

H-Diplo | ISSF

Roundtable, Volume III, No. 13 (2012)



A production of H-Diplo with the journals *Security Studies*, *International Security*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, and the International Studies Association's Security Studies Section (ISSS).

<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF> | <http://www.issforum.org>

Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse, H-Diplo/ISSF Editors

George Fujii, H-Diplo/ISSF Web and Production Editor

Commissioned for H-Diplo/ISSF by Thomas Maddux

Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro, eds. *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy after the Berlin Wall and 9/11*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-8014-4909-3 (hardcover, \$59.95); 978-0-8014-7619-8 (paperback, \$19.95).

Published by H-Diplo/ISSF on **30 April 2012**

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-3-13.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Meena Bose, Hofstra University	2
Review by Eliot A. Cohen, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) ...	6
Review by James Goldgeier, American University.....	8
Review by Gideon Rose, Foreign Affairs	11
Author's Response by Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro, University of Virginia	17

Copyright © 2012 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online

H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu

Introduction by Meena Bose, Hofstra University

This edited volume makes a unique contribution to the field of American foreign policy by bringing together scholars and policy makers to assess two key turning points in American politics: the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As the editors, Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro, write, “The aim of this book is to extrapolate from the aftermath of the most dramatic events in recent international history for the purposes of improving strategic thinking and strategic planning.” (3) Foreign-policy crises typically prompt reassessments of U.S. interests and priorities, and the editors aim to identify how those efforts can be better informed by those who develop policy and those who evaluate it (and several contributors to the volume have been active in both areas).

While the most ambitious scholarship and policy making will seek to bridge both worlds, such connections are difficult to achieve in practice. Explicit attention to the two perspectives is necessary to appreciate how scholars can inform policy making, and how policy makers may make scholars more attentive to the constraints upon models of decision making that daily politics often impose.

Leffler and Legro are to be commended for undertaking the challenge of bringing together scholarly and policy-oriented analyses to understand how the two worlds might better develop long-term strategic planning for the United States in foreign affairs. As the reviewers in this roundtable – all of whom regularly contribute both to scholarship and policy advocacy -- agree, the contributors present thoughtful perspectives on the events under study, and often point out issues that critics of their actions or evaluations may have overlooked. But the task of building upon these dual efforts to develop more integrated policy remains, and may well be a task for another volume.

The first reviewer, Eliot A. Cohen, finds that an underlying challenge in the volume is the “inevitable distortions” that scholars and practitioners have in their work. Practitioners, he writes, tend to look back at their actions and assume that rationality, order, and coherence informed their policy making, whereas “frenzied improvisation” is typically a more accurate description. Scholars tend to assert that connections between research and political opinion are not partisan, but Cohen finds that formulation unpersuasive. He contends that instability and uncertainty largely define modern international politics, and both forces work against coherent long-term strategic planning. Cohen suggests that scholars would do well to have more “empathy” for policy makers who face numerous pressures and constraints in their decision making, and that policy makers in turn need to recognize that mistakes will happen while they are in office, and that successes often are due as much, or even more so, to luck than planning. Ultimately, bridging the gap in perspective between scholars and policy makers may not be feasible when both are evaluating events soon after they take place.

Like Cohen, James M. Goldgeier, sees “a tremendous chasm” between how scholars and policy makers evaluate events and policy choices. For example, Mary Elise Sarotte writes

that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, policy makers missed a rare opportunity to develop new institutions for promoting international security, unlike the significant institutional developments that took place after World War II. But policy makers in the George Bush administration, such as Robert B. Zoellick and Paul Wolfowitz, point out that existing international institutions in 1989 made new institutional design unnecessary, that efforts to adapt those institutions to the post-Cold War era made more sense than starting anew. After the devastating terrorist attacks of 9/11, John Mueller argues that the George W. Bush administration did not define priorities for combating terrorism clearly, particularly in deciding to invade Iraq. But Goldgeier notes that Philip Zelikow, who directed the bipartisan 9/11 Commission, shows the deep fear that policy makers had of another terrorist attack at the time. While questions about intelligence collection and analysis, especially in connection with Iraq, are legitimate, and raise major concerns about decision making, they also point to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of unifying the divergent perspectives in this volume.

The third reviewer, Gideon Rose, presents the most fundamental critique of the volume, raising questions about how the contributors as well as the topics were chosen. Rose considers the project to be “insufficiently theorized,” in large part because the underlying structure is not evident, nor are parallel comparisons of historical events connected to the two main cases. He also questions whether the volume addresses strategic planning or U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era more generally. Despite these problems, Rose finds many insights from the contributors and attempts to integrate them into a policy narrative from the end of the Cold War to the present. In so doing, he reveals several policy choices that merit more extended analysis, perhaps in another volume, with the Iraq war and lack of postwar planning providing the most vivid examples.

