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M. E. Sarotte. *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9780300268034

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Introduction by Charles A. Kupchan, Georgetown University and Council on Foreign Relations

Not One Inch, Mary E. Sarotte's excellent study of the origins of the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) could not be timelier. Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine brings to a head the debate over NATO enlargement that has been roiling since the end of the Cold War.

Critics see NATO's eastward expansion as a major strategic misstep that isolated and threatened Russia, arguing that the policy inevitably provoked Moscow's opposition and countermeasures. Indeed, in justifying his February decision to launch a "special military operation" in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin pointed to "the fundamental threats which irresponsible Western politicians created for Russia....I am referring to the eastward expansion of NATO, which is moving its military infrastructure ever closer to the Russian border."¹

In contrast, proponents of NATO's enlargement see Russian aggression against Ukraine and other neighbors as justifying and vindicating the eastward expansion of the alliance. In their opinion, Russia's military adventurism reveals that the Kremlin has malign intent, precisely why it was necessary for NATO to extend security guarantees to over a dozen countries since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. These countries need the protection afforded by NATO membership and NATO needs the strategic depth and military capability that new members bring to the table.²

Not One Inch dives right into this debate, delving deeply into the history of the expansion of NATO as the policy was formulated and initially implemented over the course of the 1990s. Sarotte not only tells the story of NATO enlargement, but also offers a nuanced evaluation of the policy. She is a measured critic, calling the eastward expansion of the alliance a "justifiable response to the challenges of the 1990s," but then contending that "the problem was *how* it happened" (3). She is an enthusiastic supporter of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), an initiative devised by the Clinton administration late in 1993 that enabled all European countries to cooperate with NATO, putting on hold consideration of the formal extension of membership. Sarotte argues that Washington then called the question of enlargement too soon, missing opportunities to anchor Russia in a new post-Cold War order. Washington proceeded to orchestrate successive rounds of enlargement, moving NATO's frontier further into Russia's former sphere of influence while paying insufficient attention to Moscow's objections. In the meantime, Russia's own political, economic, and strategic missteps added to a deteriorating relationship with West. The result was that "American choices combined with the tragic failures of both Gorbachev and Yeltsin to undercut the potential for post-Cold War cooperation and to push the U.S.-Russian relationship into a period of uneven decline" (15).

Sarotte builds her case through an exacting account of the policy deliberations and diplomatic engagements that guided the enlargement of NATO. She is able to break considerable new ground in part because of the painstaking work she did to declassify and mine previously unavailable documents. As Heidi Tworek aptly notes in her review, "source procurement is one of the book's signature achievements." Sarotte also

¹ President Vladimir Putin, "Address to the Nation Announcing Start of Military Campaign in Ukraine," 24 February 2022, American Rhetoric Online Speech Bank, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/vladimirputinrussianmilitarycampaignukraine.htm>.

² For an interesting poll demonstrating the diversity of expert opinion on the merits of NATO enlargement, see "Was NATO Enlargement a Mistake?" 19 April 2022, *Foreign Affairs*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/2022-04-19/was-nato-enlargement-mistake>.

conducted myriad interviews and thoughtfully collated and interpreted information already in the public domain, enabling her to go well beyond previous studies of NATO enlargement.³

The reviewers in this roundtable appropriately laud Sarotte's impressive accomplishment. The text is paced and fluid; Sarotte is a superb story-teller as well as historian. Sergey Radchenko calls the book "a masterfully crafted narrative" and a "page-turner." Stephan Kieninger labels it a "tour de force" that is "highly detailed, meticulously researched, and superbly written." The reviewers also praise *Not One Inch* for its multinational breadth. The book's account of the evolution of NATO enlargement revolves around decision making in Washington; that focus is appropriate given that the United States was the central player in driving the policy. Yet Sarotte extends the book's reach by bringing into the picture the views of a wide range of other governments. As Colleen Anderson points out, the book offers a "truly transnational approach" that draws on the "author's consultation of a vast collection of primary material housed across the United States and Europe."

Of particular importance in this regard is Sarotte's chronicling of the debates that took place among American, German, and Russian officials during the crucial period of German reunification. The record shows just how sensitive the Russian leadership was to the prospect of NATO's frontier coming its way. Amid the diplomacy over Germany's future, the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, insisted that "a unified Germany staying in NATO" was "unacceptable for us" (61). The Russians lost that battle—and many more when it came to the enlargement of NATO.

But even as Sarotte documents Russia's continuous and vociferous objections to NATO enlargement, she also effectively disarms a crucial Russian claim. To this day, Russian leaders insist that Washington committed an act of betrayal during the negotiations over German reunification, pledging to Moscow that NATO would not expand eastward, and then readily proceeding to break that promise. Sarotte provides ample evidence that such claims of perfidy are unjustified. During a conversation between Secretary of State James Baker and Gorbachev in February 1990, Baker did indeed float the idea that "NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position" (55). But Baker was only musing over the potential geopolitical status of a unified Germany. His position was a trial balloon that had not been approved in Washington and was never formally agreed to or codified in any document. To be sure, the US position contained ambiguities as negotiations proceeded and policies evolved. But Sarotte's investigative burrowing sets to rest Russia's spurious claims that the United States broke its word.

Not One Inch provides such revelatory details about many of the crucial policy debates and diplomatic encounters that took place during the 1990s. To her credit, Sarotte also regularly widens her lens, going beyond the diplomatic record to include in her analysis how domestic political considerations, personal relationships, and unforeseen events shape outcomes. For example, the pressures of electoral politics, the influence of ethnic lobbies, the distractions imposed on President Bill Clinton by the Monica Lewinsky scandal, and the diplomatic and strategic impact of the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia all figure prominently in Sarotte's story.

Alongside their ample praise, the reviewers do offer several criticisms of *Not One Inch*. Kieninger takes issue with Sarotte's overall critique of NATO enlargement, arguing that the decision to expand the alliance constituted a necessary and prudent insurance policy against Russian aggression. Whereas Sarotte concludes that the West paid insufficient attention to Moscow's security concerns, Kieninger maintains that "NATO always went the extra mile to work with Russia. NATO's outreach toward Russia always preceded decisions on enlargement." Tworek suggests that Sarotte's analysis is perhaps too US-centric and that she may have

³ See, for example, James Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The US Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999); and Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

given too much weight to the personal agency of decision makers at the expense of the structural forces at play.

I would add a further critique for Sarotte to consider—that perhaps her assessment of NATO enlargement is too measured. In the spirit of full disclosure, I served on the National Security Council during 1993 and 1994 and, in that capacity, was a staunch opponent of NATO enlargement. As I wrote soon after leaving the NSC in 1994, “expanding NATO would be a grave strategic error....[P]ushing NATO's boundaries eastward promises to resurrect Europe's dividing lines, not erase them.”⁴ The far preferable option in my mind was to invest in the Partnership for Peace and aim to construct a pan-European security architecture that would include Russia. NATO would proceed with formal enlargement only if and when necessary, that is, should Russia return to the path of military expansionism. My views align well with those of Radchenko, who laments that the United States missed an opportunity “to steer Russia to a dignified place in the Western order.” “Shouldn't leaders have found ways to anchor Russia in the West?” he pointedly asks.

Sarotte resists this blanket critique of NATO enlargement, preferring to focus on how the policy was implemented, not the policy itself. But most of the downsides she identifies were baked into the initial decision to open NATO to new members. After Clinton declared in Prague in January 1994 that “the question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members but when and how,” fundamental strategic realities became set in stone.⁵ As Sarotte herself acknowledges, “Once PfP was abandoned, a new dividing line became inevitable” (342).

Indeed, that inescapable reality is precisely why the Russians objected to NATO enlargement even before they had a sense of how it would be implemented. As early as 1993, President Boris Yeltsin warned that Russians across the political spectrum “would no doubt perceive this as a sort of neo-isolation of our country in diametric opposition to its natural admission into Euro-Atlantic space.” In a face-to-face meeting with Clinton in 1995, Yeltsin was more direct: “I see nothing but humiliation for Russia if you proceed....Why do you want to do this? We need a new structure for Pan-European security, not old ones!....For me to agree to the borders of NATO expanding towards those of Russia—that would constitute a betrayal on my part of the Russian people.”⁶

To be sure, decision-makers had leeway as to the timing of enlargement and how far east NATO's new frontier would go. Once enlargement began, Sarotte correctly observes, “the only question was how close to Russia's border that line would be drawn” (342). In theory, NATO could have stopped after its first wave of enlargement, taking in only the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. Instead, as Sarotte notes, “Washington set up an iterative, continuous process of enlargement” (273).

