

Seven Questions on...

NATO History

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Editor's note: *"Seven Questions On..." is a new regular feature in Passport that will ask scholars in a particular field to respond to seven questions about their field's historiography, key publications, influences, etc. It is designed to introduce the broader SHAFR community to a variety of perspectives for a given field, as well as serving as a primer for graduate students and non-specialists. AJ*

1. What drew you to this field and inspired you to focus on your specific area of the history of NATO?

Susan Colbourn: I don't have a good linear origin story about how I became a historian of NATO. The best I've got is a long-standing interest in the Cold War thanks to some excellent professors at Toronto and LSE, plus a conversation with Jeremi Suri that happened at exactly the right time in the grad school application cycle. But I stuck with it because I found the nitty gritty of alliance politics fascinating and saw NATO as central to so much of how the world was ordered post-1945, but still weirdly misunderstood. Being Canadian can't have hurt; we seem to be a fixture of NATO studies, even if the ever-popular shorthand of the United States and Europe is always leaving us out!

Jeffrey H. Michaels: My interest in NATO history developed from an internship on the Secretary General's staff in 2001, and immediately thereafter working as a researcher at the NATO School (SHAPE) in Oberammergau. At the time I was completely out of my depth. During my undergraduate studies I had the unusual opportunity whilst studying abroad in the UK to do a tutorial on Russian foreign policy at the Conflict Studies Research Centre located at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. It was through that experience that I ended up being offered the NATO internship where I focused on NATO-Russia relations. However, upon arriving at the old headquarters in Brussels, finding my way about, interacting with other officials, taking notes at various committee meetings, etc., I became increasingly intrigued by the question of how consensus is reached for NATO policy to be made. Or, to put it slightly differently, how does the requirement for consensus impact on the content of the policy that emerges, and does this requirement mean that certain policies cannot emerge at all. More than twenty years later I am still intrigued by these questions so clearly I have not advanced very far. Working at NATO HQ, one has the impression you are at the center of an enormous policy machine: the hustle and bustle of thousands of diplomats, civil servants and military personnel roaming the corridors, different national delegations engaged in horse trading, the Secretary General and International Staff sometimes acting as facilitators, at other times acting with an agenda of their own, a near constant series of high-level deliberations on international crises but more often the case on rudimentary matters, seemingly endless committees on everything from pipelines to nuclear planning, and so forth. Observing all this diplomatic activity forced me to rethink assumptions I previously held about multinational policymaking, and completely undermined any stereotypes I had about US dominance within NATO. When the

9/11 attacks occurred, I was based in Oberammergau, and from that perch I was able to discuss with visiting officials, senior officers and academics, NATO's role in the emerging "war on terrorism." Later on I worked as an analyst for the US European Command where I would regularly brief the four-star general who was dual-hatted as SACEUR. Thus it was interesting to see the same commander in two very different roles being briefed by two sets of intelligence briefers. In that post, I was able to observe the early development of the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre and became interested in intelligence production, analysis and sharing within the Alliance. Throughout this period, I became less interested in Russia and more interested in US and NATO policymaking, trying to make sense of the system I was serving.

It was only after moving from the civil service to academia, and with the "surge" in Afghanistan and then the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, that I began writing about the Alliance, albeit very much in the contemporary sense. Although I had several Cold War projects on the drawing board, they always seemed to remain there. It was not until the mid-to-late 2010s that I returned to them. Because of work I was doing on deterrence, nuclear weapons and Cold War history, I became quite interested in the Alliance's nuclear history as well as trying to ascertain how NATO might have responded to different types of armed attack from the Soviet Union/Warsaw Pact. This then led me to research NATO nuclear use decision-making, strategic concepts, military plans, military exercises, and the assumptions and scenarios upon which these were largely based. In part due to the widespread belief that destroying the Alliance might have been a reason for the Soviet Union, or even Russia in recent years, to undertake some sort of attack on NATO, I developed an interest in the dynamics of how NATO might fall apart. This led me down the rabbit hole of returning all the way back to the prehistory of NATO, examining the competing ideas about the Alliance's duration and why Article 13 of the North Atlantic Treaty emerged in the way it did. Finally, in order not to be left completely out of touch given the Alliance's growing interest in the rise of China, I've also worked a bit on the evolution of the Alliance's interest in, relations with, and ideas about, China.