In some respects, the articles in this volume and the reviews suggest that scholarship and policy making address separate issues: retrospective versus prospective analysis, or long-term study versus immediate choices. But understanding the reasons for the gulf between the two worlds should not negate efforts to explore, if not bridge, that divide. Scholars and policy makers alike will glean insights about these two momentous periods in American foreign policy from this volume, with much material to read, explore, and discuss. The lessons for foreign policy and strategic planning will follow, and the foundation for developing those lessons is presented here.

Participants:

Melvyn P. Leffler is Edward Stettinius Professor of American History at The University of Virginia and a Faculty Fellow of the Governing America in a Global Era program at UVA's Miller Center. He is the author of several books on the Cold War and on U.S. relations with Europe, including *For the Soul of Mankind* (2007), which won the George Louis Beer Prize from the American Historical Association, and *A Preponderance of Power* (1993), which won the Bancroft, Hoover, and Ferrell Prizes. In 2002-3, he was the Harmsworth Professor at Oxford. He has been president of the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations. Most recently, he is the co-editor, along with Jeff Legro, of *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Cold War* (2011). In 2010, he and Odd Arne Westad co-

edited the three-volume *Cambridge History of the Cold War*. He is now working on the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration.

Jeffrey W. Legro is Professor of Politics and Randolph P. Compton Professor in the Miller Center at the University of Virginia. In 2011 he was a Fulbright-Nehru Senior Researcher at the Institute for Defense and Strategic Analyses in New Delhi. Legro is the author of *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (2005) and *Cooperation under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint during World War II* (1995) and the editor (with Melvyn Leffler) of *To Lead the World: U.S. Strategy after the Bush Doctrine* (2008). Legro is past president of the American Political Science Association (APSA) International History and Politics section and was chair of APSA's Task Force on U.S. Standing in the World.

Meena Bose is Peter S. Kalikow Chair in Presidential Studies at Hofstra University and Director of Hofstra's Peter S. Kalikow Center for the Study of the American Presidency. She is the author of *Shaping and Signaling Presidential Policy: The National Security Decision Making of Eisenhower and Kennedy* (1998), and editor of the reference volume *The New York Times on the Presidency* (2009). She also is co-editor of several volumes in presidency studies and a reader in American politics, and she is the third author for the textbook *American Government: Institutions and Policies*, 13th ed. (2013), by James Q. Wilson and John J. DiIulio, Jr. Her current research focuses on presidential leadership in the United Nations. Dr. Bose received her undergraduate degree in international politics from Penn State University (1990), and her master's and doctoral degrees from Princeton University (1992, 1996).

Eliot A. Cohen is Robert E. Osgood Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. His government service includes two years spent as Counselor of the Department of State (2007-2008); his most recent work of history is *Conquered into Liberty: Two Centuries of Battles Along the Great Warpath that made the American Way of War* (Simon & Schuster, 2011).

James Goldgeier is dean of the School of International Service at American University. He taught previously at Cornell University and George Washington University. His most recent book (co-authored with Derek Chollet) is *America Between the Wars: From 11/9 to 9/11* (PublicAffairs 2008), named "a best book of 2008" by Slate and "a favorite book of 2008" by *The Daily Beast*. He is a principal of the Bridging the Gap project at www.bridgingthegaproject.org. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.

Gideon Rose is editor of *Foreign Affairs*. From 2000-2010 he served as managing editor, and from 1995-2000 he was senior fellow and deputy director for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. From 1994-1995 he served as associate director for Near East and South Asian affairs on the staff of the National Security Council, and before that as assistant editor of the *Public Interest* and *National Interest*. He has taught American foreign policy at Princeton and Columbia universities and is the author of numerous works

on American foreign and security policy including *How Wars End* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010).

Review by Eliot A. Cohen, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

Kudos to Mel Leffler and Jeffrey Legro for assembling an able collection of practitioners and scholars to wrestle with this topic. But despite my very high regard – and bear that in mind when reading the more acidic lines below - for the individuals who contributed here, and even though the editors set modest goals for their authors, I do not think it comes to a comprehensible conclusion – and not just because of the normal challenge of making a collection of essays come to a coherent whole.