Yet that “iterative, continuous process” was effectively inevitable. Once formal membership in NATO was established as the new calling card for Europe's new democracies, it became extremely difficult to exclude qualified aspirants. If Poland could join, then why not Bulgaria and Romania? If Baltic and Balkan countries could be NATO members, then why not Georgia and Ukraine? After NATO's door opened, the logic of NATO enlargement and the political momentum behind it made it virtually impossible to close that door.

⁴ Charles A. Kupchan, “Expand NATO—And Split Europe,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1994.

⁵ President Bill Clinton, “The President's News Conference With Visegrad Leaders in Prague,” 12 January 1994, The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-visegrad-leaders-prague>.

⁶ Svetlana Savranskaya and Tom Blanton, eds., “NATO Expansion: What Yeltsin Heard,” 16 March 2018, George Washington University National Security Archive, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2018-03-16/nato-expansion-what-yeltsin-heard>.

Sarotte is right that after PflP was abandoned, “a new dividing line became inevitable,” yet one could argue that the decision was even more consequential than Sarotte makes it out to be. As historians build on Sarotte’s seminal book, they should seek to shed even more light on that fateful move.

In her response to the reviewers, Sarotte maintains her position that “the problem is not enlargement itself; rather, it is how expansion happened.” She contends that NATO should have been expanded, but in a manner that “avoided drawing a new line” between those countries admitted and those left out. Yet given that NATO is a military alliance, it is difficult to discern how expansion could have proceeded without drawing new lines. Alliances are, by design and purpose, line-drawing instruments. *Not One Inch* significantly advances, but does not resolve, the continuing debate over the merits of NATO expansion.

Sarotte also provides further argumentation to buttress her important finding that Russia has chronically misrepresented the diplomatic agreements that took shape as the Cold War wound down, falsely claiming that Moscow in the 1990s received formal promises that NATO would not expand eastward. Her archival legwork represents a critical rebuttal of a key element in Russia’s narrative of grievance and further exposes the mistruths that Moscow deployed to justify its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, Sarotte welcomes and endorses Anderson’s and Tworek’s calls for historians to pay more attention to the role that international organizations played in shaping the trajectory of post-Cold War Europe. This exchange of views reinforces the major contributions that *Not One Inch* makes to both understanding the history of the 1990s and informing contemporary debates over transatlantic relations and the future of NATO.

Participants:

Mary Elise Sarotte is the Kravis Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington DC. She is the author, most recently, of *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate* (Yale University Press, 2021), which, among other awards, was chosen as a Foreign Affairs Book of the Year and won the Pushkin House Book Prize. A former member of the Institute for Advanced Study and Humboldt Scholar, she will be publishing her next book in German with C.H. Beck in fall 2023.

Charles A. Kupchan is Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. His most recent book is *Isolationism: A History of America’s Efforts to Shield Itself from the World*.

Colleen Anderson is a Curator in the Space History Department at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum. Her current research is on the history of East and West German space travel in the global Cold War. She completed a PhD in History at Harvard University in 2017. She also holds an MA in Modern History from the University of St Andrews (UK) and a BA in History from the University of Notre Dame.

Stephan Kieninger is a Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center and the author of two books on U.S. Cold War foreign policy and European security: *The Diplomacy of Détente: Cooperative Security Policies from Helmut Schmidt to George Shultz* (Routledge, 2018) and *Dynamic Détente: The United States and Europe, 1964–1975* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). He is currently working on a new book project, a study on Strobe Talbott and the rise of the post-Cold War order based on Talbott’s personal papers and newly declassified archival materials. Kieninger received his PhD from Mannheim University in 2011. Formerly, he was a Wilson Fellow, a postdoctoral fellow at Johns Hopkins SAIS, a fellow at the Berlin Center for Cold War Studies, a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution’s Archives, and a senior researcher at the Federal German Archives.

Sergey Radchenko is the Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Professor Radchenko's books include *Two Suns in the Heavens: the Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy* (Wilson Center Press & Stanford University Press, 2009) and *Unwanted Visionaries: the Soviet Failure in Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

Heidi J.S. Tworek is Canada Research Chair and Associate Professor of History and Public Policy at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. She is the author or co-editor of three books, including the prize-winning *News from Germany: The Competition to Control World Communications, 1900–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019). Alongside a smaller project on digitized newspapers, her current book project examines the history and policy of health communications.

Review by Colleen Anderson, National Air and Space Museum

Mary Sarotte's latest book *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*, uncovers the history of one of the most consequential changes to the transatlantic alliance in the 1990s: the decision to expand the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to include former members of the Warsaw Pact. While this choice might seem like a foregone conclusion from the vantage point of the twenty-first century, throughout the book the author shows that there were in fact many competing ideas about the future of NATO. One great strength of the book is its delineation of the junctures at which the expansion of NATO might have turned out very differently—or might not have even happened at all.

Not One Inch includes the perspectives of a wide array of political and military figures on both sides of the Atlantic. Perspectives from the US, as the main military power of the alliance, play a central role in the book, yet the book is also filled with the many other voices that contributed to the debate: voices from other NATO members, voices from European states that hoped to join NATO, and especially voices from Russia, which at times tried to work towards a compromise that could preserve NATO while also building a post-Cold War partnership between the United States and Russia. These figures include leaders such as British Prime Minister Tony Blair, US President George H. W. Bush, French President Jacques Chirac, US President Bill Clinton, Czech Republic President Václav Havel, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, British Prime Minister John Major, French President François Mitterrand, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Polish President Lech Wałęsa, and Russian President Boris Yeltsin—in addition to dozens of political and military officials. To find these voices, the author consulted 28 archives and personal collections, in addition to conducting over 100 interviews. Historical actors identified different (and sometimes competing) goals on the basis of their varying vantage points, and this rich archival material helps make clear how national contexts mattered for these various understandings of NATO enlargement.

Sarotte divides the story of NATO expansion into three eras. Each of these eras is bookended by what she sees as a major turning point in the debate about NATO membership, which irrevocably foreclosed other (and perhaps better) options.

The first of these eras is the period between 1989 and 1992, from the collapse of the Berlin Wall to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The rush for German unity, Sarotte shows, had critical ramifications on NATO. Would a reunified Germany retain West Germany's NATO membership, and, if so, would the borders of NATO move from the inner German-German border to the reunited country's eastern border? The centrality of Germany to NATO encouraged the Bush administration to push for German unity and a full German membership in NATO. But this decision also turned debates toward further NATO expansion, Sarotte argues: if NATO could expand, leaders of new democracies in central Europe reasoned that they could also join the expanding alliance.

The plans that the Bush administration had for NATO ended abruptly with the handover of political power following the election of Bill Clinton in 1992. The next era in the narrative takes place during the early years of the Clinton administration, from 1993 to 1994. Especially due to the close working relationship between Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the early 1990s seemed to hint that a more incremental NATO enlargement would take place. A slower expansion of NATO would have allowed the US to collaborate with new allies in Central and Eastern Europe while simultaneously easing tensions with Russia. But this plan soon became impossible for the Clinton administration because of changing domestic politics within both the US and Russia. By mid-decade, Sarotte argues, slow expansion was no longer an option. Indeed, while expansion

looked increasingly possible for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, the possibility for expansion to include other countries including Romania and Slovenia increasingly dimmed.¹

Part three, which covers 1995 to 1999, follows the expansion of NATO, which no longer took place along the more incremental lines suggested earlier in the decade. Allies in Central Europe were thrilled that promises for NATO expansion were finally enacted. But the expansion took a toll on the US-Russian relationship. A military alliance that in the early 1990s had ended several hundred miles away from Russia was now approaching the main borders of Russia itself. In this final closing of options, the US embarked on a track that would neither limit new members nor slow the speed of full membership.

