly motives, does not advance the scholarship on this topic. Many of us continue to try to understand what the United States sought to accomplish at the start of an era in which its power and diplomacy were at unimagined heights, particularly given that after that moment passed, American officials have struggled to chart a path forward.

⁸ Chollet and Goldgeier, “Once Burned, Twice Shy? The Pause of 1989,” 160.

⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, President’s Meeting with Prime Minister Mulroney, 10 February 1989, declassified and available at <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/memcons-telcons/1989-02-10--Mulroney%20%5B1%5D.pdf>, 5. I am grateful to Joshua Shiffrinson for sharing this document with me.

¹⁰ Wohlforth, *Cold War Endgame*, 45.

 REVIEW BY DEBORAH WELCH LARSON, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

University of Virginia Professor Philip Zelikow and Stanford University Professor Condoleezza Rice have adopted a broader perspective in this follow-on to their earlier classic book, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed*, a more conventional retelling of the diplomacy that led up to the unification of Germany and the end of the Cold War.¹¹ In *To Build a Better World*, they look at the broader historical context of challenges to democracy going back to the 1970s, including racism, human rights, the Vietnam War, inflation, and the weakness of the dollar. Instead of focusing on U.S.-Soviet relations, they are concerned primarily with Europe. The book offers an excellent discussion of how Western leaders perceived the task of creating new European institutions and unifying Germany from 1989-1991, when previously unthinkable changes in the Soviet Union unfroze the postwar settlement.

Zelikow and Rice worked as part of the national security staff under the George H. W. Bush administration during the historic period of 1989-1992. But this is not just a memoir. The authors have carried out additional research in the recent scholarly literature and primary sources from the UK, the Federal Republic of Germany, Soviet Union, France, and the United States, as well as conducting interviews. In addition to the availability of new sources due to the declassification of documents, a major reason for revisiting the resolution of the German question is the current “systemic crisis,” which has undermined and called into question the institutional order established in the early 1990s (21). By explaining what happened at the end of the Cold War, Zelikow and Rice hope to provide guidelines for dealing with the current “systemic crisis.”

Zelikow and Rice’s professed goal is to understand decision making under uncertainty; not just ordinary decisions, but “catalytic” choices that change the fundamental character of the international system (21). Because of the uncertainty and rapid pace of events, Bush and his decision-making team frequently had to rely on their judgment and experience. The authors favor the concept of judgment developed by Sir Geoffrey Vickers (14). Vickers envisioned three types of interdependent judgments—value, reality, and action judgments. Value judgments identify what is at stake, reality judgments concern what is going on, and action judgments are about what to do.¹² Each type of judgment influences the other.

The authors provide capsule biographies of the leading figures—the future German Chancellor Angela Merkel, General Secretary of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev, Russian President Vladimir Putin, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and the President of the European Commission Jacques Delors. Their background gave these leaders policy predilections and practiced ways of approaching difficult issues.

Gorbachev preferred to work alone and was unwilling to delegate, leading to administrative “chaos” (80). President George H. W. Bush’s judgments were often “intuitive” but only after he had read and mastered the issues. Of Gorbachev, Bush later remarked that “I thought I had a feel for his heartbeat” (115).¹³ U.S. decisions were hashed out in small, informal working groups—a collegial style.

¹¹ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

¹² Sir Geoffrey Vickers, *The Art of Judgment: A Study of Policy Making* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1965). For application of Vickers’s concept to foreign policymaking, see Philip Zelikow, Ernest May, and the Harvard Suez Team, *Suez Deconstructed: An Interactive Study of Crisis, War, and Peacemaking* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 1-8.

¹³ The original quotation appears in George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 10.

The authors include a series of issue maps, which list general questions about the future of U.S.-Soviet relations and Europe and options available as they appeared to leaders and staff members at the time, untinged by hindsight (121-22, 218-20, 249-51, 306-307). By comparing these issue maps in chronological order, one can see how the alternatives available changed, in response to earlier decisions. As the pathway opened up, the alternatives became more specific and numerous.

The authors contend that Bush and Secretary of State James Baker recognized the odds against success for Gorbachev's reforms but wanted the Soviet leader to succeed. In their optimism, they differed from other members of decision-making group such as National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, who was more skeptical, and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, who regarded the Soviet Union as an implacable enemy. Bush tried to avoid undermining Gorbachev by claiming credit for the fall of the Berlin Wall or the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe. At the same time, however, Bush and Baker hedged against the possibility that Gorbachev would be overthrown by trying to lock in agreements on strategic weapons reduction, restricting underground nuclear testing, and downsizing conventional forces in Europe (173-74).

They confronted an escapable value trade-off in that taking advantage of the opportunity for German unification would endanger Gorbachev's domestic political position. Not surprisingly, the authors defend the Bush administration against subsequent criticisms. One of the most controversial is that the Bush administration deceived Soviet officials in offering a guarantee that NATO would not expand to include members of the former Warsaw Pact in return for Soviet agreement to German unification.¹⁴ Zelikow and Rice argue that it would have been impossible for Baker to have offered such assurances in February 1990, when the issues of Germany's future were discussed, because no one envisioned that the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union would collapse (234). In early 1990, they stress, Gorbachev still had leverage, in that he could have insisted on German neutrality as the price for unification (242). Against the argument that the Soviets were duped, the authors assert that the details of the German settlement were worked out by professionals who "knew what they were agreeing to, or not" (477n).

The United States has also been chastised for not providing economic assistance that might have helped Russia make a smoother transition to liberal capitalism, avoiding the rampant crime and drastic lowering of living standards in the 1990s.¹⁵ But a major obstacle to large-scale Western aid was Gorbachev's lack of a strategy for making a transition to markets that would not have resulted in massive profit-taking from managers of Soviet natural resources and state-owned enterprises. Other criticisms include the failure to establish continent-wide European security institutions that integrated Russia, instead of leaving it outside and aggrieved.¹⁶ According to Zelikow and Rice, the alternative of expanding the responsibilities of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) did not receive much support from any country at the time, including the Soviet Union.