The problem is partly that of inevitable distortions. The practitioners, for the most part, have written about strategy, and err on the side of imputing reasonableness and above all clarity and foresight to the ideas they advocated in government. The phenomenon is more acute in memoirs, of course, in which genre, as Dean Acheson observed, no half-way competent author comes out second best. The problem is not dishonesty, but rather the mind's tendency to impose order where in reality, none existed. And the longer one defends one's own (or one's administration's) actions, the more coherent, and hence more misleading, the story becomes.

The scholars, for the most part, are far from free of the partisan tinge that affects most of us when we comment on contemporary affairs. The pretense that political opinions are rooted in scholarly rigor is just as false as the imputation of an overarching concept to what was, instead, frenzied improvisation. And no matter how many hat tips professors make to the mirk in which policy gets made, the implicit thought, "I would have done it much better, had these fools only listened to me," is rarely far from the surface.

Having sojourned in both worlds, I recognize the syndromes, have suffered from them myself, and come close to despairing of a remedy that could make a conversation between the two groups productive. My point of departure is an observation by Harold Nicolson (an able diplomat turned historian, and not surprisingly a bit of a depressive) that "Nobody, in fact, who has had occasion actually to witness history in the making, and to observe how infrequent and adventitious is the part played in great affairs by 'policy' or planned intention, can believe thereafter that history is ever quite so simple, or quite so deliberate, as it seems in retrospect."¹

Much to my surprise, I found the most compelling essay in this collection was Bruce Cumings' "The Assumptions Did It." I disagree with his politics, to include his depiction of the current international disorder, but agree with his recurrent theme that history surprises both statesman and scholar, and that it is only a question of when, not how, history will prove both dead wrong.

The fundamental fact of modern international politics, it seems to me, is instability, and with it, vast uncertainty. This is not simply because large events result from trivial causes. There are deep forces at work, and it is difficult to accept the editors' judgment that "the

¹ Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna; A Study in Allied Unity, 1812-1822* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), 19.

[Berlin] Wall came down as a result of accidental circumstances.” (1) The immediate event – yes, but surely the deeper rot of the Communist world set the preconditions. Those “accidental circumstances” are both extremely powerful and unpredictable, yet they depend on wider developments – no slip of an East German official’s tongue would have brought the Wall down in, say, 1977. Yet, neither the policymaker nor the scholar in today’s academy have shown themselves particularly good at understanding the deeper currents of social existence, economics, and thought that prepare the way for shattering events like the end of the Cold War or 9/11 – or the Arab spring, or the Great Recession of 2008 for that matter.

The argument that instability and uncertainty are more prevalent than ever before is worth a book in its own right. It has much to do with the multiplication of centers of political, economic and intellectual activity in the world, and with the stunning revolution in the global information order. We live in a world of black swans, as a result, and both the policymakers and the professors (the professor-policymakers too) end up merely gawking at them as they fly by.

Each of these essays is valuable. Some more than others, to be sure (I have a strong partiality for my colleague Eric Edelman’s essay on the Defense Planning Guidance of 1992, for example). But collectively these essays suggest to me different desiderata for the two groups.

The scholars could do with more empathy for practitioners to whom the future is a swirling fog, and who are subject to all kinds of pressures, anxieties, and fears that do not find their way into the official records the researchers so avidly read. This requires an awareness that policymaking is only to a limited extent about academic intelligence, demanding other qualities – emotional intelligence, for sure, but also the practical skills of collaboration, negotiation, and leadership – which professors often lack. Prudence and good judgment, in short, count for much more than IQ. And to form an adequate appreciation of what policymakers do, one has to cultivate an appreciation for those virtues, particularly if one lacks them oneself.

For the practitioners, the need is to admit how frail and fallible their own judgment has been, how little they knew and how little they foresaw, and how often their successes owed as much to luck as to sound conduct. That is a wrenching task, because, as Max Weber knew, politics is a vocation of responsibility. Having sunk a great deal of ego and energy into public service, and having a gnawing sense that others paid a price for one’s errors, it is a difficult thing to do.

Future historians will unravel with greater knowledge and skill than is possible now, what policymakers did and possibly why they did it during the decade or more from the fall of the Berlin Wall and the attacks of 9/11. Clío’s vision becomes clearer the further she is removed from the human activities she scrutinizes. My uneasy conclusion after these thoughtful essays, though, is that she can only make sense of events after the contemporaries who participated in or cared about them have been reduced to the indifference of senility or the silence of the grave.