Timothy Andrews Sayle: I wish I had a noble answer here, but I don't even have a single answer. I have three partial answers and I'm not sure they add up to a whole. I remember being an MA student and discussing the Ph.D. application with my MA supervisor. I had a short email from him asking "what do you want to study?" I was in the library working on something else and felt compelled to make up an answer on the spot. I replied that I wanted to understand how allied wartime planning and cooperation had carried on from the Second World War into the Cold War. When it came time to develop that into a Ph.D. application, it morphed into a plan for a bureaucratic history of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. My on-the-spot answer in the library is actually much closer to what I ended up writing. I am grateful, and so is everyone else who knows me, that I did not write a bureaucratic history of NATO. (See my answer to #4.)

Second: NATO lies at the heart of Canada's Cold War policies, and it also has a special place in Canadian nostalgia and heritage because Canadian diplomats played an important role in the creation of the alliance. Another Canadian, John Malloy, had written a book on NATO's early years and I thought maybe I'd pick up, chronologically, where he'd left off. In that sense, my choice was not particularly creative. It was amazing to me, however, to come to the United States and realize that Americans did not (yet) realize that NATO was at the core of postwar international affairs. And then, finally, in the CENFAD office at Temple, I found a sourcebook and essay by Kori Schake on the Berlin Crisis. I thumbed through it and thought I'd like to know more about the NATO side. My dissertation sort of grew up around some early work I did on NATO's Berlin Crisis in the early 1960s.

Joshua R. Shiffrin: I am not a historian (though I did recently stay at a Holiday Inn Express). Discussing how I ended up researching NATO's history is thus a bit of a story. The short version has to do with the quirks of political science. At its best, political science encourages scholars to speak to pressing policy debates via rigorous social science research; at its worst, reality is reduced to a series of regression tables and datasets. Thankfully, my doctoral program was in the former camp and simultaneously pushed students to "know the medium," become substantive experts in their topics of interest, and to connect their findings to contemporary concerns. In my case, this meant exploring the history of U.S.-Soviet relations at the start and end of the Cold War as part of a project examining how rising great powers behave in world politics.

Seeking the best evidence, the research led to a host of archives. The timing was particularly fortuitous for the end of the Cold War "case," where I landed at the Reagan and H.W. Bush Presidential Libraries just as documents from the period were being newly declassified (with FOIA rules promising still further evidence). When digging through the files, one could not help but be struck by the centrality of NATO to U.S. foreign policy thinking both *vis-à-vis* the USSR and in general. Of course, many of the materials were secondary to the project at hand. Still, the ubiquity of NATO to U.S. planning and the fact that virtually no scholars had seen these records before made me pay attention—even if secondary, they were just interesting. Particularly for the Reagan and Bush years, I copied the materials, filed and skimmed them, and let the substance stew in the back of my mind.

Fast forward a few years. By the mid-2010s, debates over (1) whether the U.S. had ever promised then-Soviet leaders not to expand NATO into Central and Eastern Europe, and (2) the process by which NATO began to move east were at the forefront of policy discussions—and I realized the documents I had could address these issues! Indeed, thanks to earlier findings, I realized that much of the then-consensus was deeply wrong: not only had U.S. leaders assured Soviet leaders that NATO would not go east, but the U.S. began to contemplate enlargement even as the Cold War was wrapping up. Fine-tuning these findings generated a host of published works, and further spurred follow-on questions about NATO's post-Cold War expansion into Eastern Europe—including how one assesses the merits of the move, the soundness of the decision-making behind it, and so on. A whole research agenda on NATO's post-Cold War history and its results emerged naturally. In short, I didn't set out to focus on NATO, but a combination of fortuitous timing and interest in policy debates led a political scientist to traffic in history.