¹⁴ See Joshua R. Iskowitz Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion," *International Security* 40:4 (Spring 2016): 7-44, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00236; Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 219-229. For alternative interpretations, see Kristina Spohr, "Precluded or Precedent-Setting? The 'NATO Enlargement Question' in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990-1991," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14.4 (Fall 2012): 4-54; Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *Washington Quarterly* 32:2 (April 2009): 39-61, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01636600902773248>.

¹⁵ Angela E. Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-first Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 11-12; James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy toward Russia after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2003), 337-338.

¹⁶ Dmitri Trenin, "Russia Leaves the West," *Foreign Affairs* 85.4 (July/August 2006): 87-96; Dmitri K. Simes, "Losing Russia," *Foreign Affairs* 86.6 (November/December 2007): 36-52; Lilia Shevtsova, *Russia—Lost in Transition: The Yeltsin and Putin Legacies*, trans. Arch Tait (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 2007), 23.

Despite their objective and firsthand perspective, the authors do not provide much explanation in terms of individual decision making or judgment. What they show is joint problem-solving by Baker, Bush, Kohl, and French President François Mitterrand. Political forces within Eastern Europe developed their own momentum. In December 1989, Kohl decided that German unification was feasible and should happen quickly, in order to capitalize on the East Germans' enthusiasm and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Bush responded by insisting on Germany's membership in NATO (210-15, 229-30). Far from planning to cement U.S. hegemony in Europe, as some have claimed, President Bush was planning to downsize the U.S. military and cut defense spending as the question of continued U.S. presence in Europe was up for grabs (268-69).

Zelikow and Rice capture some of this uncertainty in a memo that Rice wrote in January 1990 speculating on how far to push Gorbachev on the issue of German unification. "I believe (and this is a hunch and I guess if we did this that I would spend a lot of time in church praying that I was right) that the Soviets would not even threaten the Germans. Within six months, if events continue as they are going, no one would believe them anyway" (195). Although Gorbachev and his advisers had privately ruled out the use of force to keep Eastern Europe in the empire, no one in the West knew that at the time. The Soviet Union had over 400,000 troops in East Germany at the time.

What the authors call the "global commonwealth" is currently under siege due to the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Russia's invasion of Crimea, the Syrian Civil War, Brexit vote, and the 2016 election of Donald Trump as president. Given the betrayal of hopes for a new liberal world order, in the concluding chapter Zelikow and Rice offer a diagnosis of the causes of its failure and suggestions for the future. They blame lack of Western coordination of policy in response to the 2008 financial crisis, the flood of immigrants to Europe from the Syrian Civil War, rising inequality, and absorption with identity politics over economic issues.

They do not give sufficient weight to the 2003 Iraq War, which was set in motion when Rice was the national security adviser. Disillusionment with the outcome of the Iraq War contributed to support for Trump's 'America First' policy. The authors still believe that the war was necessary to force Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to live up to his commitments for international inspection of weapons sites, although they admit that the intelligence on Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) could have been better used and different political choices should have been made in the aftermath of the invasion. But they add the caveat that any future military intervention should deal with essential norms and have feasible objectives and the support of other states.

To deal with the challenges of populism and great power competition, they contend that elite expertise and experience are still needed. The complicated maneuvering by the Bush administration and its counterparts in France and West Germany would not have been possible without it. But elites need to take an interest in local problem-solving and the absence of opportunity for economic mobility.

In their view, the United States should reach out to Russians, who favor economic integration and reform, rather than trying to isolate the country through sanctions. China poses different problems, as it is a rising power. While Washington should join forces with Asian allies and India, the United States should also try to accommodate Beijing's pride and need for respect, just as Bush refrained from humiliating Gorbachev.

The issues now are even more difficult because they are unstructured, involving questions of the US position and the continued existence of multilateral institutions, in contrast to a more limited set of questions that had implications for action, which favored Baker's and Bush's pragmatic style. Vision as well as the exercise of good judgment is needed.

REVIEW BY STEPHEN SESTANOVICH, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice have done something that scholars, not to mention memoirists, don't do nearly enough—return to an earlier work and give its conclusions an exhaustive reconsideration. Having written an excellent book twenty-five years ago on the end of the Cold War, they now take up the same subject again in *To Build a Better World*.¹⁷ How, they ask, do the many declassified documents, public recollections of major participants, and other information released since their book came out add to our understanding of what happened in the late 1980's and early 1990's? Does what we now know alter our assessment of the policies pursued by the different players in this diplomatic drama? Do subsequent events make these players look visionary, short-sighted, or somewhere in-between? Where things have turned out well, who gets the credit? If the results have disappointed us, who is to blame?

Both Zelikow and Rice served as members of the National Security Council staff under President George H. W. Bush and are therefore part of their own story. For the most part they make this a strength rather than a weakness of their project. They know what to look for. They can recognize in the revelations of the past quarter-century what they didn't know at the time, what confirms their earlier views and expectations, and what puts them in doubt. Though they conclude, not too surprisingly, that American policymakers (and their talented assistants!) did a good job in this period, this is not a book of self-vindication. Zelikow and Rice play the analysis pretty straight.

No theme is more important in their review than contingency: Zelikow and Rice want us to see from the inside how difficult it is, when an old order is coming to an end and a new one has to be improvised, to avoid being overwhelmed by events, to identify plausible alternative paths forward, and to choose prudently among them. In all the countries that had been part of the long Cold War stand-off, political leaders and their advisers had the job of devising policies that would improve the European security environment and head off actions that would make that environment more dangerous.