Melvyn Leffler and Jeffrey Legro have done a masterful job bringing together in one volume many of the most outstanding academics and policymakers of the last two decades to analyze the ability of the United States to engage in strategic planning in periods of great uncertainty. While the academics provide insightful analysis and the policymakers impressively articulate the rationales behind their efforts, what is most striking about this volume is what is often implied but never directly confronted: the extraordinarily wide gap between academia and the policy world. The academics are for the most part struck by what policymakers missed or misunderstood. They almost completely fail to engage the policymakers on their own terms as individuals who in periods of uncertainty had to decide what the United States should do. Meanwhile, the policymakers for the most part are oblivious to the kinds of mistaken judgments that are so obvious to the academics, whose expertise decision-makers often ignore.

Mary Elise Sarotte, who has so brilliantly chronicled the 1989-90 period of German unification, repeats a charge she has made elsewhere: policymakers after 1989 missed an opportunity to create new institutions to guide world affairs, thereby falling short of their predecessors of the post-World War II period, who designed the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), among others.

The institution-building period after 1945 demonstrated tremendous foresight. But does it really make sense to label officials in the George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations as failures because they did not do what was done in 1945-50? There were no functioning international institutions in 1945. Responding to the events of the interwar period, policymakers after World War II built a set of institutions to forestall the possibilities that those events would be repeated in the future. And even those institutions had their design flaws; after all, the United Nations was stymied by the Cold War rivalry and the ability of the United States and Soviet Union to veto one another's efforts. NATO may have kept the Soviet Union from expanding further across Europe, but it led to free riding among the Europeans that remains largely intact to this day.

Unlike 1945, policymakers in 1989 did have institutions already in place. They were emerging from a four-decade clash between competing ideologies, and believed that the institutions of the West had proven themselves superior and were now available to help integrate the former communist world. As Robert B. Zoellick writes, "What is wrong with Western democracy and market economics? Why not build on those values as advanced and safeguarded by Western institutions? Why not utilize them and modify those institutions as appropriate? This might be called an American 'constitutionalist' perspective: build on frameworks and then adapt them, while benefiting from the cohesion and customs that those constitutions and traditions create." (31)

One can agree or disagree with what Zoellick, Paul Wolfowitz and Eric S. Edelman have written in this volume. There has certainly been significant debate over the economic

model described by Zoellick that the United States promoted in the 1990s to open up global markets. The 1992 Defense Planning Guidance that Wolfowitz and Edelman had a hand in set off a firestorm when an early draft was leaked. But those chapters describe processes of internal discussion and debates as well as the use of public documents to lay out a strategy in economic and military affairs that the academic chapters do not take on their own terms. Was it really imaginable that policymakers witnessing the collapse of America's Cold War rival would decide that institutions the United States built to manage global affairs on a democratic and free market basis should start over?

A significant problem is that the academics often downplay policymakers' fears as unwarranted, or they fail to weigh the costs of alternate courses of action that the experts view as preferable. When violence broke out in Yugoslavia in 1991, didn't it make sense for policymakers to fear what could happen if similar dynamics played out in the Soviet Union? Twenty-five million Russians lived outside of Russia in a country spanning twelve time zones and possessing tens of thousands of nuclear weapons. We will never know if the Soviet Union could have gone the way of Yugoslavia, nor if American policy in 1991-92 made violence less likely, but academics rarely spend much time considering how the Bush and Clinton administrations pushed hard to denuclearize Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan in order to prevent "a Yugoslavia with nukes" from emerging. Just imagine the impact on European affairs if Belarus still had strategic nuclear weapons on its soil.

Even when the academics raise important points, they reveal the tremendous gaps between the two worlds. John Mueller, for example, discusses what he views as the inflated threat of terrorism after 9/11 that led to resource allocations to the "war on terror" that the country did not need to make and could not afford, most dramatically epitomized by the George W. Bush administration's ill-advised invasion of Iraq that proved so damaging to American interests. But compare Mueller's devastating critique to Philip Zelickow's recreation of the fear inside of the Bush administration that another attack was just around the corner. It is easy in retrospect to say those fears were misplaced (and even if one accepts the fears were legitimate one can question why the United States needed to invade Iraq), but the president and his advisers did have a sworn duty to protect the country and its citizens.

Bruce Cumings complains that the lack of any expertise on North Korea led administrations across time continually to predict wrongly the imminent collapse of that regime. He demonstrates quite vividly that administrations either failed to listen to experts or misused historical analogies to other communist regimes and thus kept getting it wrong. And yet despite all the valid points Cumings makes, he misses a central question: what should policymakers do to respond to the challenges to American interests posed by North Korea? Unless academics have something to say regarding courses of action, their analysis will fall short of what policymakers need.