2. Which scholars do you see as having laid the groundwork for the study of the history of NATO?

SC: It would be virtually impossible to talk about the historical study of NATO without mentioning Lawrence S. Kaplan. Over the years, Kaplan published a series of major works on the Alliance's origins, the U.S. role within NATO, etc. It's hard to imagine the serious historical study of NATO without Kaplan's efforts.

JHM: This is a very difficult question to answer in the sense that there are multiple ways of studying the Alliance, and a great deal of non-English language literature on the topic that I'm only vaguely aware of. For instance, there are various archival-based studies on Alliance history that have been written in German, French, Dutch, Norwegian, etc., that appear in the footnotes of English-language studies but trying to get a proper grasp of this vast literature would require an international scholarly effort. Indeed, a major shortcoming of the field, assuming one can define "NATO Studies" as some sort of semi-coherent entity, is the lack of any recent attempt at bibliographic control. There are a handful of bibliographic essays scattered about, as well as some Cold War era bibliographies, plus the NATO Library will occasionally produce a thematic bibliography that contains relevant material on a particular issue, but in general, chaos prevails. This shouldn't come as much of a surprise as the study of NATO includes works on Alliance history, both archival and non-archival based, studies that examine the Alliance from various IR and political science perspectives, especially on its present and future, studies of NATO as an international organization, military histories dealing with NATO defense plans during the Cold War and military operations after the Cold War, studies examining NATO policies and strategies, internal political friction, how the Alliance functions, how it is led, its role in various international crises, its relationships with nonmember states, member states' policies towards the Alliance, etc. As such, scholars contributing to the study of NATO hail from both the social sciences and humanities, with an emphasis on the former. Nor should the importance of practitioners be ignored.

In my view, the best work on the drafting of the North Atlantic Treaty was written by a Canadian diplomat, Escott Reid, who was a direct participant. Various think tanks have also produced important work on the Alliance. For example, one of the earliest analyses of NATO was a 1952 report prepared by a Chatham House study group. Important analyses by university-based political scientists and historians would only emerge later. For instance, Robert S. Jordan and David P. Calleo published several important works in the 1970s, and Lawrence S. Kaplan's major archival-based works only began to be published in the 1980s. Another crucial point to mention is that some of the best books on NATO are edited collections, such as Klaus Knorr's 1959 edited book on *NATO and American Security*, or Gustav Schmidt's 2001 edited three-volume *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years*. In contrast, grand narratives are a rarity, albeit with some exceptions, such as Timothy A. Saylor's 2019 book, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order*. Most authors have focused on specific themes, such as Beatrice Heuser's *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949-2000*. Thus, one can identify certain edited books that have been influential, but somewhat trickier to identify single-authored books that have laid the groundwork for the field in the same sort of way one can identify certain influential scholars in fields such as Cold War history or the history of US foreign policy. Even so, if one were to single out a particularly influential academic on NATO, it would be the recently deceased Lawrence S. Kaplan (a student of the influential American foreign policy scholar Samuel Flagg Bemis), as he is probably the academic most often referred to as the "doyen" of "NATO Studies." Beginning in the early 1950s Kaplan started writing about NATO, tracking its early history from whatever sources were then available. Later on, his work increasingly benefited from declassified documentation and probably his best books were only published following his retirement. Notably, Kaplan founded the Center for NATO Studies at Kent State University (later the Lemnitzer Center) in 1979; the first, indeed probably the only, academic center, at least that I am aware of, dedicated to the subject. Notably, the Center's output on NATO was somewhat limited and the Center eventually expanded to include study of the European Union as well. More generally, NATO Studies never emerged elsewhere, presumably due to a lack of student demand and limited institutional enthusiasm. At best, the field consists of academics from a range

of disciplines working independently of one another and without any dedicated research centers, journals, annual conferences, etc. Moreover, compared with the number of MA modules, Ph.D. students, postgraduate researchers, and research clusters and centers focused on the United Nations or European Union, those focused on NATO are few and far between.