Reduced to its essentials, the core of Zelikow and Rice's case is that a combination of two factors made it possible to transcend contingency and achieve a peaceful, constructive, and consensual end to the Cold War: first, personal relationships of real trust among policymakers in all major governments; second, a commitment to institutional transformations that made negotiated agreements both easier to accept and more likely to endure.

There is no real doubt about the role of personal dynamics in this story. Everything we've learned in the interim confirms the real confidence that George Bush and his Western counterparts had in Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev—and their increasing fear that his power position at home was shaky. Their confidence made it easier to deal with him and reach agreement; their fear made them want to act on their agreement quickly. It is rare in the best of times to find important global players working together in such a collaborative spirit and exhibiting such sensitivity to each other's political needs. To see them doing so when the stakes are as high as they were in this case makes the diplomacy of the Cold War's end nearly unique.

Zelikow and Rice paint a completely convincing portrait of great-power collegiality. Is their picture of institutional transformation also convincing? Their argument is that a new security framework was created through a series of policy choices—recasting NATO, giving the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) more power and purpose than their predecessors had, and energizing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with more resources and a wider purview. The end of the Cold War did bring significant changes in these institutions and others, but a close look at the results raises questions about some elements of Zelikow and Rice's reading.

¹⁷ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Because it was so central to the security calculations of major states, NATO was, of course, the crucial case of institutional change. The trans-Atlantic alliance, say Zelikow and Rice, “kept the same reassuring shell. The interior was gutted and completely renovated” (291). They are right that NATO leaders promised Gorbachev new policies, especially in the area of military security. At the alliance’s London summit in July 1990 they agreed to reduce their conventional forces, their forward troop presence, their reliance on nuclear weapons as anything but weapons of last resort, and more (284-5). They even invited Warsaw Pact members to send resident ambassadors to NATO headquarters in Brussels for regular consultation on security issues of common concern.

These many promises—all of them kept—remade the atmosphere of East-West competition and bolstered mutual confidence. Even so, it is too much to say that they “guttled” the interior of the alliance. (This architectural metaphor—conjuring up images of old drywall and plaster tossed into a dumpster, along with defunct appliances and smashed light fixtures—was obviously too vivid to resist, but it is also too misleading to be useful.) In fact, NATO retained the essential features that had defined it for decades—the all-for-one-and-one-for-all security guarantee, the American military commander, the permanent (though much reduced) U.S. force presence in Europe, and the collective decision-making that put an almost irresistible emphasis on unanimity. Members of the alliance remained highly sensitive to the need to show that they could act together when necessary. When they intervened to stop ethnic and sectarian violence in the Balkans in the 1990’s, NATO governments had many reasons for doing so, but none was more important than showing the continued strength and relevance of their alliance. They were determined to prove that NATO had *not* been “guttled,” that its “reassuring shell” was as meaningful as ever.

By pointing out how much was done by Western governments to put European security on a new foundation, Zelikow and Rice clearly want to reframe the never-ending debate about the enlargement of NATO in the 1990’s and after. They make a crucial point that is often lost: Europe was virtually demilitarized after the end of the Cold War. And the process was in no way limited to the early 1990’s or reversed by enlargement. In the negotiations that led to unification, Soviet officials pushed for a firm cap on the future size of Germany’s armed forces—370,000 troops. Though in no way obliged to do so, the leaders of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) have over time chosen to cut that number in half.¹⁸

This diminished sense of threat across the entire continent could have—*should* have, really—produced an enduring cooperative relationship between Russia and NATO. That it didn’t do so requires an explanation. To my mind, Zelikow and Rice are right that NATO enlargement alone cannot explain what happened. But they don’t get us closer to a satisfactory explanation by insisting that the alliance became “a different kind of organization.” It did not.

NATO’s might-have-been transformation is just one of the changes that Zelikow and Rice believe defined the end of the Cold War. They correctly point to the network of other institutions that were meant to play a supporting role in the new dispensation. The EU was to domesticate the power of a potentially too-strong Germany by embedding it within a supra-national framework. The OSCE was intended to provide a forum for states that were not members of either NATO or the EU to have their concerns heeded—while also holding new democracies to their commitments on elections, media freedom, etc. The IMF (and the new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) were to help post-Communist economies—and the weaker members of the EU—find their way in a globalized capitalist world. Beyond Europe, cooperation among the major powers during the Persian Gulf War of 1991 showed that the United Nations (UN) itself could be a robust element of what president Bush called a ‘new world order.’

By weaving these additional strands into the story of how major governments tackled the problem of European security at the end of the Cold War, Zelikow and Rice remind us how often we oversimplify the so-called ‘unipolar moment.’ It was defined not only by the reach of U.S. power, but also by its limits—and by the hope that other international players would contribute more to global security than they had in the past. One of Zelikow and Rice’s recurrent themes is the skepticism

¹⁸Stephen Sestanovich, “Could It Have Been Otherwise?” *The American Interest* 10:5 (May/June 2015); <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/04/14/could-it-have-been-otherwise/>.

of Bush administration officials as to how long the American public would support a strategy of deep international engagement. The president himself, despite a strong foreign-policy record, worked hard to distance himself from it when he ran for re-election. With U.S. commitment uncertain, others had to be ready to take on greater responsibility for global peace and prosperity.

With the Cold War over and the right institutions in place, Washington policymakers seemed to believe—apologies here to Lord Ismay for upending his famous description of what was required to keep Europe secure—that it was no longer desirable to keep the Germans completely down, no longer necessary to keep the Russians completely out, and no longer certain that the Americans would stay completely in. Building on this strategic logic Zelikow and Rice come up with the term “global commonwealth” as a unifying label for the arrangements that Western governments hoped would guarantee future peace and prosperity. It is an exceedingly grand phrase and may confuse many readers. Zelikow and Rice cannot, after all, point to the document—secret or otherwise—that set out this goal. They cannot cite the American politician or bureaucrat who used the term, either publicly or privately. They don’t even define it very clearly for themselves, or for us.