William C. Wohlforth, in his discussion of the academic experts, raises an important question that is rarely asked: in the case of a policy criticized by academics, what would have been the costs of not pursuing that policy? As Wohlforth notes, academics almost unanimously opposed NATO's enlargement into Central and Eastern Europe, largely on

grounds that it needlessly antagonized Russia. We cannot know if Russia would have developed more democratically or more pro-Western in the absence of NATO enlargement. And we also cannot know if Central and Eastern Europe would have been engulfed in instability as policymakers feared. But the prospect of NATO membership was used effectively to help promote democracy and markets, and it is hard to imagine that the European Union could have enlarged into territories not secured by NATO. The creation of a Europe that is nearly whole and free, enunciated by George H.W. Bush as an American policy goal in 1989, is a remarkable success story for the United States and its European allies, and yet academics often do not consider how things might have turned out in Europe if NATO had not ventured beyond Western Europe.

Edited volumes typically suffer from the fact that authors are not speaking to one another. In this case, the gap between the scholars and the policymakers is an important feature of this book, and is yet another reminder of the tremendous chasm that exists between these two worlds.

Review by Gideon Rose, Foreign Affairs

In Uncertain Times is an interesting and valuable collection of essays, if rather an odd one. The editors have brought together an impressive group of policymakers and scholars to “recount, analyze, and reflect on how the United States responded to” the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the 9/11 attacks. (3) The inclusion of upper mid-level practitioners (e.g., undersecretaries and the like) in the mix was a smart move, because the experienced professionals who operate at that level know what really goes on in their administrations without being quite as puffed up or politicized as the “principals” at the top of the pyramid. That is particularly true of the individuals represented here—Bob Zoellick, Paul Wolfowitz, Eric Edelman, Walt Slocombe, and Phil Zelikow—who are among the sharpest tools in the technocratic shed.

Just why these individuals were picked to contribute rather than others, however, remains unclear, as does the logic of the specific substantive assignments they were given. The same is true of the diplomatic historians (and one historically-oriented political scientist) whose essays round out the collection. And the project itself seems inadequately theorized. There are occasional nods to the sort of structured, focused comparison that might allow insights from the individual case studies to cumulate, and some authors talk about broader lessons regarding crises and planning. But there is no explicit discussion of methodology and the chapters cover bits and pieces of history almost at random. This makes reading the book like walking past a construction site and stealing occasional glances through various openings in the wall at the complex maneuvers taking place within.

The editors talk of those maneuvers as “American strategic planning in uncertain times,” (2) but the real subject at issue here is both broader and simpler: U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War world. Because the practitioners’ reflections constitute primary sources of a sort, and the scholars are generally smart and knowledgeable, the collection adds to our understanding of that subject, although not necessarily the way the authors themselves recognize.

The story the book tells has two parts—one about continuity and success, the other about change and failure. The first part, about the extension of the liberal postwar order into the post-Cold War era gets lots of attention; the second, the Iraq fiasco, is touched on only glancingly and unsatisfyingly. A challenge for future historians will be to integrate the two stories into a single narrative of American policy running from George H.W. Bush through Barack Obama and beyond. Below are some thoughts on what that narrative might look like.

From the mid 1940s onward, the central challenge for U.S. foreign policy has been straightforward: consolidate, protect, and extend the liberal international order that emerged in the West after World War II. This order featured a new approach to modern political economy—increasing cooperation and trade among mutually supporting liberal democracies with mixed economies—that rested on and was protected by American geostrategic dominance. The order has been the framework within which local economic,

social, and political development has proceeded, to the lasting benefit of both the United States and the world at large. Generations of policymakers in Washington and allied capitals have nurtured and guarded their precious offspring, keeping at bay a host of dangers—war and aggression, economic nationalism, disruption and chaos.

The Soviet Union had to be contained because it threatened this order, but the conception of the order predated the Cold War and the system would have existed without it. What the Cold War did was ensure it was set up on a partial basis, in U.S. spheres of interest, rather than on a universal basis as originally planned. This is why the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union did little to affect the order itself, but merely paved the way for its extension into areas of the globe previously off limits.

Thus, while the collapse of the Berlin Wall was both an accident and a shock, as Mary Sarotte's chapter describes, it was not really the ideological or historical hinge that many took it to be. And the way the George H.W. Bush administration ended up responding to the situation—using skillful diplomacy to smooth the ending of the geopolitical conflict, dampen the possible ripple effects, and bring a unified Germany fully inside the order's institutional framework—seems in retrospect to be not only eminently sensible but almost overdetermined.