Not One Inch focuses on the historical narrative of NATO expansion, but it does not ignore the contemporary repercussions of these historical decisions, especially for US-Russian relations. Sarotte argues that the timing of NATO expansion is at least in part responsible for the deterioration of US-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War. She finds that NATO expansion was “a justifiable response to the challenges of the 1990s and to the entreaties of new Central and Eastern European democracies” (3). The issue was not expansion itself, but rather how NATO expanded and when the addition of new members occurred. Sarotte argues that the US should have first pursued an alternative to NATO expansion. Especially, she argues that cooperation with Central Europe through the Partnership for Peace might have been the wiser option. Such a plan could have allowed the US and Russia to develop a more cooperative relationship, while simultaneously still leaving open the possibility for NATO expansion should US-Russian collaboration ultimately prove impossible. While wiser actions for historical actors are sometimes only clear in hindsight, *Not One Inch* provides ample evidence that major figures within the Bush and Clinton administrations—like US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott—also hoped early on to slow the expansion of NATO, although these plans (like Partnership for Peace) ultimately lost out to plans for a rapid expansion. For Sarotte, the ultimate rush to expand NATO is a story of tragic missed opportunities. She argues that NATO expansion hindered the development of US-Russian relations at the precise moment when both countries were most open to working together and when Russia needed external help the most. A more cautious approach might have changed the course of US-Russian relations.

Not One Inch adds a crucial addition to the wealth of scholarship on the history of NATO. First, its focus on the 1990s allows for a closer treatment of this important moment in the history of the alliance. Studies that have looked at the entire duration of the alliance, while noting continuities and changes across decades, also have not had the ability to take such a focused look at the contemporaneous political contexts of Russia, Europe, and the US that surrounded the alliance’s expansion.² Second, it has a truly transnational approach, which does not prioritize just US or Russian views on the expansion of NATO. This approach is thanks to the author’s consultation of a vast collection of primary material housed across the United States and Europe. Indeed, this collection of primary sources provides rich new anecdotes that shine light not only on NATO, but also on the many decision makers themselves. For instance, the scene in which Yeltsin snuck out of Blair House during a visit to the US, to be discovered wandering down Pennsylvania Avenue before dawn insisting that he needed a pizza, helps shed light on how the personal stories of the individuals involved are as necessary to the story of NATO as domestic and international priorities are. And finally, *Not One Inch*

¹ Zlatko Šabič and Charles Bukowski, eds., *Small States in the Post-Cold War World: Slovenia and NATO Enlargement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

² Seth A. Johnston, *How NATO Adapts: Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance since 1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017); Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport: Praeger, 2004); Timothy Andrews Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019); Stanley R. Sloan, *Defense of the West: Transatlantic Security from Truman to Trump* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

convincingly demonstrates how 1991 was not a clear historical rupture. Cold War institutions—with NATO at the forefront—continued to play a role in the new post-Cold War order.³

Not One Inch is an instructive read for historians, including but also beyond the scholars who study NATO. In general, the 1990s have been studied relatively little. Indeed, historians (especially historians of Europe) often treat the decade as a bookend to the Cold War. *Not One Inch* demonstrates how crucial this period was and how much promise individual actors thought the decade held in store. Arguably, the primary reason why research on the 1990s remains sparse is the challenge of obtaining primary material. *Not One Inch* also shows a way to address this issue of source access. The author submitted hundreds of information requests to acquire the material for the book—including transcripts of conversations between Clinton and Yeltsin. Her work means that these specific documents are now available to future researchers. More broadly, Sarotte's method for obtaining these sources might also provide a useful blueprint for future researchers.

Not One Inch sets up what will likely be a growing scholarly engagement with the topics of post-Cold War NATO history and NATO expansion, especially given interest in the topic following more recent moves toward expanding the alliance.⁴ The topic of NATO expansion will likely also open up further avenues of study. First, while NATO is surely one critical international organization that expanded into former Warsaw Pact states after the end of the Cold War, further studies might consider how the post-Cold War expansion of political, scientific, and cultural organizations shaped the US-Russian relationship in the 1990s and continues to frame relations between the two countries today. Second, additional studies might want to look at how NATO expansion affected the relationship between Russia and other states that border it beyond the cases of eastern Europe.

In conclusion, *Not One Inch* provides an engaging read for historians, especially those who are interested in transatlantic history and the history of the twentieth century. It reminds its readers of the importance of contingency in history and the need for historians to critically examine the processes that led to well-known historical events. Furthermore, the work done to secure archival material for this book will likely act as a model for future studies on the 1990s.

³ Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

⁴ Joe Burton, *NATO's Durability in a Post-Cold War World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018); Sebastian Mayer (ed.), *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics: The Changing Provision of Security* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Rebecca Moore, *NATO's New Mission: Projecting Stability in a Post-Cold War World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007).

 Review by Stephan Kieninger, Woodrow Wilson Center

Not One Inch is an important book, and a highly timely and insightful one as well. In it, Mary Sarotte chronicles the evolution of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) post-Cold War enlargement based on a broad range of newly declassified archival materials. The study is highly detailed, meticulously researched, and superbly written. It is a tour de force and will be essential as a foundation for future debates about the lessons of history—especially against the backdrop of Russia’s war in Ukraine. Historians and the general public owe Sarotte a big thanks for the declassification of vast amounts of archival materials from six countries. A decade ago, she began a long-term effort to get new evidence released. In the last couple years, in response to Sarotte’s requests, the Clinton Presidential Library and the State Department declassified thousands of documents. These collections are available online on the Clinton Library website and the State Department’s Freedom of Information Act Virtual Reading Room.¹ As Sarotte recalls, the Clinton Library collection is so rich that “Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov protested the declassification of ‘documents concerning current politicians’—meaning above all his boss” (9).

In a recent review of the book, Fred Kaplan points out that it “leaves the impression that Putin has a case for resenting how the United States and its allies took in the western parts of his country’s erstwhile empire—though not as good a case as he seems to believe.”² Kaplan has a good point here. The book examines NATO enlargement as a costly way to have shifted the Cold War dividing line further to the East. In the conclusion, Sarotte writes that “when Estonia subsequently joined, NATO’s border moved again, to less than a hundred miles from President Vladimir Putin’s hometown of St. Petersburg. In 1989, the distance was roughly 1,200 miles.” Sarotte continues that

this result fulfilled the justified hopes of many states oppressed by the Soviet Union in the past and worried about aggression from Moscow in the future. Yet American and Russian choices, in a series of cumulative interactions, had also yielded a less desirable result: a post-Cold War order that looked much like its Cold War predecessor, but with a more easterly dividing line (339).

One could disagree with this conclusion. Would Russia be a different place today if NATO had decided to slow down enlargement or to admit less new member states? Would Russia have been less annoyed if the Baltic countries had not become NATO members and would have stayed in NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program (PfP) instead? Sarotte argues that “this Partnership also provided options for post-Soviet states—again, remarkably with Moscow’s assent—and could have been a long-term solution not just for the Baltic states but perhaps even for Ukraine, all the while sustaining Russia’s cooperation” (341). One could also flip this argument in the manner of Stephen Kotkin, who makes the case that NATO enlargement has put the West and the Baltic states in a better position to deal with the kind of belligerent Russia that we witness now: “Where would we be now if Poland or the Baltic states were not in NATO? They would be in the same limbo, in the same world that Ukraine is in,”³ Kotkin argues.

Another essential theme in Sarotte’s book pertains to the role of US unipolarity and post-Cold War preeminence.⁴ Sarotte argues that the Bush and Clinton Administrations saw NATO enlargement as a way “to win bigger” (18) after the Soviet Union’s demise. But was the Bush Administration not cautious in terms

¹ See <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/collections/show/36>, <https://foia.state.gov/Search/Search.aspx>.

² Fred Kaplan, “A Bridge Too Far,” *New York Review of Books*, 7 April 2022, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2022/04/07/a-bridge-too-far-not-one-inch-m-e-sarotte/>.

³ Stephan Kotkin, “The Weakness of the Despot,” *The New Yorker*, 11 March 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/stephen-kotkin-putin-russia-ukraine-stalin>.