TAS: The late Lawrence S. Kaplan was referred to as “Mr. NATO” and for good reason. I think Marc Trachtenberg’s work on the postwar settlement has been absolutely essential for all the scholarship that has come next. There is a coterie of scholars who first got into the British archives, especially on the nuclear side. Now, I think it is pretty clear that Mary Sarotte has laid down the marker or the groundwork or whatever you would like to call it for basically all studies of NATO at the end of the Cold War and beyond.

I had in my Ph.D. proposal a statement like: “library shelves groan under the combined weight of books NATO.” (Now I groan when I think of that line.) This is one thing I find so strange about NATO history: There is a lot—and I mean A LOT—of political science scholarship on NATO. There is very little historical scholarship directly on NATO. And yet so many SHAFR members have touched on a part of NATO in some part of their work. NATO is such an important part of post-Second World War international affairs that almost everyone has or has had to deal with some aspect of its history, but it is often tangential. The result is strange: We do not have many historians who would call themselves “NATO historians” and yet little tidbits of NATO history are everywhere floating in a loose, uncoordinated constellation of SHAFR historiography.

JRS: With a topic as sprawling as a “NATO,” it’s almost impossible to list scholars having laid a groundwork: it very much depends on whether we look at NATO as a subject or actor, on the time frame, on the issue area, and so on. Likewise, my views are colored by coming to NATO scholarship by way of political science. That said, Marc Trachtenberg has probably done more than anyone else to lay a foundation for serious scholarship on NATO as both actor and subject. Among earlier scholarship, and especially for NATO’s early years, important names include Lawrence Kaplan, John Baylis, Melvyn Leffler, John Gaddis, and Timothy Ireland. On the military side, Robert Wampler, Beatrice Heuser, and John Duffield stand out. Meanwhile, James Goldgeier, Svetlana Savranskaya, Sean Kay, and Mary Sarotte have done much to advance the study of NATO in the post-Cold War era. And although not scholarship per se, memoirs by key policymakers involved in the creation or operation of the alliance—on the U.S. side, Ted Achilles, George Kennan, and Condoleezza Rice come to mind—are indispensable for thinking through the alliance’s evolution.

It’s also important to underscore that, with new evidence to light and diverse historical approaches gaining traction, a bevy of rising scholars are bringing new perspectives to debates over NATO. Timothy Sayle, Susan Colbourn, Heidi Hardt, Seth Johnston, Bryan Frizzelle, Stefanie von Hlatky, Sara Moller, Paul van Hooft, and Linde Desmaele are all standout names in this regard (not all are historians, and I’m sure I’ve forgotten others who should be mentioned). Here, I’ve been especially struck by the push to approach NATO from a transnational perspective, to consider popular reactions to NATO during and after the Cold War, and to consider NATO’s relationship with other international institutions. Given resurgent interest in the alliance, their work promises to break new ground.

3. Discuss how the field has evolved to include different approaches to analyzing the history of NATO.

SC: Even talk of a field might be presumptuous. Work on NATO spans disciplines, and much of what has been written comes from practitioners and political scientists, not historians. Within

the field of history, NATO issues often end up covered as part of other subjects of study, be it the foreign policy of a particular presidential administration or an in-depth dive on a crisis that had major implications for NATO like Berlin.

That being said, the sheer size and scale of NATO mean that historians have gone in plenty of directions. There’s been a lot of work in recent years delving into the various committees and councils under NATO’s auspices, be it the military and political work of bodies like the Nuclear Planning Group and the Information Service or NATO’s efforts to carve out a role in scientific and climate issues such as the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society.