Bruce Cumings' chapter describes the order I am talking about, and the Zoellick, Wolfowitz, and Edelman chapters describe, in their own ways, how the administration of Bush *père* decided to give it new life, and new domains, after 11/9. In his perceptive contribution, William Wohlforth notes that in doing so, the administration showed a keener eye and a steadier hand than many experts outside the system. John Mueller is correct to point out, in his chapter, that U.S. policy in this period was not based on response to major threats, but this does not mean it was necessarily inappropriate. It is hardly shocking that U.S. officials, having power to spare, decided to take advantage of an opportunity to enlarge their (essentially benign) sphere of influence rather than cultivate their gardens.

The key decision in this era was to lock Germany into the West, including NATO. Some opposed this because they feared German power, others because they feared Russian resentment. And the latter was the chief objection to a follow-on decision by the Clinton administration a few years later, to expand NATO by including successive tranches of former East Bloc countries on Europe's marches. The Slocombe chapter describes the Clinton administration's Yeltsin-based Russia policy as a failure, because in the end a recalcitrant semi-authoritarian regime took power in Moscow. But it is not clear that any other approach to domesticating the bear would have worked any better—and at least the Bush-Clinton approach managed to bring several other countries inside the castle walls while it was still possible. (The Clinton administration's failure to secure the extension of "fast-track" trade negotiating authority and the slowness of progress on global trade liberalization during this era strikes me as a bigger mistake, although to its credit the administration did get NAFTA through Congress. In general, this collection's skimpy treatment of the Clinton administration is a missed opportunity to show how the first Bush administration's policies fared in later years.)

As the 1990s wore on, the threat of great power conflict receded and globalization took off. In this context, terrorism posed a growing problem. Historically a secondary concern, it gained new importance as ever-increasing waves of goods and peoples flooded across borders, presenting both targets and cover for nontraditional extremists simultaneously appearing on the scene. Some observers recognized that a critical issue of the day was how to police the flows of globalization so as to reap the economic, social, and political benefits of openness while minimizing its costs and dangers. Others recognized that the most likely source of those dangers was a violent strain of Islamism, an activist movement devoted to purifying the Muslim world, overthrowing “apostate” regimes there, and restoring the glories of the medieval caliphate. On 9/11, these concerns merged when a score of radical Islamists hijacked four civilian jets and flew them into targets in New York and Washington, killing thousands.

It was inevitable that the attacks would make the fight against al Qaeda and other jihadists the top priority of American policy. And given the complexities involved, it was inevitable that this fight would last a long time and present many controversial policy choices along the way. What was not inevitable was that the attacks would also produce a major shift in America’s approach to the world, the launching of a costly war in an unrelated country, and an enduring state of siege. Those happened because Washington could not keep its head.

It would have been difficult for any administration to make discretion the better part of valor, to calibrate its responses to the attacks carefully. But it was even more so for the Bush *files* team, because that would have meant facing squarely up to its own earlier mistakes. The despised and contemptible Clintonites, after all, were the ones who had been harping about the dangers of freelance jihadist terrorists such as al Qaeda—and the ones associated with narrowly targeted responses. The new administration, in contrast, had chosen to concentrate its attention on other security issues, such Iraq, China, and missile defense.

Given the desultory approach of Bush officials to the jihadist terrorist threat during the spring and summer of 2001, those officials might have responded to the attacks with chagrin and self-recrimination, conceding (at least tacitly) that their initial national security priorities had been incorrect. If they had done this, they would still have undertaken a military campaign against al Qaeda and its unrepentant Afghan hosts, strengthened global counterterrorist operations and intelligence gathering, and paid more attention to homeland security. But they would not have situated these policies in a politically divisive framework at home and abroad, and they would not have gone to war with Iraq—because there was no good reason to believe it had been connected to 9/11 or would be connected to similar attacks in the future.

Instead of engaging in self-reflection, however, the administration plunged forward. It clung to many of its earlier views and incorporated Iraq and other issues (such as defense transformation and revived presidential powers) into a new foreign policy framework designed not simply to respond to the attacks and attackers but, as the president put it a few days later, to “rid the world of evil.”

Still, psychology alone would not have been enough to trigger the policies that emerged. Those required a larger intellectual and structural context, one offering a broadly accepted motive and opportunity for the deployment of U.S. power abroad. This is where Middle Eastern politics and American hegemony come in.