All the same, it is clear enough what they mean by it: the mutually reinforcing institutional initiatives that Western leaders and policymakers envisioned as a bulwark of post-Cold War order. Rather than quibble with the term, it’s more useful to ask whether these were in fact the initiatives on which the Bush administrations and its European counterparts bet the future and why the outcome has fallen short of their hopes. To the first question, Zelikow and Rice have an overstated but broadly accurate answer: yes, this is how the pieces of Western policy were meant to fit together.

The second question is the more important one, however. It’s hard to read *To Build a Better World* without feeling that it teaches a harsh lesson about institutional solutions to international problems. It may be that none of the re-designs envisioned thirty years ago—whether of NATO, the EU, the OSCE, the IMF, or the UN—has utterly failed to materialize. But none operates in the way Zelikow and Rice say American policymakers hoped for in the early 1990’s. (And if we add another institution whose transformation was implicit in the entire vision—Russia’s own national security establishment—the shortfall is still more obvious.)¹⁹

These disappointments of the ‘new world order’ played a large part—both in Washington and elsewhere—in reviving reliance on American power as the key ingredient of peace and prosperity. A decade later, it even led an incoming president’s national security adviser to express her strong conviction that a successful foreign policy could not be based on “the interests of an illusory international community.”²⁰

¹⁹ Sestanovich, “The Day After Putin: Russia’s Deep State Holds the Key to Succession,” *Foreign Affairs* (March 2020): <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2020-03-04/day-after-putin>.

²⁰ Rice, “Campaign 2000: Promoting the National Interest,” *Foreign Affairs* (January-February 2000), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2000-01-01/campaign-2000-promoting-national-interest>.

RESPONSE BY PHILIP ZELIKOW, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, AND CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
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Analyzing a Catalytic Episode in World History

We will briefly identify the key historical questions that our book tries to answer, putting the reviews—and our replies—into that more coherent framework. As Stephen Sestanovich and Deborah Welch Larson point out, our book is an ambitious international history. It is not just about a history of ‘endings,’ explaining the end of the Cold War. It is a history of creations. That aspect of the history has received much less attention from scholars. As Sestanovich calls attention to contingency, Larson helpfully calls out the way we tried to outline some of the sets of choices at different stages of the story, to focus not just on outcomes but on the alternatives plausibly available at the time.

There are few, if any, other catalytic episodes in all of world history that wrought so much change without a cataclysmic war. The leaders yearned to somehow build a better world. They did fashion a global commonwealth that was almost inconceivably safer and more prosperous than the world in which they grew up.

“Another way we complicate the story is that we center it not in U.S.-Soviet global relations, but in Europe,” we say in our Introduction. “The crucial partnerships in our story always involve European leaders, not just American or Soviet ones. It is an ensemble drama. There were several leading players. Each took turns in the spotlight” (19). This narrative necessity becomes clearer if we use this roundtable to list what we think are some of the major questions presented by this period in world history.

Why—and how—did the free world ‘reboot’ and renew its confidence? (focus especially on 1978-1985)

We used James Burnham and George Orwell to illustrate two quite contrasting visions about the future of freedom back in the 1940s. Burnham had predicted a world of technocratic totalitarians. Orwell used Burnham’s work as the inspiration for his critique of that vision, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Burnham remained a pessimist about freedom practically all his life and in the 1970s it looked like his dark vision was being confirmed.

Our answer to this question, about why Burnham turned out to be wrong, at least for a while, has four parts.

First, we spotlight the ‘rights’ revolution, which heightened the contrast between the free world and the Communist world. Rather than stress international human rights diplomacy, we think the sharp cultural contrast, especially in Europe, grew out of a broad transatlantic social discourse in which millions of people in the West were debating the extension of all sorts of rights -- against employment discrimination, for press freedom, or the rights of criminal suspects, and reproductive rights, and more. This debate dramatically extended its reach and impact during the 1970s, led in the United States. It did not have much to do with presidents and treaties.

Second, we call out the reconstruction of global finance. This we also portray more as a transatlantic phenomenon, in which European leaders and innovations—like West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and the European Monetary System—forced changes on vacillating U.S. policymakers, especially in 1978-79. And we also highlight how much the globalization of finance accelerated the breakdown of the old GATT system for free-world trade, hurting the U.S. and feeding rising economic nationalism in North America.

Third, we highlight the cultural momentum from the evident success in ‘lowering barriers.’ We highlight three touchstones: the revolution in personal computing, the Chinese reforms, and the Single European Act.

Fourth, we discuss the renewal of ‘anti-Communism’ as a powerful, rallying idea, including the importance of the Polish crisis, the Euromissile crisis, and general concerns about Soviet actions and arms competition as well as deteriorating public order.

These four developments converged, by the mid-1980s, to create large political, cultural, social, and economic pressures on the Communist world.

The United States government, and the Reagan administration, played an important role in some of this. But, from a historical point of view, even in the renewal of ‘anti-communism,’ what mattered most were shifting views in the ‘swing states,’ above all those in the heart of Europe, above all in West Germany.

Why did Reform Communism lead to a systemic world crisis? (focus especially on 1988-1989)

At the end of 1988 both Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Secretary of State George Shultz thought the cold war was over, because East-West tensions had relaxed. Ronald Reagan, Shultz, and Thatcher played their part in that. Reagan, famous for his ‘tear down that wall’ speech, even told Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Shevardnadze that he regretted this speech. His call to tear down the Wall, he said, “had perhaps been unrealistic” (103-104). Yet, at the end of 1988, the systemic world crisis was getting underway.