JHM: As with most other related subjects, the history of NATO has evolved over several phases. I would highlight three as being particularly noteworthy. The first phase, running pretty much through the first several decades after NATO was founded, was characterized by works limited to non-archival sources, such as news accounts, official communiqués, memoirs, and so forth. The second phase was inaugurated as the archives of NATO member states slowly opened up beginning in the late 1970s, with archival-based monograph-length studies starting to appear in the early 1980s. The third phase kicked off in the late 1990s when researchers were finally able to access the NATO Archives. This last phase has led to some useful studies based on documentation from various NATO committees. For example, scholars utilizing these documents, such as Linda Risso and Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, have produced important studies on NATO intelligence assessments, the NATO Information Service, NATO’s Science Committee, the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, and Atlantic Policy Advisory Group. Importantly, whilst some member state archives continue to release relevant documentation and are slowly crossing the threshold into the post-Cold War period, the NATO Archives have not progressed beyond the mid-1960s. Another key limitation is that documentation from SHAPE, even from this early period, is mostly unavailable. Nevertheless, a good deal of the NATO Archival documentation, which incidentally is also posted online, has yet to be sufficiently mined. Regardless, one question arising from scholars’ relative access to different types of sources is the degree to which utilizing archival material has advanced NATO scholarship and offered any major revisions to what was already known. I think it is fair to say that although access to the archives has fleshed out our understanding of the Alliance, it has not radically altered it. To take one example, Paul Buteux’s work in the mid-1980s on NATO nuclear consultation from 1965 through 1980, which relied almost entirely on media reports, other open sources, and some interviews, provided a fairly reliable overview of the major Alliance nuclear debates, and has not been fundamentally challenged, despite numerous subsequent works benefitting from various archival collections. Naturally, histories addressing the evolution of NATO strategy that are based on the original NATO strategy documents can offer a degree of nuance that is otherwise lacking in studies not based on these documents. Nevertheless, even those histories that appeared prior to the full release of NATO’s classified Cold War strategy documents were still able to capture the essential features of the strategy.

TAS: I am not sure about this. I think the biggest change of importance for NATO studies has been the acceptance in the SHAFR world of international history (as opposed to the history of American foreign policy). I don’t mean this as a knock on anyone or anything; there’s no bogeyman here. I just think there is more room now for scholars to study NATO rather than, say, “the United States and NATO” or “the United Kingdom of NATO.” This is not totally new, of course. Marc Trachtenberg’s work on NATO in *A Constructed Peace* (Princeton University Press, 1999) is a great example of what I’m talking about. Trachtenberg modelled what was becoming possible for the 21st century: truly multi-archival research that allows scholars to see the subject from many angles. The increasing ease of international travel

(pandemic aside) and especially the digital camera have of course made this much easier than it was in the past.

JRS: We can think of NATO scholarship as evolving in three waves. Broadly, these waves tracked with the emergence of different approaches toward engaging history itself. First generation scholarship was, for obvious reasons, wrapped up in discussions of U.S.-Soviet relations. Particularly in early studies, the field tended to treat NATO largely as an arm of American foreign policy in general and policy toward Europe/the USSR/the Cold War in particular; partly as a result, high-level pronouncements of U.S. policy and/or NATO's direction were frequently taken at face value. For better or worse, such approaches continue to color many treatments of the history. Needless to say, it also tended (and tends) to produce somewhat hortatory work arguing the alliance is a force for "good" in the world, central to "liberal order," critical to the spread of liberal democracy, and other such ostensible hallmarks of the postwar world.

Starting in the 1960s-1970s and continuing after the Cold War, however, the growing availability of archival and other primary source evidence, the development of more sophisticated methods to assess, e.g., NATO diplomatic policy, and the growing attention to smaller actors' agency in world affairs caused the field to shift. A second wave emerged that increasingly foregrounded the role of contingency and the importance of domestic politics and intra-institutional considerations for the alliance's history. Not coincidentally, this work pushed the field to more critically examine NATO's behavior, its relationship with the Soviet Union (and later Russia), and the often-fraught relationships among the alliance's core members (including the United States and the European allies, but also among the European states themselves).

