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Reviewed by **Kenneth Weisbrode**, Bilkent University

The London School of Economics' Piers Ludlow is well known as an original reinterpreter of conventional chronologies and episodes in contemporary European and transatlantic history — from the Gaullist challenge to the European project to, most recently in a book I co-edited with Kiran Klaus Patel, the reputation of the early 1980s as a bleak prelude to the end of the Cold War.¹ We were so persuaded by his thesis, as summarized by the wording of his chapter — "The Unnoticed Apogee of Atlanticism" — that we chose it for the title of our book. Alas, 'Apogee in the West,' was rejected by our publisher as perhaps just a bit too Spenglerian for the academic market.

At the end of that chapter title Ludlow included a question mark. He has done the same here in a portrait of another unnoticed (or underappreciated) period, from 1974 to 1977. The punctuation is apt, for the article raises two interrelated questions about the moment between the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter: Why have these years been overlooked? Why do they matter? He answers them with documentation from the Nixon and Ford presidential libraries, and several European and American secondary sources. Further research in European archives may support (and complicate) the picture, but Ludlow makes a convincing case that the Ford years laid the foundation for a way of transatlantic cooperation — a component of today's global governance — that outlasted the decade and even the century.

¹ "The Unnoticed Apogee of Atlanticism? U.S.-Western European Relations during the Early Reagan Era," in *European Integration and the Atlantic Community in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 17-38.

The larger question for any gap-filling reinterpretation, of course, is less whether a gap ought to be filled than whether it ought to be filled precisely in this way, that is, with favorable attention and a different emphasis. And then whether the difference rises to the level of challenging the standard periodization — in this case, of transatlantic relations during the latter part of the twentieth century and, by implication, of the Cold War.

The title of this article is taken from the infamous ‘Year of Europe’ that Richard Nixon and his assistant, Henry Kissinger, proclaimed, without any evident irony, in 1973. The consensus today is that this year marked the Cold War nadir of transatlantic relations for several reasons that Ludlow outlines in the article, starting with the dismantling of the Bretton Woods system from 1971, to the mutual hostility between leading Americans and Europeans, to the drama of the October War and the subsequent energy crisis, which coincided with some of the darkest moments of the Watergate ordeal in the United States. Nixon may have made his first trip as President to Europe and gone on to concoct the Year of Europe, the new Atlantic Charter, and all the rest in a spirit that was reciprocated by few people on the other side of the Atlantic apart from the Soviets, who were willing to sign the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, a very unpopular document west of the Iron Curtain. Even so, it is difficult to find anyone who had predicted that, by the end of Nixon’s presidency, the United States and most of its European allies would find themselves on opposing sides of a Middle Eastern conflict that had global ramifications, not least because the United States raised the worldwide alert level of its armed forces without warning anybody in Europe ahead.

Diplomatic and other crises, if such ruptures are allowed to dissipate, tend to be followed by efforts of repair or “renewal,” as Kissinger called them in the third volume of his memoirs.² Cycles of diplomatic boom and bust typify transatlantic relations as much as they do European integration. This part of one such cycle, according to Ludlow, mattered for a couple of reasons. The first is that it recast the basis of transatlantic relations from the military and political field to the economic one. The second is that it devised an alternative, intergovernmental coordinating process — the G-summit — to manage it.

Ludlow’s retelling focuses heavily on the foreign policy role of Henry Kissinger in the American government. Like many histories of the 1970s it is Kissinger-centric, probably by necessity due to the vast paper and magnetic trail he left behind. Kissinger’s position supplies the answer to the first of Ludlow’s two questions: these years have been overlooked because Kissinger remained in control of U.S. foreign policy and was unlikely to cede much of it to President Gerald Ford, or to divert it in some other direction. Yet Ludlow goes on to state that in the Ford years Kissinger had become “more of a team player than he had been under Nixon” (159). This may be true, but the shift had occurred earlier — in September 1973 — when Kissinger came to occupy the positions of Assistant for National Security Affairs and Secretary of State simultaneously. It continued after

² Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999).

November 1975 when his aide, General Brent Scowcroft, was named to the former position and acted with little of the deviousness that Kissinger had made his trademark there.