⁴ See Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment. U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2016).

of cracking NATO's door open?⁵ Actually, during the first half of the 1990s, there were much more pressing foreign policy issues, such as the danger of loose Soviet nuclear weapons, the Balkan wars, and humanitarian interventions in Somalia and elsewhere. The emergence of NATO's PfP program in 1994 signaled that enlargement would only emerge at the end of a long-term process. The aim was to open up NATO, but slowly, cautiously, and combined with an expanded effort to engage Russia. There was not even a master plan for NATO's enlargement until the mid-1990s. NATO enlargement was not a symbol of triumphalism. It was not a signal of America's unipolarity. Rather, it was a careful process to transform Europe over time in consultation with Russia—as Sarotte points out throughout the book. In 1993, the initiative for enlargement did not even come from the Clinton Administration. Others blazed the trail, including policymakers from the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia), such as Polish President Lech Walesa and Czech President Vaclav Havel; as well as German Defense Minister Volker Rühle, Ronald Asmus from the RAND Corporation, NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, and US Senators such as Richard Lugar (160-167).

Another key question in Sarotte's book pertains to the issue of Western promises or non-promises over NATO enlargement in the context of international diplomacy on Germany's unification in 1990. The book is based on the argument that there was indeed a promise. Sarotte writes that "Secretary of State Baker proposed a hypothetical bargain to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev after the fall of the Berlin Wall: if you let your part of Germany go, we will move NATO not one inch eastward... Gorbachev let his Germany go, but Washington rethought the bargain, not least after the Soviet Union's collapse in December 1991. Washington realized it could not just win big but win bigger. Not one inch of territory needed to be off limits to NATO" (Book Cover). Other scholars and former policymakers argue that there was no promise and no deal over NATO enlargement. Mark Kramer, James Goldgeier, Kristina Spohr, Condoleezza Rice, Philip Zelikow, Peter Baker and even Mikhail Gorbachev⁶ have come to the conclusion that there was not a deal on NATO enlargement when Baker and Gorbachev discussed the terms of German unification in February 1990. The Warsaw Pact was still in existence, and Gorbachev's main requests pertained to economic assistance and assurances that NATO troops would not be deployed in East Germany as long as Soviet troops were there. In February 1990, Baker assured Gorbachev that NATO would maintain its military presence in united Germany, but "there [would] be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction or military presence one inch to the

⁵ See Liviu Horowitz, "The George H.W. Bush Administration's Policies *vis-à-vis* Central Europe. From Cautious Encouragement to Cracking Open NATO's Door," in: Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr, eds., *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 71-92, <https://transatlanticrelations.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/03-Horovitz.pdf>.

⁶ See Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *The Washington Quarterly* 32:2 (Spring 2009), 39–61; https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/twq/v32i2/f_0016179_13953.pdf; James Goldgeier, "Promises Made, Promises Broken? What Yeltsin Was Told about NATO in 1993 and Why It Matters," *War on the Rocks*, 12 July 2016, <https://warontherocks.com/2016/07/promises-made-promises-broken-what-yeltsin-was-told-about-nato-in-1993-and-why-it-matters/>; 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, (2012) 4–54; Spohr, "Exposing the Myth of Western Betrayal of Russia over NATO's Eastern Enlargement," *LSE British Politics and Policy*, 2 March 2022, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/exposing-the-myth-of-western-betrayal-of-russia/>; Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed. A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Zelikow, "NATO Expansion Wasn't Ruled Out," *The New York Times*, 10 August 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/10/opinion/IHT-nato-expansion-wasnt-ruled-out.html>; Peter Baker, "In Ukraine Conflict, Putin Relies on a Promise That Ultimately Wasn't," *The New York Times*, 9 January 2022, <https://worldnewsera.com/news/politics/in-ukraine-conflict-putin-relies-on-a-promise-that-ultimately-wasnt/>; and Steven Pifer, "Did NATO Promise Not to Enlarge? Gorbachev Says 'No,'" *Brookings Institution*, 6 November 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/11/06/did-nato-promise-not-to-enlarge-gorbachev-says-no/>.

East.”⁷ Is it not obvious that this statement pertained to East Germany—and not to the entire area of the former Warsaw Pact in Central and Eastern Europe?

The Two-Plus-Four Treaty on the German settlement specified that the provisions on force deployment in East Germany were unique and arose from the 1990 settlement on Germany.⁸ In the mid-1990s, when Russian policymakers started to misinterpret the settlement on Germany in their campaign against NATO enlargement, the State Department pointed out that “in broader terms, we should also remind Moscow that its Two-Plus-Four involvement in internal German affairs (i.e., prohibiting certain force deployments), was unique, arising from the post-war settlement, and did not set any legal or political precedents; Russia does not have a similar right to define or dictate the security arrangements of other sovereign states.”⁹ The historiographical debate on NATO enlargement will certainly continue as more archival sources will be opened. For NATO, it is a constant challenge to repel the official Russian broken promise narrative.¹⁰ Because the book’s main focus is on America and Russia, much remains to be explored especially on the European side. How did the West European NATO allies see developments in their eastern neighborhood, and what made the states east of the Oder Neisse tick as they pressed increasingly forcefully to join the EU and NATO the more the nationalist voices in Russia gained traction? They, much more than America, were in fact the real change agents of how the geopolitical map of Europe came to be redrawn over the decade and a half after the Cold War.

The book chronicles the history of NATO enlargement and traces back the origins of the NATO-Russia conflict. In chapters 1 to 4, Sarotte investigates the international diplomacy that created post-Cold War Europe—and the book benefits in numerous ways from her previous monograph *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*.¹¹ In chapters 5 and 6, Sarotte skillfully analyses the emergence of NATO’s two-track policy, the evolution of NATO’s decision to open up the Alliance, and the emergence of a strategic relationship with Russia in parallel. Based on a wealth of newly declassified archival sources, she looks both into the tension between the two tracks, as well as into the constant misunderstandings in the US-Russia relationship. Sarotte depicts how Clinton and Yeltsin failed to clarify the details of NATO enlargement and the rationale of the NATO-Russia partnership in 1994. The discrepancy in perception led to Yeltsin’s outburst at the December 1994 Budapest summit when he lambasted NATO enlargement and referred to the emergence of a “cold peace” in Europe (204).

Chapter 7 looks into the Clinton administration’s efforts to reassure Yeltsin and to establish a new kind of special NATO-Russia partnership addressing Russia’s request for assurances—short of NATO membership and a veto or co-decision making power for Moscow. Sarotte depicts NATO’s response to the four Russian desiderates that Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev raised in a key meeting with Secretary of State Warren Christopher in January 1995. The first Russian demand was that NATO ought to overcome its traditional Cold War concept of security. Second, Russia wanted to be involved in NATO’s consultation mechanisms and its decision-making process. Third, Russia sought guarantees that there would be no expansion of NATO’s military bases or nuclear deployments further east. Fourth, Kozyrev emphasized that Russia’s nervousness over NATO enlargement could be reduced if there was a chance for the Russian military to cooperate with NATO in joint collaborative projects such as sophisticated military technology (223-227).

⁷ Memcon Baker and Mikhail Gorbachev, 9 February 1990, *National Security Archive*, Soviet Flashpoints, Box 38, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4325679-Document-05-Memorandum-of-conversation-between>.

⁸ See Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, 12 September 1990, <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/2plusfour8994e.htm>.

⁹ State-036296, “Russian Assertions about the Two-Plus-Four-Treaty,” 27 February 1996, in: FOIA, F-2008-02356.

¹⁰ See NATO Website “NATO-Russia Relations: The Facts,” last updated 27 January 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm.

¹¹ Mary Sarotte, *1989. The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Chapter 8 underlines that NATO addressed all these issues. The Alliance revised its strategic concept and no longer considered Russia as an adversary. NATO and Russia were partners. NATO's enlargement was not accompanied by a military policy as long as Russia showed similar restraint. Russia was constantly consulted in terms of NATO's military footprint in the Central and East European states. In 1996, NATO announced that it had no intention, no reason, and no plans for the deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of its newest members (257-274). In addition, NATO refrained from deploying permanent foreign combat forces in Central and East Europe. NATO's assumption was that the emerging partnership with Russia was strong enough to limit the extent of NATO's military engagement in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1997, both sides established the Permanent Joint Council as a way for consultation and cooperation. It was created by the NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security of May 1997.¹²

In a nutshell, NATO always went the extra mile to work with Russia. NATO's outreach toward Russia always preceded decisions on enlargement. As Sarotte writes, Clinton and his advisers always had the Russia dimension of NATO enlargement on their mind:

Despite repeatedly saying Moscow had no veto over enlargement, they nonetheless felt it necessary to secure some form of de facto Russian acceptance beforehand, for two reasons. First, they still found it essential to avoid endangering President Boris Yeltsin's chances or reelections that summer [in 1996]....Second, they wanted to limit enlargement's overall cost, measured partly in dollars but mostly in damage to U.S.-Russian relations. (241).