To answer this question about why Reform Communism led to a systemic world crisis, historians must follow, and contrast, its three distinct streams—in China, in the Soviet Union, and in Eastern Europe. Each had different kinds of problems. Each made choices among different kinds of solutions.

It is in the context of dynamic revival and renewed confidence in western Europe (the historical question we posed above) that we situate Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev’s choices. Following the work of Mark Kramer and others, we see 1988 as a crucial year in this story. It was also, as the Soviets began to realize, a crucial year in countries like Poland, above all because of their financial problems. Here we can also build on new work by younger historians who have clarified the economic reform and financial issues, like Chris Miller, Fritz Bartel, and Michael DeGroot.²¹

The largest mass movement for democracy in the world was not in eastern Europe. It was in China. Chinese leaders were divided, but China’s Gorbachev—Premier Zhao Ziyang—was put under house arrest and the Chinese government crushed their democracy movement. The East Europeans were also divided on how to proceed. The Soviet government pushed forward, while deciding it would not intervene in Poland, one way or another. We try to explain these diverging choices, against the options these leaders saw before them.

What were the visions for alternative futures, the choice vectors of 1989?

Western leaders in 1989 had to envision preferred futures, and related choices, on at least six vectors: China after Tiananmen, West European integration; Eastern Europe; European security; the Soviet Union; and Germany. The hard

²¹ The most recent elaboration of Mark Kramer’s view of the Soviet policy shift is his monograph, “The Demise of the Soviet Bloc,” in Kramer and Vit Smetana, eds., *Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945-1989* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014). On the recent works on comparative Communist reforms, Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Fritz Bartel, “The Triumph of Broken Promises: Oil, Finance, and the End of the Cold War,” Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 2017; and Michael DeGroot, “Disruption: Economic Globalization and the End of the Cold War Order in the 1970s,” Ph.D. thesis, University of Virginia, 2018.

part, for the historian, is not just to observe outcomes, but to notice that, on each of these vectors, there were plausible alternative choices.

On some of these, the new Bush administration did end up playing a central part, especially in partnership with the West Germans (as in the planning for aid to Poland and Hungary). Whether others think these choices are creditable depends on whether they prefer other alternatives available at the time.

James Goldgeier's review nicely discusses some of the issues surrounding the so-called 'pause,' including National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft's personal hesitancy (especially on the Soviet vector and the associated START moves). But it is now possible to identify the chronology of choices on some of the key vectors with some precision, as George H. W. Bush's advisers began churning with new choices on five of these vectors beginning in earnest during the second week of March 1989. Since all of those choices would either break with or go beyond Reagan administration positions, and Bush had been in office about seven weeks, to us, working in the engine room at the time, it sure did not seem like a pause.

The China choices were on a different schedule and reflected a G-7 consensus. The Japanese voice was important. And the West European integration path, the movement toward economic and monetary union, had—as we point out—little American participation. But the US did choose the outreach to French President François Mitterrand, the decision to affirmatively support integration, and the choice to strike a bargain with President of the European Commission Jacques Delors about the relation between his agenda and the Uruguay Round plan for a new system of global trade.

Unify Germany? How? (focus especially on 1989-1990)

The historical work on the terminal East German crisis is now strong.²² Building on that, we tried to pick out the critical points at which three sets of choices occurred. First, from October 1989 to January 1990, there were the choices to unify. These choices had interacting internal and external dimensions.

Second, from January to March 1990, there were the choices on *how* to unify. This second phase is less widely understood, because it was intricate, yet moved so quickly. The East German government, under Chairman of the Council of Ministers Hans Modrow, did support unification—working with the Soviets and in sympathy with the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), East and West. But these East Germans and their Soviet and SPD allies had an alternative conception of unity, more of a confederation. Here the critical choices were not just about overall structure. They were also about tempo, fast versus slow; about the nature of economic and monetary union; about the nature of the political union—negotiated merger or annexation of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG); and about alliance alignment, if any.

Third, from March through September 1990, there were the choices on how to manage unification in the European and the international system. Our argument is that the two central questions, at the time, were about Germany's international alignment and about how to manage the potential power of a united Germany. The two were connected, because the main ways chosen to manage German power (including the need for nuclear deterrence) relied on two features of the new Europe: a transformed NATO (embedding German armed forces in a multinational structure), and a new Conventional Armed

²² Some more recent leading examples include Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel: Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR* (Munich: Beck, 2009); Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland: Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung* (Munich: Beck, 2009); and Mary Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Basic, 2014) (about much more than the Wall). These build on outstanding older works focused on the GDR such as Charles Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); a book-length portion of Ehrhart Neubert's monumental, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949-1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1998); and Walter Süß, *Staatsicherheit am Ende: Warum es den Mächtigen nicht gelang, 1989 zu eine Revolution zu verhindern* (Berlin: Links, 1999).

Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty that would limit German military power, along with the military power of everyone else in Europe.

How to redesign Europe? (focus on the 1990 designs)

One contribution we think we make to the history of this period is to stress the ‘tightrope’ the major powers had to walk during the spring of 1990. We call attention, apparently for the first time, to the simultaneous convergence of the turmoil in central Europe not only with the Lithuanian crisis, which was well noticed, but also with the quite secret crisis—known only to a few in London, Washington, and Moscow—arising from the sensational discovery of a large-scale and illegal Soviet biological weapons program. Talk about possible pandemics.

The three major redesigns for Europe we emphasize in this phase were the transformation of the European Union (EU), the transformation of NATO, and the creation of a new pan-European security system. The EU story is well enough known, although we think we sharpen the focus of when and why some of the key choices were made on economic/monetary union, then on political union.