Unfortunately (in my view), the demise of the Soviet Union and decline of diplomatic history in the academy largely limited the serious study of NATO after the Cold War. Insofar as this period also saw history (and political science) develop still more approaches to empirical inquiry, scholarship on NATO tended to stagnate. Recently, however, a third wave of NATO work has begun emerging that—as noted—promises to bring new insights to bear on the material. Without rejecting traditional approaches emphasizing high politics, domestic issues, and institutional debates, the new wave has begun incorporating, *inter alia*, transnational, business-vice-economic, and gendered approaches to the subject. It has also begun investigating the range of NATO activities ranging from promoting women, peace, and security, to counterinsurgency/terrorism operations and institutional competition with the European Union—that, combined, have been part of NATO's post-Cold War role. Where this work goes is anyone's guess, but the field is becoming increasingly dynamic after years of stasis. One hopes for still more research to shed further light on NATO's history.

4. What are some of the challenges faced by scholars working in the field?

SC: Probably the biggest problem, if I'm being honest, is NATO itself. It's an unwieldy disaster as a researcher and a writer!

Let me give just one example. Imagine we suspend the realities of thirty-year document release rules and the often-glacial pace of declassification for a moment and assume you are about to start working on a history of one of today's major NATO issues: the joint Swedish-Finnish bid to join the Atlantic Alliance. You would be interested in Swedish documents and Finnish ones, of course. You'd likely want records from NATO of the relevant Council discussions at the Headquarters in Brussels. You would want the perspectives and considerations of major allies likely to influence the decision, so the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany. You probably also want to touch on potential spoiler

states. That means, at the very least, documents and interviews from Hungary and Turkey. Let's assume you stop there (and don't, for instance, want to touch the hornet's nest of figuring out Russian attitudes toward Finland and Sweden joining): that's already seven languages and even more archives. And that list includes two members-in-waiting and just six of NATO's thirty members. It's not hard to see the topic can quickly become a sprawling and complicated research task.

No matter which element of NATO's history you take on, the same kinds of problems exist. NATO operated on principles of consensus, though all of the member countries did not have the same degree of influence. Historians gravitate toward the biggest players, but the history of NATO is not the history of US foreign policy in Europe or of US relations with Western Europe. (For those readers familiar with the Bernie Sanders meme, this is where you should imagine my own NATO Bernie: "I am once again asking you to stop talking about NATO and its history as nothing more than an extension of US foreign policy.") The organization's history involves members of all sizes, each with their own influence and input. To get a fuller picture, you need the perspectives and attitudes of smaller states, too. Not everything started in Washington.

As with other topics, historians interested in NATO face problems of declassification and access to relevant documents, particularly on nuclear and defense questions. There are also the struggles of balancing NATO's institutional records with those of NATO's member governments and their respective domestic politics. The NATO Archives have worked hard to make material available, but there's still reams of private office files from successive Secretaries General of the alliance that would be a boon to have, to give one example.

JHM: Several challenges come immediately to mind. The most important, which I alluded to earlier, has to do with access to relevant documents. Whilst the 30-year declassification rule equivalent in many national archives is grudgingly accepted, provided of course that documents are in fact made available, which all too often is not the case, that the NATO Archives has not released more documents through the end of the Cold War, with very few exceptions, is a major problem. Worse still, the document collections that have been released do not include many important records dealing with the NATO Secretary General, nor those of SACEUR and SACLANT, nor have many details of war plans and reports on high-level exercises been released either. An equally important challenge is the language problem. Simply put, depending on the national archive, some countries will release more NATO-related documents than others, yet researchers are simply unable to effectively make use of this material, assuming they are even aware of its existence, due to the difficulties of translation. This relates to another major challenge which is the lack of a proper community or network of NATO historians. To the extent interactions occur, this is done on an *ad hoc* basis, rather than in a more formalized manner. As such, many historians working in this area are simply unaware of what new materials may have been released elsewhere, with far too few transnational collaborative projects. Lastly, there is the basic problem that to study NATO in a reasonably comprehensive manner is simply an impossible task given the number of member states and other institutional actors. For the vast majority of scholars, the research focus will be limited to a national perspective, or perhaps two or three national perspectives, and they will interpret NATO history based on the national-level documents they are working with. This is not to suggest that an absence of comprehensiveness should be equated with an inability to produce meaningful research. Rather, there are certain obvious limits scholars working in this field will be familiar with, such as only being able to consult a handful of national archives, or focusing on a handful of member states.