The NATO-Russia Founding Act signaled that Russia found NATO enlargement acceptable. It provided a chance for friendly relations over the long term. There was perhaps a unique opportunity to build a Europe whole and free. In chapter 9, Sarotte investigates the reasons for the emergence of a conditional and unstable peace: NATO and Russia could not find consensus on the norms, rules, and structures of the post-Cold War security system. Yeltsin rejected NATO enlargement. In 1997, he told Clinton that "our position has not changed. It remains a mistake for NATO to move eastward. But I need to take steps to alleviate the negative consequences of this for Russia. I am prepared to enter into an agreement with NATO not because I want to but because it is a forced step. There is no other solution for today."¹³ Despite Russia's continuous opposition, both sides could work together in the military realm. Sarotte points out that Clinton "hoped to increase Russian comfort with expansion through cooperation with NATO in Bosnia" (237).

One could argue that it is perhaps too early to argue that "a frost" has settled over US-Russia relations in 1995, as Sarotte does (213). There was still plenty of cooperation despite the underlying NATO-Russia conflict. Russia participated in the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia and Hercegovina. This was a historic occasion: US and Russian troops worked together under one single command for the first times since World War II. Officers of the Russian Defense Ministry worked at NATO's Supreme Allied Headquarters (SHAPE) guiding the Russian contingent in Bosnia-Hercegovina. Equally important, the Russian officers established a communication channel between NATO headquarters and the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces. Bosnia was a way to strengthen the US-Russia partnership. "The good news is that if we can work something out on these issues, it will help us not only with Bosnia now...but also with NATO expansion and the NATO-Russia dialogue later,"¹⁴ Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott pointed out.

In a nutshell, Sarotte's book is helping to bridge the gap between scholarly research and public debate and decision-making. It equips reader and policymakers with new information on the origins of the NATO-

¹² See "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation Signed in Paris, France," 27 May 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm.

¹³ Memcon Clinton and Yeltsin, 21 March 1997, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/57569>.

¹⁴ Memo, Talbott for Christopher, 15 September 1995, in: FOIA, F-2017-13804.

Russia conflict. After the Cold War, NATO and Russia established an interim security system, something between collective defense and collective security—a system in which confrontation and war between NATO and Russia could not be excluded. The establishment of such an interim security system was perhaps inevitable at a time when Europe’s security issues were not resolved and both sides were searching for a new order without a predetermined script. NATO and Russia were merely able to find a “conditional peace”¹⁵ that eroded over time and was finally destroyed when Russia launched full-scale war in Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

¹⁵ See James E. Goodby, *Europe Undivided. The New Logic of Peace in U.S.-Russian Relations* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 159-179.

 Review by Sergey Radchenko, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

Mary Sarotte, who has written pathbreaking books on Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and on Germany's Cold War endgame,¹ has opened the wormiest can of the emerging post-Cold War historiography: the rights and wrongs of NATO's eastern enlargement. The subject has been at the centre of much ill-tempered sparring between academics, current and former policy makers, and even political leaders in Russia and the West.² Russian leader Vladimir Putin himself had set the tone by arguing repeatedly since his 2007 Munich speech that the West made promises of NATO's non-enlargement and then broke them.³ This argument about "broken promises" in the context of a broader set of Russian grievances about real and imaginary threats from NATO has formed a part of justification for Putin's current brutal war against Ukraine.

Sarotte, having spent years in the ultimately successful litigation with the US government over the release of pertinent archival records, brings these astonishing records to the reader in a masterfully crafted narrative, the page-turner called *Not One Inch*. We can follow her through the pages from meeting to meeting, from summit to summit, as Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton shaped and reshaped American foreign policy while juggling competing priorities. Should relations with Moscow take precedence over these with Central and Eastern Europe? What should be done about nuclear disarmament? How could Ukraine be reassured that its fate would not be decided over its head? These were all big questions, and there was often more than one way to answer them. The path ultimately chosen was one of several alternatives in the post-Cold War world. Could other roads have been taken, and if so, to what end?

The first fork in the road was reached in 1990. The Berlin Wall had already fallen, and Germany was on the brink of reunification. The key question for policy makers in Moscow, Bonn, and Washington was the prospect of united Germany's membership in NATO. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had pushed for neutrality. Germany's Helmut Kohl was wavering. Bush was adamant that Germany would stay. Without Germany, he reasoned, NATO would simply fall apart, and the United States would have no legal justification for maintaining a military presence in Europe. As he told Kohl during their memorable conversation on 24 February 1990: "What worries me is talk that Germany must not stay in NATO. To hell with that. We prevailed and they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat."⁴

Bush was right. Gorbachev had very few cards to play. He was unable to prevent NATO from "crossing the line" into former Warsaw Pact territory (76). Sarotte provides a definitive account of how it happened, revealing the complexities behind the "promises given/promises broken" debate. She shows that Western policy makers offered assurance to Gorbachev about NATO not moving to the East, but these were promptly walked back and never codified in a binding document. By contrast, the document that *was* signed

¹ Mary Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969-1973* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2001); Mary Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

² For early treatments, see James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: the US Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999) and Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). For more recent debates, see among others Joshua Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the US Offer to Limit NATO Expansion," *International Security*, Vol. 40, no. 4 (2016): 7-44; Mary Sarotte, "How to Enlarge NATO: The Debate inside the Clinton Administration, 1993-1995," *International Security* Vol. 44, no. 1 (2019): 7-41. See also the Special Issue of *International Politics* (edited by Shiffrin and Goldgeier): "Legacies of NATO Enlargement: International Relations, Domestic Politics, and Alliance Management," *International Politics*, Vol. 57, Issue 3 (2000).

³ Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy," 10 February 2007, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/copy/24034>.

⁴ Memcon, George H.W. Bush and Helmut Kohl, 24 February 1990, George Washington University National Security Archive, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16127-document-13-memorandum-conversation-between>.

by all parties involved was the September 1990 Two Plus Four Agreement that (together with the “agreed minute”) in fact allowed NATO to cross the line (104).

Sarotte also describes how the Two Plus Four process was arrived at. She argues that US policy makers worked to ensure “that the two-plus-four did not turn into a true decision-making forum” (67). Moscow would be given a role to play but denied any input into policy. A similar process later played out during NATO enlargement (in the creation of the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council).

With the record thus clarified, Putin’s complaints are rendered largely meaningless. True, the picture does not look as pretty as here in the West we would rather have hoped it would. There is, however, great value in understanding the complicated context of decision-making, which included mixed messages from Western politicians like Secretary of State James Baker and German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, both of whom did say enough to the Soviets to feed false hopes and contribute to Moscow’s illusions. It does not add credence to Putin’s wild claims, but it provides an informed way of debunking them.

At one point, Sarotte recounts Gorbachev’s plea to have the USSR admitted to NATO (88). Needless to say, it went unheeded. I haven’t often pondered whether this rejection of Gorbachev’s, and later Boris Yeltsin’s, enthusiasm for joining the Western alliance was a missed opportunity. At the end of the Cold War, Moscow was demoralized and humiliated. The Soviet Union was falling apart. It had lost the Cold War. But this only placed the greater responsibility upon America’s shoulders, as the winners, to steer Russia to a dignified place in the Western order. Shouldn’t leaders have found ways to anchor Russia in the West, to give it a chance to rediscover itself without succumbing to bitter resentments and toxic nationalism? Wasn’t this, after all, in America’s enlightened self-interest?

At one point in mid-1990s the Russians were so desperate that they were asking for partial membership, something like what France had had since 1966. (Sarotte reminds us in the book that there were multiple forms of membership in NATO—not one size fit all.) Moscow did not get very far. In the meantime, Russia witnessed successive rounds of enlargement with NATO coming ever closer to its borders. The Central and Eastern Europeans had every reason to be overjoyed. But the Russians—the unquestionable losers in this process—were complaining bitterly and loudly. Could something have been done to avert this new division of Europe? “We blew it,” a part of me says, the idealist part.