The transformation of NATO is still not so well understood, partly because the old façade was reassuringly maintained, with the fundamental concept of Atlantic partnership, even as the mission was entirely changed. On this point Sestanovich disagrees with us because he believes NATO “retained the essential features that had defined it for decades.”

But NATO had primarily been a military alliance to prepare for World War III against the Soviet Union and its allies. From 1990 on, NATO became primarily a political/security alliance that no longer prepared for World War III. It had three other missions instead. It organized large-scale disarmament; it helped with the civil-military transitions in post-Communist states; and it worried about new world disorder in places like the Balkans and, as we point out, in assisting the US-led response against Iraq in 1990-1991. From December 1989 into 1991, Mitterrand’s opposition to these changes in NATO, expressed in Secretary of State James Baker’s concept of a ‘New Atlanticism,’ arose precisely because Mitterrand and his team instantly grasped the significance of this transformation into a more political role. The French wanted NATO to stick only to its traditional military mission.

Much of the disarmament work occurred with former Warsaw Pact states in their new liaison missions at NATO, which became the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe/Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE/OSCE) also played an important role, as the NACC helped manage the transition of the breathtakingly ambitious CFE system into the national limits of the “Helsinki” framework.

The creation of the pan-European security system has gone practically unnoticed by most historians. This neglect is unfortunate, since the CFE-OSCE-Open Skies system did more to comprehensively regulate and to monitor armed forces in Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, than any other regional security system ever devised in European or world history.

How to redesign post-Communist Eurasia? (Focus especially on 1990-1992)

This was one of the most difficult parts of the book for us to write, not because of the historical problem of explaining NATO enlargement in the 1990s, but because we think the much harder problem for historians is to spotlight and critique key choices surrounding political and economic reform in the post-Communist space.

The reviews are sympathetic to our treatment of this topic. But this roundtable is a good occasion to clarify our view of the historical treatment of NATO enlargement, from 1990 to 2008. The following points stand out to us.

First, from December 1989 through February 1990, the focus was on whether a united Germany would be a member of NATO. In January, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher called for a freezing of the status quo, not because he had a long view on NATO enlargement, but because he thought both NATO and Warsaw Pact would cease to exist, to be replaced by a new CSCE-based system that had yet to be designed. Freezing the issue, pending the negotiation on how to replace the alliances, would also help manage the Soviets. Chancellor Helmut Kohl bought into this position for at least a few weeks.²³

Baker went along with this position for about a week (Feb 2-10) because he was preoccupied with gaining agreement to his Two Plus Four diplomatic plan and went along, for that week, with Genscher's idea for freezing the NATO issue. The Soviets never understood or accepted Genscher's formula anyway, and by late February the issue had clarified along familiar lines.

Thus, in January and February, the issue of NATO expansion to a country like Poland was not really in the frame, even in Genscher's view, because to him the main issue was whether NATO (and the Warsaw Pact) would even continue to exist. His alternative foundered, in part because he never articulated how an alternative system would work in practice, nor did anyone else.

Second, by the spring of 1990, the issue was evolving. Because of the simultaneous Lithuania crisis, the Warsaw Pact started unravelling much more quickly. Meanwhile, support for a continued NATO hardened among all its European members. Therefore, the two of us pushed the notion of a NATO with liaisons to the former Warsaw Pact, very much including the Soviet Union. This was adopted in July 1990, and later consolidated in the 1991 NACC. This concept of the 'open door' to the East, with no formal decisions about further membership, remained a solid consensus view on through 1991.

Third, attitudes in the U.S. and Europe about NATO enlargement changed again in 1992 and 1993, framing the now-familiar debate that went on during the mid-1990s. The literature on this controversy tends to neglect the gigantic events that spurred this change: the breakup of the Soviet Union and the breakup and wars of former Yugoslavia. The European security environment became much more disorderly and worrying, especially for any governments in central and eastern Europe. At the time, Andrew Cottey wrote a good study of these evolving attitudes.²⁴

The most urgent issue of European security during this period of discontinuity was the issue of how to handle nuclear (and biological) weapons in the post-Soviet space. We try to delineate those key choices, which have also not received enough historical attention.

Fourth, historical debate about NATO enlargement tends to focus almost exclusively on American debates, and American evidence, in the early 1990s. But European views were quite important and influential at every stage. In this light, we call readers' attention to a recent and excellent H-Diplo roundtable that addresses some of these weaknesses.²⁵

²³ Kristina Spohr has the most careful reconstruction of the internal Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) debates on this issue in the first months of 1990, alongside her analysis of other players, in "Precluded or Precedent-Setting? The 'NATO Enlargement Question' in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990-1991," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14:4 (2012): 4-54.

²⁴ Andrew Cottey, *East-Central Europe after the Cold War: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary in Search of Security* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995).

²⁵ See the essays by Paul van Hoof, Stefanie von Hlatky and Michel Fortmann, Alexander Lanoszka, and Kimberley Marten in James Goldgeier & Joshua Shiffrin, eds., "NATO Expansion in Retrospect," *H-Diplo/ISSF Policy Roundtable XII-1*, 19 October 2020, at <https://issforum.org/to/ir12-1>. This roundtable builds on a special issue of *International Politics* devoted to the topic, 57:3 (2020),

The most glaring neglect is inattention to German positions. At all times, Germany could, and did, regulate the pace not only of NATO enlargement, but also the parallel, and even more important, process of EU enlargement. The sequence of actual decisions in both processes in the late 1990s was not a coincidence.

Further, not only was Germany exquisitely sensitive to Polish and Russian views, up to 1998 it was led by Helmut Kohl, who personally had a reasonably complete fund of knowledge about just what had been promised to whom at every stage of this story. It is our impression that Kohl managed President Bill Clinton in this process more than Clinton managed Kohl.