Some violent actors, such as the Unabomber or Aum Shinrikyo, are isolated from the societies and polities around them. Al Qaeda was different. It was part of the radicalized fringe of a broader ideological movement with clear roots in the social, political, and economic dysfunction of the modern Middle East. In the wake of 9/11, one could make a plausible argument that radical Islamism was best understood as a developmental disease, a product of modernizing societies in wrenching transition in a particular cultural context. A corollary to this argument was the notion that the threat the jihadists posed to the United States would never be fully dealt with until the countries of the greater Middle East managed to overcome their various problems and offer their populations freer, better, more satisfying lives.

It just so happened, moreover, that the attacks occurred at precisely the moment when the United States had amassed the greatest relative power of any state since Rome. Contrary to all expectations, in the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union the United States pulled even further ahead of the rest of the pack, as the “unipolar moment” stretched into simple unipolarity. This massive power potential was bound to express itself eventually in a comparably ambitious world role, although just how and when remained to be seen.

The combination of all these factors meant that the 9/11 attacks had the psychological effect of Pearl Harbor and the geopolitical effect (as John Mueller notes) of the 1950 communist invasion of South Korea. They instilled fear and a desire for revenge, loosened the domestic constraints on the deployment of American power, and led not simply to increased counterterrorist efforts but to a grand campaign to achieve total security by fundamentally transforming a broad swath of the world.

The Zelikow chapter is in many respects the most interesting in the volume, precisely because it covers this crucial period from an insider’s perspective. He gives a good sense of the psychological impact of the attacks on the administration, and usefully covers what one might call the development of several key policy consequences—the Afghan campaign, increased attention to homeland security, an intensified and reconsidered approach to foreign aid and development. Oh—and a preventive war against an unrelated third party with little planning for the aftermath. The last, of course, is the elephant in the room, and calls for much more discussion than it receives not simply in this chapter, but in the volume more generally.

Zelikow approaches Iraq through the lens of the “preemption” discussion in the 2002 National Security Strategy, prepared chiefly by national security adviser Condoleezza Rice. It turns out that the word wasn’t in the first draft, was inserted in a later draft in reference to al Qaeda, and was shifted to the Iraq section because some considered the original wording there problematic—“the phrase ‘preventive war’ had bad associations” (113).

Well, yes—and after the Bush administration’s experiences in Iraq, those “bad associations” have only been reinforced. So why did the administration embrace it?

Wohlforth notes that in the entire period under discussion, the Iraq war was the only instance in which outside experts proved wiser than insiders, and this highlights the exceptionalism of the issue—not least because many of the people involved in the second Bush administration had previously shown themselves to be such wise and steady hands. Wolfowitz, Zoellick, Edelman, even the Democrat Slocombe—all were players or at least flies on key walls during the second Bush administration’s Iraq debates, and as useful and interesting as their chapters on earlier topics are, their observations on Iraq policy during the latter period would be even more so. This reader eagerly awaits the next volume in the series!

It was in 2003 that what one might call the “narrow” and “broad” streams of the war on terrorism truly diverged, with the latter branching off into Iraq, the “freedom agenda,” and other issues. Zelikow correctly notes that neither stream was on the Bush administration’s agenda prior to 9/11, but he doesn’t sufficiently explore the difference between them or point out that the “broad” stream was much more idiosyncratic than the “narrow” one—and thus requires a great deal more process tracing about how and why it became U.S. policy. After writing a lengthy chapter on the Iraq war in my own book, I think it is clear that the war had its roots in the shock of 9/11 and the administration’s lowered risk tolerance: at the start of September it was almost unthinkable, by the end of December it was probable, and six months after that it was almost inevitable. But why Iraq was considered such a concern in the first place, and why so little practical planning was done for the aftermath of the conflict, remain major puzzles. (*Pace* Zelikow’s chapter, the notion that because a light footprint was seeming to work well in Afghanistan it was logical to assume it would work fine in Iraq too is implausible, given the vastly greater number of counterexamples that could have been cited—and if that was really what decisionmakers were thinking, the case becomes in some ways even more interesting.)

To the surprise of both its supporters and detractors, the Obama administration has carried on the “narrow” version of the war on terror even as it dropped the “broader” version. Thus the departure of U.S. forces from Iraq has been paired with stepped-up attacks against terrorists, even to the point of openly killing American citizens with little if any formal due process. And diplomatic openings to countries such as Iran and Syria have been paired with a willingness to switch course when those openings failed to produce results. Rather than seeing such policies as schizophrenic or contradictory, however, they strike me more as a return to a broad mainstream line of American policy, one devoted to protecting the liberal order in a reasonably prudent and deliberate manner, avoiding extreme courses of all kinds. In that sense, the Bush *père* policymakers represented in this volume might well find themselves closer to their Obama administration epigones than either group might like.