But this is immediately contradicted by another, more realistic voice in my head. “Don’t be foolish,” the realist says. America did what was good for America. It is not in the business of making others feel good about themselves. What is it, a charity? America was keen to preserve the most successful defensive alliance in history, one that played a largely positive role in maintaining peace, freedom, and democracy in Europe. Dismantling this alliance, as Gorbachev had hoped for, was a folly. Allowing Russia into the alliance—in whatever form—was an equal folly, because Russia would break it.

Sarotte also struggles with this question. The stakes were great. There were the Central and Eastern Europeans who were knocking anxiously on NATO’s door, and there were the Russians who warned again and again that enlargement would not be taken lightly, that it would strengthen the froth-mouthed nationalists in Moscow, and undermine those who stood for closer relations with the West. The Clinton administration was divided, with Secretary of Defence William Perry being particularly outspoken in his opposition to enlargement at the expense of other American priorities, notably nuclear arms control. These conflicting priorities led to the emergence of Partnership for Peace (PfP)—a program that would allow would-be aspirants to begin their cooperation with the alliance without foreclosing any options. The inclusive program was open to Central and Eastern Europeans—for whom it could be a midway stop before joining NATO—but also to Russia and, importantly, to Ukraine, that would thus not be assigned to a grey zone of potential Russian influence.

Sarotte documents the rise of PfP—which Yeltsin described as a “stroke of genius” (178)—and its precipitous decline, a consequence of the confluence of a number of factors, not least enthusiasm in the Clinton team for proper enlargement, incessant lobbying by the Central and Eastern Europeans who saw opportunities slipping away, and the self-defeating policies of Yeltsin, who unleashed a crackdown on his political opponents in October 1993 and launched a tragic invasion of Chechnya in December 1994, leaving many in the West wondering whether Russian autocracy and imperialism might yet return.

We learn from Sarotte’s book that it was not just the National Security Adviser Anthony Lake who vigorously pushed for NATO enlargement, but also the “Russia hand,” Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, who, for all his deep knowledge of Russia (or maybe because of it), was swayed quickly to support NATO enlargement even at the cost of derailing PfP (226). Partnership for Peace stands out in Sarotte’s narrative. She argues that it was that middle road that would have helped the US put off decisions about NATO’s enlargement until the fog dispersed and things became clearer. As she puts it, “the smart move is to avoid rushing a decision—and the best way to do that is to avoid calling the question too soon” (4).

Such behaviour is of course recognizable as procrastination, a well-known evolutionary trait that developed to help our ancestors avoid potential dangers lurking in their hostile environment. Instead of usefully procrastinating for a little while to see how the pieces would fall, Clinton decided to act fast regardless of what the Russians were thinking and so, together with Bush, he “promoted a dividing line across Europe” (343), which they both claimed they did not want. “Once Pfp was abandoned,” she adds, “a new dividing line became inevitable. The only question was how close to Russia’s border that line would be drawn” (342).

Among the book’s many strengths is Sarotte’s brilliant juxtaposition of Clinton’s foreign policy and his domestic challenges. She shows, for instance, how the Republican victory in the 1994 midterms played into Clinton’s decisive move in favour of NATO enlargement. But the real highlight is where Sarotte zeroes in on former intern Monica Lewinsky’s relationship with the President, which at crucial moments overlapped with his decision-making on NATO, distracting and weakening Clinton.

There is a useful Daoist concept called *wei-wu-wei*—doing by not doing—which I have previously invoked to characterize President George H.W. Bush. This was in response to Jeffrey Engel’s book, which showed how Bush managed the end of the Cold War, carefully, skilfully letting things take their own course.⁵ After reading Sarotte’s book, I have had to amend my view of Bush. He was probably less of a Daoist than I imagined. He played his hand well behind the scenes to shape the outcome that allowed NATO to enlarge, and that ultimately left Moscow on the margins of the European security structures. Whether it was for the better is another question.

But Bush was still quite a bit more cautious than his successor, who actively sought to reshape the European security order. Clinton made decisions that moved history in a particular direction, one ostensibly favourable to America’s long-term interests. Not all agreed. Defence Secretary Bill Perry, as Sarotte reminds us, lamented the demise of arms control—a casualty of NATO enlargement (326). One might argue, too, that the failure to properly address Russia’s various complaints and, crucially, the failure to anchor Ukraine in the West, led us to where we are now, which is not a pretty place. On the other hand, we can also blame the Russians. After all, it was the Russians who, whatever their grievances, chose to pursue the self-defeating policies that led them to the brutal, criminal war in Ukraine. They could have responded differently, and yet they chose the

⁵ See my review in the H-Diplo Roundtable on of Engel’s book: H-Diplo Roundtable review of Jeffrey Engel, *When the World Seemed New: George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), ed. Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse, 2 December 2018, <https://issforum.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XX-14.pdf>. The review is also available at https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/3279417/roundtable-xx-14-jeffrey-engel-when-world-seemed-new-george-hw#_Toc531463248.

most stupid, atrocious option among those available, very much justifying in retrospect even the most alarmist predictions about Russia's aggressive revanchism.

Sarotte does not play this blame game. She gives us a solid foundation for understanding how we got here—and just in time. For, without knowing how we got where we are today, how do we ever find out where we should go from here?

 Review by Heidi J.S. Tworek, University of British Columbia

“From Vancouver to Vladivostock.” That was the phrase used by everyone from US Secretary of State James Baker to German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Russian President Boris Yeltsin in the early 1990s to describe their ideal post-Cold War security order. Within a few short years, that dream was gone. Mary Elise Sarotte’s important book traces in elegant detail how and why the potential for a shared vision dissolved. Sarotte uses debates around the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO’s) enlargement to trace “the making of a post-Cold War political order that looked much like its Cold War predecessor” (2) and as one entry point to understand the deterioration of US-Russian relations in the 1990s.

By taking NATO seriously, Sarotte reminds historians that military alliances are also a form of international organization. Compared to the burgeoning historiography on international organizations over the last fifteen years, NATO has received comparatively little attention.¹ For many in the early 1990s, the United Nations, not NATO, held the greatest promise to maintain peace. After Rwanda and Srebrenica at the very latest, that optimism swiftly dissipated. This history of NATO thus offers the opportunity to integrate security into the historiography on international organizations.

Although the book examines the maintenance and expansion of a security order, it does so mainly through individuals. Vancouver did not just symbolize one geographical end point of a security system. In April 1993, it was also the location of the first of eighteen face-to-face meetings between President Bill Clinton and Yeltsin, whose drinking became a leitmotiv of meetings. Starting in Vancouver, Clinton staffers kept a “private running tally...of how many drinks Yeltsin consumed” (127). Clinton had grown up with an alcoholic stepfather and was unfazed, even covering for Yeltsin with other world leaders.

By weaving in fascinating personal details and relationships, the book implicitly argues that political leaders mattered most for the history of NATO enlargement. Explicitly, American leaders’ decisions weigh most heavily. The three parts of the book proceed chronologically and place agency mostly in the hands of US presidents who made “irreversible decisions about NATO’s future” which “interact[ed] with Russian choices” (14). Sarotte uses the metaphor of a ratchet to argue clearly that presidents George H.W. Bush and Clinton made decisions that cumulatively constrained the possibilities for other security arrangements in Europe. During the broader debate around German unification, Bush forestalled the chance for arrangements beyond a transatlantic alliance. Clinton then slammed the door shut on the “incremental approach” (4) of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), a strategic security partnership to enable potential NATO members to work with the West without a full Article 5 guarantee or NATO membership. Finally, Clinton stymied options to limit the location or number of NATO members or the pace of admission.

The focus on political leaders contrasts with some of Sarotte’s earlier work on this period. In *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall*, Sarotte emphasized the importance of mid-level actors in why the Wall fell as it did.² While mid-level actors could affect why a particular event unfolded as it did, longer-term processes seemed ultimately driven by leaders. In both cases, though, individuals matter. Taking these works as a collection, it would be interesting to read more of Sarotte’s reflections on how individuals and structures interacted in this period to effect change at different levels and what room for maneuver was accorded to which types of individuals.