Fifth, the excessive attention to the NATO enlargement debates of the early 1990s diverts attention from the enlargement debates of the mid-to-late 2000s. If the main concern is to link NATO expansion to the break with Russia, the later focus is more important. In the earlier period, NATO expansion was an irritant, but not a vital issue. It was not as inflammatory, for instance, as NATO conduct toward Serbia, especially over Kosovo. All this was part of the general context of anger over Russia's loss of great-power status and the socio-economic chaos of the 1990s. But it is excessively deterministic to assume that the later major break with Russia in the late 2000s was therefore predestined.

It is right, however, to call attention to the important issue of NATO enlargement and Ukraine, which came to a head in 2007 and 2008, along with the crisis over Georgia. Former ambassador William Burns has a good discussion of this in his recent memoir.²⁶ We refer briefly to this episode in our book (402-04), including to Germany's decisive role in stopping a NATO Membership Action Plan for Ukraine.

Yet all of the discussion of NATO is itself a diversion from a deeper, more difficult, historical analysis of the choices about the fundamental future of post-Communist Eurasia. In our book, we try to analyze, first in 1989, then again in 1991-92 and onward into the 1990s, the choices that were available to outsiders who sought to prevent or mitigate the wrenching economic hardship, social dislocation, and political pathologies that afflicted the post-Communist space.

On the vital issues of how to replace a Communist system and mitigate the inevitable hardship, we conclude, once the available choices are examined, that outsiders did offer substantial assistance. We praise the choices made in 1989-90 to support the initial phases of Polish and Hungarian reform. We call out the episode of the '500-day plan' in August-October 1990 as a last chance to save the Soviet economy and we sadly record the (perhaps understandably) limited Western engagement in that episode.

We then make a strong and controversial argument, though it is not critiqued in these reviews, about why it was so essential to condition aid on radical reform. We emphasize the role of the EU in that process, as well as the Germans (who held much of the relevant debt). We also argue that the actual radical reform agenda did not need to have a doctrinaire view on privatization (a subject on which West European states themselves have divergent views). We argue that the 'partial reform equilibrium' turned out to be the most dangerous choice of all, as it mixed with lawless or corrupt privatization.

After the Soviet breakup, we argue that there was another vital window in 1992, to support Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar. This is another understudied case. We see Baker leading a strong effort to help, an effort that became quixotic as Russian financial restraints, and Gaidar's power, eroded later in 1992.

edited by Goldgeier and Shiffrinon. The essay by Rajan Menon is more critical of U.S. choices, but the chronology of his argument resonates well with the emphasis in our fifth point, below.

²⁶ See William Burns, *The Back Channel* (New York: Random House, 2019), Chapter 6, 200-42.

Although we believe that the choices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were well judged in principle, we argue that, in practice, from 1992 on at least until 1997, both the G-7 powers and the IMF made some poor choices. To start with, Gaidar appears to have been right and the IMF was wrong on the ‘common ruble zone’ controversy.

Later, the economic powers and the IMF also fatefully compromised their conditionality in their assistance to Russia, possibly making matters worse. Our argument is not against the insistence on radical reform. Our argument is that this insistence was compromised in practice and that the IMF and its Western sponsors settled for supporting the worst case—the hyper-corrupt system of partial reform.²⁷

But we argue that the West and the IMF, including countries like France, played a more constructive role in the very difficult case of Ukraine. We hope that by calling more attention to these extraordinarily important and interesting political-economic-social choices for how to replace a collapsed system across a substantial part of the globe, we will persuade historians to give those choices more careful study.

What foundation to put down for a global ‘commonwealth of free nations’? (focus especially on 1990-93)

Our basic argument is that, in the early 1990s, the United States played a central part in replacing the Cold War international system with a transformed global system. The U.S. and its partners aspired to lay a foundation to build, over time, a growing global ‘commonwealth of free nations.’

Sestanovich is puzzled about the documentary evidence for such a U.S. vision. President Bush first introduced this concept of a “commonwealth of free nations” in May 1989, in his speeches in Boston and Mainz. He then repeated it in July, in Leiden, and again in his January 1990 State of the Union message. If there was any doubt about the global scope of his vision, that would be dispelled as Bush elaborated on it, including four key aspirational principles, in speeches he gave in late 1990 in Prague and in Brasilia (305-06). Bush tried out another phrase, “new world order,” in an important speech in November 1990. Another founding document was the Charter of Paris, which was agreed among 35 states at the CSCE summit meeting of November 1990, and which reflected a broad consensus about free elections and some significant space for free enterprise.

To understand the remarkable shared vision of American, European, and Asian leaders for the future of the world economy, we call attention to the significance of the Uruguay Round and creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the first truly global trading system in history. These institutions were complemented by the creation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) structures to bring together the nations of the Asia-Pacific and of NAFTA, in North America.

We also spotlight the transformation of the IMF (and World Bank) from their much more limited Cold War roles to much broader missions, setting standards for creditworthiness and development. The IMF generally did better than the Bank. The 1990s was a decade that challenged older approaches to ‘development,’ reemphasizing the significance of local governance and local institutions.

Bush’s vision for how to handle global security was, however, reactive. It was the reaction to the unexpected Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. As a test case this one was extreme, practically the most brazen possible sort of international aggression. The world agreed that this should not stand. But beyond that first test case, beginning with the series of Balkan wars, the approaches to later problems did not reflect a preconceived design.

²⁷ An important early explanation is found in Joel Hellman, “Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions,” *World Politics* 50:2 (1998): 203.

The system set up in the early 1990s was oriented to a set of newly prominent dangers. These were entirely different from the missions of the Cold War system, dominated by its preparations to wage global war, including global thermonuclear war.