Kissinger thus appeared to be more of a team player because by then he essentially was the team — within the American government, at least. Only this is not entirely accurate, either. There was also the Department of Defense, which contained rivals, both civilian and military, to Kissinger, and worked to outflank him from the earliest days of the Nixon administration. This also continued under Ford at the hands of two Secretaries of Defense — James Schlesinger and Donald Rumsfeld — and later when the young Dick Cheney became Rumsfeld's deputy and then his successor as White House Chief of Staff after Rumsfeld moved to the Pentagon, also in November 1975. These and other figures continued to limit Kissinger's power by opposing, reversing, or circumventing his actions. Knowing this fact is of special importance for a history like the Franco-American one, for example, because for all that Kissinger got on dismally with the Foreign Minister, Michel Jobert, quieter players, such as the Pentagon physicist Johnny Foster who oversaw the secret bilateral program of nuclear cooperation, or the French and Americans at NATO — including the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe — kept the lines of communication open and, some evidence has suggested, went even further than that. Another important figure was George Shultz, who, as Secretary of the Treasury, had convened the first meetings of the Library Group (in the White House library, hence the name) and had a professional relationship with Helmut Schmidt that was one of the closest and most productive either man had. Although Shultz left government service in 1974, he continued to play an unofficial role, and deserves as much credit for inventing the G-process as anyone else, including Schmidt and his French colleague, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

The relevance of personalities and bureaucracies to Ludlow's point about teamwork is that Kissinger's role in foreign policy was less autonomous than advertised under both Nixon and Ford, which may be one reason why, paradoxically, he can now share credit for having aided a constructive turn in 'West-West' relations and even for economic diplomacy, a field in which he usually claimed to possess neither interest nor ability.

There is, however, an additional paradox, or rather, irony, to consider: namely, that Western Europe was the part of the world where Kissinger's direct role was the most modest, even during the Nixon years. His voluminous writings and transcripts tell one story; but the consensus among contemporaries, notably in the State Department, was that, with the exception of his near monopoly of the U.S.-Soviet relationship, Kissinger wielded most of his influence and power east of Suez. About the only European negotiation he took an active and direct interest in was the one leading to the Berlin Quadripartite Agreement, and mainly because of its linkage to SALT and détente. He cared little for intra-European questions, and disparaged the negotiations in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe as unworthy of his attention, or just plain unworthy. With other challenges, such as countering the rise of Eurocommunism,

he was usually dismissive or contemptuous of the efforts of others — colleagues, subordinates, and European counterparts.

By the end of the Ford administration, the Eurocommunist menace, such that it was, had begun to wane, namely in Portugal, where it brought about a political crisis that was met with Western backing for the Socialist politician Mario Soares, a man Kissinger had likened to Alexander Kerensky. And the CSCE negotiations had culminated in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, a major achievement that even Kissinger has at long last come to recognize. The counter-opposition on both sides of the Atlantic was formidable enough to thwart whatever moves he may have taken against it. One effect of this exchange, Ludlow argues, was a consolidation of Western positions, not only between American and several European governments but also within Europe. Someday a new school of Cold War revisionists may show that Kissinger and the policy of *détente* (at least as he defined it, which was closer to ‘*entente*’) really did have the world-historic effect that he has claimed for it, although less for its strategic or operational brilliance than for what it led to indirectly in Europe or otherwise failed to obstruct.

This is the setting from which to view the moves toward greater West-West cooperation that Ludlow describes. He writes against the over-emphasis of these factors but his analysis is consistent with the larger structural narrative, which saw a political convergence take place both within Western Europe and between East and West during these years. It broke down again but also resumed again by the mid-1980s, and culminated later in Berlin.

The seeds for a Europe, whole and free, Ludlow notes, may have been planted earlier and the flower may have bloomed later; but the Ford administration provided the necessary fertilizer. If the United States by the end of the 1970s was, as the historian Daniel Sargent labels it in his forthcoming book, “a superpower transformed,” the weeding and replanting also happened at this moment, at least with regard to Western Europe. How much the new pattern of West-West diplomacy was the cause and not the symptom or the effect of a diplomatic transition is hard to determine, particularly when measured by qualities like trust. There was much more to “regime change” (as the phrase has been applied in this setting by John Gillingham) than a reformulation or a reformatting of intergovernmental consultation.³ A particular selection of individuals is bound to prompt challenges, moreover: for all that Ford and Kissinger got on well with Schmidt or with Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who can really say with certainty that other relationships — Kissinger’s earlier and more complicated one with the negotiator Egon Bahr, for example — were not of more lasting consequence? The list could go on. Ultimately, however, Ludlow makes a circumstantial case for the alignment of European

³ John Gillingham, *European Integration, 1950-2003: Superstate or New Market Economy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2003), 97ff.

and transatlantic trends that facilitated the brief but fortuitous confluence, to use Kissinger's term, of personalities and interests.

My own view is that there were three principal understudied moments of diplomatic recovery and progress in the transatlantic history of the twentieth century: the second half of the 1920s, the end of the 1950s, and the middle of the 1970s. Piers Ludlow has given us an overdue reassessment of the final one that should inspire more interest in this period, as I suspect it will.

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