¹ Some exceptions are Susan Colbourn, *Euromissiles: The Nuclear Weapons That Nearly Destroyed NATO* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming 2022); Timothy Andrew Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019). For the historiography of international organizations, see the bibliographies on the United Nations History Project: <https://www.histecon.magd.cam.ac.uk/unhist/research/bibliographies.html>

² Mary Elise Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Fall of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

The same question might apply to countries. The United States is most important in Sarotte's story of NATO enlargement. Here, recent developments raise new perspectives on the past. As Turkey's intervention slows the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO, questions arise about, for example, the Turkish perspective on events in the 1990s. How far did other NATO members like Turkey chafe against continued American dominance? What were their approaches to NATO enlargement and how did they attempt to influence, if at all, American approaches? Lorenz Lüthi has recently suggested that historians think about the Cold War in the plural, with many Cold Wars depending upon where one starts the story.³ Perhaps there is only one NATO, but it suggests avenues for future histories of military alliances to explore.

NATO offers one useful thread to tell a coherent story of the chaotic 1990s and of the US-Russia relationship, as Sarotte argues. Another, though, might be economic. Russia became a member of the G7, transforming it into the G8 in 1998; that seems an almost opposite trend to Russia's exclusion from security arrangements. At the same time that US presidents turned the security ratchet in one direction, UK prime ministers turned the economic ratchet in the other: in 1994, Prime Minister John Major created "golden visas" by allowing immigration for individuals bringing one million pounds to the UK. Many Russians took up the opportunity to invest and to purchase property. Despite growing evidence of corrupt money in "Londongrad," only the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has enabled a shut-out of some oligarchic funds, such as the forced sale of Chelsea Football Club which Roman Abramovich had purchased in 2003. If the political order resembled the Cold War, the economic order did not. Sources for an economic history are presumably even harder to obtain than for a history of NATO, but could offer a picture of how financial integration occurred in parallel with security exclusion.

Indeed, source procurement is one of the book's signature achievements. Sarotte interviewed over 100 participants, consulted archives, and then created her "own archive based on declassifications from six countries," while also using sources that other scholars had also declassified (9). Sarotte also appealed multiple declassification decisions, which in some cases were overturned. Such approaches require time, patience, and presumably legal assistance for the thorniest requests. A swift paragraph in the introduction summarizes what must have been many weeks and months of painstaking, persistent work.

The 1990s, the decade when many sources started to be born digital, raise particular issues. By the late 1990s, the end of this book's period of study, information accessibility looked radically different: the Drudge Report website fundamentally shaped how political and public reactions to the Clinton-Lewinsky affair unfolded.⁴ By 1998, sources on the web would be crucial for writing many histories.⁵ That is true not just for public websites, but also communications within and between states. Even beyond the born digital, the vast quantity of sources from the 1990s onwards has created new problems of record selection and declassification. As Matthew Connelly noted in 2020, "at the George W. Bush Library, the last of its kind, approximately 158 million pages of records await review. With the current staff, it is estimated it will take nearly 250 years."⁶ How do historians need to change their craft to work with this "age of abundance"?⁷ And how does our work change when we have to consider incorporating the Internet Archive and its Wayback Machine into our archival research?

³ Lorenz Lüthi, *Cold Wars. Asia, the Middle East, Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁴ The Drudge Report is available at <https://www.drudgereport.com>.

⁵ Ian Milligan, "Lost in the Infinite Archive: The Promise and Pitfalls of Web Archives," *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*, 10.1: 78–94.

⁶ Matthew Connelly, "Why You May Never Learn the Truth about ICE," *New York Times* 2 February 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/04/opinion/archives-document-destruction.html>

⁷ Ian Milligan, *History in the Age of Abundance? How the Web is Transforming Historical Research* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).

Sadly, Sarotte's excellent book is timelier than ever, as NATO becomes more rather than less relevant. So too are the questions of how scholars can write these types of histories for the 1990s and thereafter.

Response by Mary Elise Sarotte, Johns Hopkins University

I am deeply grateful to this roundtable's contributors for their thoughtful commentary. I also thank the H-Diplo editors for having assembled a group of diverse reviewers, including writers at various stages in their careers—from postdocs to senior faculty—and from multiple countries and institutions. Given that the NATO enlargement story is a truly international one, involving the interplay of individual and institutions, this group of reviewers reflects those realities in both its make-up and in the resulting comments.

I would like to use the space allotted to me to highlight key aspects from their contributions, in the order in which they appear.

Charles Kupchan provides a valuable and nuanced summary of my overall arguments. His introduction also explores the historical debate over the desirability of NATO enlargement writ large. Kupchan makes clear that he was a strong and consistent opponent of such enlargement. In response, it is worth clarifying my stance on this debate in a nutshell. Briefly, I am not opposed to NATO enlargement (either historical or contemporary). The problem is not enlargement itself; rather, it is how expansion happened in the past.

As I argue in *Not One Inch*, the big play in post-Cold War Europe was to find a way to achieve three goals simultaneously: (1) to enable Central and Eastern European countries to join NATO and other Western institutions; (2) to provide a berth for Ukraine in a European security order; and (3) to facilitate continued nuclear disarmament between the world's two strategic nuclear powers, the United States and Russia. As my book shows, there were policies in place in the 1990s that had a reasonable chance of accomplishing all three. Briefly, these were policies that avoided drawing a new line between those areas of post-Cold War Europe that were covered by NATO's Article 5 and those that were not covered—in other words, avoided an all-or-nothing manner of NATO expansion. Such an approach enabled the West to enlarge the alliance without leaving Ukraine in the lurch or undermining disarmament cooperation with Russia. Thanks, however, to a decision to demote goals (2) and (3) to a lesser status than promoting all-or-nothing NATO enlargement, the only goal achieved was (1), with fateful consequences for today's world.

Colleen Anderson calls in her contribution for a greater focus on the role of international organizations in shaping the post-Cold War era. As she rightly points out, NATO is just “one critical international organization that expanded into former Warsaw Pact states after the end of the Cold War,” so studies of more such organizations are necessary. In particular, “further studies might consider how the post-Cold War expansion of political, scientific, and cultural organizations shaped the US-Russian relationship in the 1990s.” (This statement echoes Heidi Tworek's similar call, in her own contribution to this roundtable, for a greater focus on organizations in the history of this period.)

Stephen Kieninger emphasizes the opportunities for future scholars provided by the collections that I declassified through years of appeals. I am grateful to him for his recognition of the work involved in this lengthy declassification process. One of the rewards of that labor is to see scholars such as Kieninger making good use of them.

His essay requires more of a response, because it seems to have misunderstood one of the book's main arguments. Kieninger's essay mistakenly states that my book is “based on the argument that there was indeed a promise” not to enlarge NATO. Given the complexity of the issue involved, it is not surprising that there may be some confusion, so it is worth taking time here to restate the evidence presented *Not One Inch*.

The idea that the Soviet Union might receive a no-expansion promise in exchange for letting divided Germany unify arose in a speculative fashion during the diplomatic contacts that culminated in the 3 October 1990, unification of that country. *Not One Inch* shows that the US Secretary of State, James Baker, and his

West German counterpart, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, discussed this notion both with each other and with a number of senior leaders, including Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. In February 1990, however, Baker's boss and long-time friend, President George H.W. Bush, made clear that the secretary should cease such talk. Bush thought that even the hypothetical idea of a promise blocking NATO's future movement eastward was both unnecessary and unwise.

Obedying, Baker informed the West German foreign ministry that such wording should be dropped. Despite this message, Foreign Minister Genscher kept the idea alive rhetorically. He continued to suggest that once Germany unified, NATO would either cease enlargement or "dissipate" entirely. Lower-level diplomats—mostly, but not entirely, West German—echoed Genscher's thinking in their own dealings with their Soviet counterparts. Some apparently did so out of a mistaken conviction that this was still the preferred policy; some apparently did so as an expedient to negotiations; but in either case, that view no longer represented that of their country's leaders, that is, the people who got to decide. Genscher's obstinance also produced a series of clashes, both between Genscher and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl—who had also been convinced by Bush that a non-enlargement promise was undesirable, and who told Genscher, in so many words, to knock it off—and between Genscher and the Western allies.