The new missions, like policing terrorist outlaws and WMD proliferation outlaws, began picking up more and more attention through the 1980s. They then stood alone as the gigantic older missions dissipated. As all the mountains disappeared, the remaining foothills seemed like mountains.

These new missions were to police the emerging global commonwealth in at least a few ways regarded as basic. The focus was on “rogues” like weapons of mass destruction (WMD) outlaws (e.g., North Korea), terrorist outlaws (e.g., al Qaeda), and a couple of especially egregious or intrusive local aggressors (e.g., Iraq in 1990 and Serbia during most of the 1990s). The subsequent pattern during the 1990s and beyond was mostly inductive. Countries rationalized what were really situation-driven reactions to various crises, experimenting and trying to feel a way forward.

Goldgeier thinks we are too harsh about academics who decry U.S. “hegemony.” He believes they are only calling out an aim of “primacy.” Perhaps he is right. But terms like ‘dominance,’ ‘hegemony,’ or ‘primacy’ are abstract words, which are full of loaded and half-articulated meanings, some of them toxic. Bush and Baker tended not to use those words.

To be even clearer, contrary to the bubble of scholarship that emphasizes the U.S. Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) of 1992, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and his staff did not set the grand strategy of the Bush 41 administration.²⁸ Knowing how that administration worked, it is hard to conceive of any informed argument about that administration’s grand strategy that would not lean hard on the views of Jim Baker, and, behind him, the brain trust led by Counselor (and later Undersecretary) Robert Zoellick and Director of Policy Planning Dennis Ross. Over at the White House, Scowcroft regarded the DPG as “arrogant” and he “emphasized that this never became the national strategy for the Bush 41 team. It was the ‘wrong approach’ in his judgment.”²⁹ And, if anything, Bush himself was even more of a multilateralist than Scowcroft, for some of the reasons that Sestanovich draws out in his review.

It is perhaps a bit resonant now, as the Biden administration takes office, that the foreign policy portion of the 1992 Republican party platform (for which Zelikow held the pen) thumped its chest, discussing the Gulf War of 1991, by saying that the U.S. “in a preeminent position of world leadership, forged a new strategy of collective engagement which invigorated the United Nations.” The next section led with the headline: “Leadership through Partnership.” To many people, including those outside the United States, terms like “primacy” were, and are, not synonymous with “leadership through partnership.”³⁰

In our book we comment on the oscillating misunderstandings of U.S. power. In September 1989, the British embassy in Washington correctly informed Thatcher that the U.S. was then gripped by a belief in American decline, and that Americans were troubled by their loss of status and coping with a surge of economic nationalism (154-55). That assessment hardly anticipated a “unipolar moment.”

²⁸ A sober account by one of those involved is Eric Edelman, “The Strange Career of the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance,” in Melvyn Leffler and Jeffrey Legro, eds., *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy after the Berlin Wall and 9/11* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 63-77.

²⁹ Bartholomew Sparrow, *The Strategist: Brent Scowcroft and the Call of National Security* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2015), 484. See also Philip Zelikow, “Brent Scowcroft and American Military Intervention,” *War on the Rocks*, 24 August 2020, at <https://warontherocks.com/2020/08/brent-scowcroft-and-american-military-intervention/>.

³⁰ Republican Party Platform of 1992 at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1992>.

The talk of a “unipolar moment” concealed that, all along, it was what we call a “unipolar mirage” The diplomacy of 1988-1992 was an exceptional case because “America’s was a power gained from combining strengths—political, financial, and military—in networks of partnerships with others. The power was apparent not because leaders bragged about how much of it they had, but because well-designed policy choices produced visible, constructive results” (364).

How and why has that system faltered? (Focus especially on 2007-2016)

We carry the story to the present day. It is mainly a story of drift and shocks. Larson is understandably concerned that we do not sufficiently emphasize the impact of the painful wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We did discuss some lessons we draw from those experiences (especially on 398-401). Rice has written other books in which she details her views.³¹ Zelikow believes that, in the aftermath of the 9/11 trauma, dominated by narrow-minded military and intelligence arguments and estimates, the U.S. badly misjudged both the gravity of the local situation in Iraq and America’s capacities to manage the aftermath of its military operations. He was not involved in policymaking about Iraq until the beginning of 2005, when the situation was already very bad.

It does not take anything away from a critical analysis of those wars to conclude, though, that from the perspective of wider global history, the most impactful phase of world crises began somewhat later, in 2007-2008. Whatever the causes, our conclusion is that the system created in the early 1990s is no longer well adapted to the agenda of the twenty-first century.

Yet the fact that the global commonwealth is coming apart is exactly why we chose to write such a broad account focused on the hinge years of 1988-1992. Understanding that history is vital. It is vital not because the world’s governments should wind the clock backward but because—as we may be entering another global systemic crisis—that history illustrates how nations and leaders coped peacefully with the last one.

We think the history of that last systemic crisis is quite relevant to the contemporary world, with its polarized politics, new threats, and economic dislocation. Again and again, in studying that happened to the EU, to NATO, to the CSCE, to the IMF, or in the creation of new institutions like a WTO, APEC, NAFTA, or CFE, ours is a story of massive adaptation and institutional transformation to create a new political, economic, and security environment. These acts of creation and transformation were accomplished through coalition diplomacy of an unusual kind, thankfully without the deck-clearing aid of a cataclysmic war.

We have tried to translate a broad history of endings, creation, and transformation into concrete choices made by individuals in specific situations. Since that is how people actually confront big problems, perhaps this book can help a generation that is confronting crises of their own.

³¹ See Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011); and Rice, *Democracy: Stories from the Long Road to Freedom* (New York: Twelve, 2017), 273-330.