So, bottom line: several of the essays in this collection will serve as useful inputs for scholars telling the story of American foreign policy in recent decades, and the notion of getting smart, serious policymakers to explain what they did and why is a winner. But the

collection leaves many areas uncovered, and the broader history of the era remains to be written.

We want to thank our reviewers for their thoughtful and incisive assessments. We agree with most of their comments.

As Gideon Rose, James Goldgeier, and Eliot Cohen all write, we do feel that we accomplished a great deal bringing influential decision-makers and eminent scholars together. We also agree that the gaps between them are large. Our hope, of course, was that they would learn from one another, and that dialogue would nurture more productive thinking and action over the long run. Yes, it is important for scholars to get a better sense of the pressures, anxieties, and fears of policymakers as well as the messiness of the policy process. Scholars, Cohen and Goldgeier stress, need to empathize, and they need to be aware of their own ideological and political predilections. William Wohlforth's chapter in the book shows that academicians often prescribed more poorly than the officials performed. Yet the policymakers also need to be more introspective, more inclined to acknowledge the fog that engulfs them, and more ready to admit error. Actually, their self-assessments in this volume are varied: sometimes self-satisfied, sometimes critical, sometimes modest; always interesting.

We asked the policymakers to reflect on their time in office and to examine how they grappled with sudden and dramatic change after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the attack on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon. Paul Wolfowitz examines the overall strategic planning of the George H. W. Bush administration; Eric Edelman writes a provocative reinterpretation of the Defense Policy Guidance of 1992; Robert Zoellick outlines the efforts to expand the liberal international economic order that had prevailed in the Cold War; Walter Slocombe analyzes why the Clinton administration did not succeed in absorbing Yeltsin's Russia into that order; and Philip Zelikow compares the reactions of Bush 43 to 9/11 with those of his father to 11/9. Readers will be surprised and engaged by what the policymakers have to say. Much is fresh, engaging, stimulating, and thoughtful. In writing their future histories of the era, historians will need to grapple with these first-hand accounts.

Nonetheless, Gideon Rose is certainly right when he says that the chapters do not provide a complete history of the era after the Cold War. Rose notes that, among the policymakers, only Zelikow examines the post-9/11 environment in a serious and systematic way. The scholars also do not dwell on the decision to intervene in Iraq, yet several of them directly and indirectly extrapolate lessons from that event and its aftermath: John Mueller emphasizes the temptation to exaggerate threats; Bruce Cumings and Odd Arne Westad stress the fundamental assumptions, core values, and ideological predilections that shape officials' (distorted) thinking and (misguided) actions. With this framework lurking in her mind, Mary Sarotte concludes that after 1989 policymakers here and abroad failed to design new structures to deal with new circumstances.

Such criticisms are salient, yet Wohlforth shows that policymakers during the 1990s were often more prescient than scholars. Officials accomplished more than we tend to acknowledge: the reunification of Germany within NATO; the rollback of Saddam's armies in the Gulf War; the enlargement of NATO; the reorientation of strategic thinking; and the modulation of the conflict in the Balkans. Instead, academics dwell (properly, we think) on mistakes and missed opportunities: insufficient attention to failed states, the rise of terrorism, the tribulations of postwar Iraq, and the dynamics inside a revanchist Russia.

In our conclusion, we try to extrapolate from the chapters and identify the key challenges to strategic planning in uncertain times. We highlight the nearsighted vision, faulty assumptions, bureaucratic battles, and domestic priorities that plagued the policy process. We do not theorize, as Gideon Rose notes, but we do try to illuminate the factors that need to be attended to if planning is to be improved. By illuminating how key policymakers saw themselves tackling unprecedented challenges, our intent is to encourage scholars to assess such efforts with empathy, wisdom, and humility.

The challenges of uncertainty endure. "The argument that instability and uncertainty are more prevalent than ever before is worth a book in its own right," writes Eliot Cohen. Indeed. Our initial focus was to consider the aftermath of the Cold War. But we realized that situation was in many ways the same one that leaders faced after 9/11 – and they confront in the ongoing Arab Spring today: how to navigate a world of rapidly changing unfamiliar conditions. There is much more to explore on this crucial issue. Our aim in this volume is to get all of us -- students, scholars, and practitioners – to think more constructively and to exercise better judgment when it comes to strategic planning in uncertain times.

Copyright © 2012 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.