Push came to shove in September 1990 in Moscow, when the wording of the "Final Settlement" on German unification was still up for grabs even as political leaders were arriving for the high-profile signing ceremony. Representatives of Britain, France, and the United States, working around the clock in Moscow ahead of the 12 September 1990 deadline, insisted that the Final Settlement accomplish three goals: (1) grant explicit permission for NATO to extend Article 5 into eastern Germany, that is, eastward across the former Cold War front line; (2) enable both German and non-German troops to cross that line as well, once Soviet troops withdrew; and (3) accomplish both of these goals without any explicit prohibition on future movement.

Genscher, still unwilling to give up his earlier views entirely, thought that his Western allies were asking for far too much. Given that peace between East and West had broken out, he thought that these demands unnecessarily threatened his country's unification chances. Genscher began repeatedly disappearing into short-notice talks with only his Soviet colleagues. He repeatedly left his Western allies to cool their heels, to wonder whose side Genscher was on, and to speculate on just how desperate he was for reunification, given that his former hometown was in East Germany.

It took a dramatic middle-of-the-night episode, with Genscher suddenly appearing at Baker's hotel and insisting the secretary's staff wake Baker up in the wee hours, to break the impasse. The two men agreed to add a so-called Agreed Minute to the Final Settlement. This minute stipulated what Genscher's allies wanted: that foreign (i.e. non-German) NATO troops could move across the former Cold War front line and into East Germany as long as their movement was not called a deployment. Genscher gained something in exchange: it would be up to the united German government to decide what constituted a deployment.

Once informed, all the signatories agreed to this solution. Moscow's representative signed both the treaty itself and, separately, the Agreed Minute, producing a final document with two complete sets of signatures. The Soviet Union subsequently ratified the entire package. Soviet leaders also pocketed the associated German financial support dangled during the negotiations in exchange for just those signatures and the subsequent ratification. Put simply, Moscow signed and ratified a legally binding document allowing both German and non-German NATO forces to move eastward across the former Cold War front line—without any mention of other states in Central and Eastern Europe in the treaty.

Although this seemed to be a done deal, the memory of Baker and Genscher's earlier comments about a non-enlargement pledge continued to plague Western relations with Russia for the rest of the 1990s (and beyond). The unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union on 25 December 1991, along with the rapid emergence of a host of successor states, added new uncertainty to the future of European security.

Amid this contention, the NATO member-states and Russia (as the successor to the defunct Soviet Union) agreed on a key point: that the Final Settlement of 1990 applied exclusively to Germany. The problem was that they did not agree on what that meant. NATO allies understood the Settlement as *allowing* enlargement to countries east of Germany, because the accord had (1) set the precedent of allowing Article 5 and foreign troops to move eastward across the former Cold War front line; (2) said nothing about any limits on that movement; and (3) received both signature and ratification from Moscow. Russia, in contrast, understood the treaty as *prohibiting* NATO enlargement east of Germany for two reasons: (1) because of speculative comments made about such a prohibition during negotiations in early 1990, and (2) phrases in the treaty that explicitly allowed limited alliance activity in eastern German territory, the implication being that such phrases for other countries were absent for other territories.

Many contentious talks ensued. Their goal was to reduce Russian resistance to Central and Eastern European states joining the alliance. The result was the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. With this accord, the West sought to assuage Moscow's concerns sufficiently to allow enlargement to continue without causing more damage to Western-Russian relations. But even this document became a further source of contention when Russian president Boris Yeltsin began to ascribe powers to the Act that it did not possess. Immediately after signing the accord, Yeltsin announced that the Founding Act prohibited NATO from using any former Warsaw Pact military infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe. It did not. But that new controversy, plus friction over the alliance's intervention in Kosovo in 1999—which was opposed by a large majority of Russians, both members of the elite and average citizens—further eroded Western relations with Russia. Bitterness over this continuing controversy also corroded Yeltsin's relationship with US President Bill Clinton. That relationship had begun with back-slapping bonhomie but descended into alcohol-fueled animosity by the time Yeltsin decided to resign abruptly on December 31, 1999, and make his prime minister, Vladimir Putin, acting president.

Once he took over, Putin did not immediately launch a campaign against these past events. But as the amount of violence he was willing to use increased over the course of his two decades in power, so too did the usefulness of these events to him as justifications for that violence. Complaints about NATO formed part of his 2007 speech to the Munich Security Conference, his 2014 address on Crimean annexation, and his 2021 pronouncements in advance of his full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In a December 2021, Putin even tried to “re-fight” specific battles from the history of NATO enlargement in the 1990s, only this time with Russia winning. He ordered the sending of two “draft treaties”—essentially, two ultimatums—to Washington and NATO, saying (in so many words), “sign this document as-is, or else I invade Ukraine.” In the “treaty” sent to NATO on 17 December 2021, Putin specifically insisted that Atlantic Alliance forces return to their locations of 27 May 1997. By this, he meant to their locations on the date of the signing of the Founding Act. In other words, Putin was retroactively trying to make real Yeltsin's false claim that the 1997 Act blocked NATO forces from subsuming former Warsaw Pact military structure into their alliance.

This is just one of the many historical conflicts which Putin now wants to “re-fight,” but this time with Russia getting what it wants. He seems to have spent much of the pandemic brooding over post-Cold War and Soviet history and besieging archivists for copies of documents, and now wants to right what he sees as a number of historical wrongs. The events about which Putin obsesses are not impenetrable mysteries. Instead, there are extensive pieces of evidence from them that are now publicly available—many because of my declassification efforts, along with those of other scholars—and numerous living witnesses to them. Because of that evidence, it is possible to work on these recent events in a serious, historical way, rather than simply accept Putin's versions.

Next, the roundtable includes an essay by Sergey Radchenko. A word of context for readers is needed here. Hard-working H-Diplo editors began recruiting reviewers for this roundtable even before *Not One Inch* appeared in December 2021. Unfortunately, a serious family illness and a subsequent death significantly delayed, and ultimately prevented, one of the reviewers from contributing, understandably slowing the release of this roundtable. During that delay, Radchenko became my colleague at Johns Hopkins SAIS. While I am very happy about that development, following the *Best Practices* Guide of the Association of University Presses I will refrain from commenting on a current colleague's writing and instead encourage readers to have a look at his contribution for themselves.

Lastly, Heidi Tworek makes several worthwhile points along the lines of those raised by Anderson, calling for greater attention to the role of international organizations in the post-Cold War period. She rightly emphasizes that scholars need to understand “military alliances are also a form of international organization,” and they are deserving of the scholarly attention given to other such organizations. As she correctly points out, “compared to the burgeoning historiography on international organizations over the last fifteen years, NATO has received comparatively little attention.” For example, “for many in the early 1990s, the United Nations, not NATO, held the greatest promise to maintain peace. After Rwanda and Srebrenica at the very latest, that optimism swiftly dissipated.” As a result, an engagement with the history of NATO “offers the opportunity to integrate security into the historiography on international organizations.”

Tworek further makes an insightful point about the challenge of narrativizing the 1990s. As I describe in the book, the nineties produced an astonishing amount of change. Those years witnessed an imperial collapse, yielding a host of new Eurasian states; inspired visionary leaders; and redefined the realm of the possible for democratization, disarmament, market economies, and liberal international order. But the decade also witnessed new expressions of authoritarianism, de-democratization, and ethnic cleansing. Without a story to follow, the odds of getting from the beginning to the end of the list of actors, concepts, and locales approaches zero. Put differently, it is necessary to narrativize the nineties. My book uses the fight over NATO expansion as its narrative through-line, but as Tworek rightly states, many other through-lines exist.

She points out that another narrative thread might be an economic one. That would yield a different kind of story, because the outcomes of security policies and economic policies varied widely. In her words, as NATO enlarged without Russia, “Prime Minister John Major created ‘golden visas’ by allowing immigration for individuals bringing one million pounds to the UK. Many Russians took up the opportunity to invest and to purchase property.” Yet, “despite growing evidence of corrupt money in ‘Londongrad,’” it was not until the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 that Britain began to crack down seriously on oligarchic funds. I second her view that, while “sources for an economic history...could offer a picture of how financial integration occurred in parallel with security exclusion.”

In conclusion, the richness of the commentary gathered in this roundtable by the H-Diplo editors shows how scholars can contribute to understanding a contentious issue at the heart of international tensions today. Given the significance of political, military, and diplomatic history to the current conflict in Ukraine, the staff of H-Diplo deserve praise for their ongoing work to collect and disseminate serious, historical commentary on matters of both scholarly and contemporary significance.