TAS: What is NATO? This is one of those questions that can

drive you up the wall. Is NATO an integrated military command structure? Is NATO an international organization? Is NATO a forum for sovereign states to exchange ideas? It is at least all of these things but probably many more things, too. "NATO" is not a historical actor in the same way "Belgium" or "the President of the United States" or "the Foreign Office" can be an actor, and describing "NATO" as an entity that takes decisions or actions can be misleading. One of the greatest challenges in studying NATO is to explain both to yourself and to others just what "NATO" you are studying, and why that "NATO" matters.

The other challenge is that NATO is boring. Yes, I said it. NATO is boring. The history of Europe's Cold War is primarily a history of meetings. Little meetings. Big meetings. But they are still meetings. NATO really did not "do" anything during the Cold War. (Allies met. In Council. At dinner. In the hallway). And yet that is absolutely the whole and very important point of NATO. It was created and maintained to have a negative effect: to prevent something from happening. This created all sorts of amazing challenges for NATO, the most important of which is that if your goal is to guarantee something does not happen, then you are unlikely to have proof that you are the cause of that absence. And so people do not believe you when you say you yourself have kept the tiger away by blowing a whistle. People just say: why are you still blowing that whistle? That is, of course, until Russian armored units start rolling across borders, and then, for a few months, maybe a few years, everyone remembers why.

JRS: Where to begin? One challenge is substantive. As anyone who spends a few minutes on Google Scholar will discover, there is an overwhelming volume of existing work: big arguments are unfortunately few and far between, but there are literally thousands of articles, monographs, memoirs, oral histories, and documentary collections that touch on NATO in some way or form. Although it is not difficult for researchers to engage the major schools of thought and core debates, it is daunting to have to wade through these studies as part of the cost of doing business. Variation in archival access compounds the problem: relevant archival materials can be found in multiple countries, often across multiple archives within each country, but not all archives are equally accessible. This can create practical difficulties—for example, in gaining access to materials in countries where freedom of information is less than ideal while also biasing the types of questions asked and answers offered. Coupled with the fact that many issues relevant to NATO discussions (e.g., nuclear policy, relations with Moscow) are particularly sensitive for governments—meaning they may not be fully documented, let alone declassified—and researchers are often left grasping for evidence. Combined, those interested in NATO can face a wealth of studies and materials to consult, yet end up with a surprisingly thin evidentiary base; needless to say, this is a situation that, over time, can allow tentative ideas to become intellectual shibboleths.

Another issue is professional. Frankly, there is often little reward for younger scholars seeking to seriously study NATO. Traditional diplomatic and military history is dying in the academy, particularly as history departments confront falling enrollments. Meanwhile, political science has increasingly moved away from historical case studies. The net result is that those interested in studying NATO do so at significant professional risk; they often need to find somewhat niche topics to engage, embrace a creative method to get there, or accept a larger possibility of not landing a tenure-track job (bracket for now whether a tenure-track job should be the gold standard) or seeing one's work go unpublished. Professional incentives weigh strongly against working in the area.

Finally, because NATO itself is in the news these days, there can be a paradoxically limited space for interesting research. NATO as an organization monitors what is written about it; policymakers and scholars with a particular view can be jealous guardians of their preferred narratives; even open-minded scholars read political

intent into historical research. The outcome tends to narrow the space for true intellectual inquiry while rapidly leading to politicized debates—work can be readily misappropriated. This should not be a deterrent to research, but scholars working on NATO need to recognize that not all historical debates will be conducted in good faith.

5. What are some of the significant questions in the field that you feel need to be addressed in greater detail or, alternatively, which questions need to be reconsidered by contemporary scholars?

SC: There's an old quip that the history of NATO is a history of crisis. The same is true of the historiography. For an institution that has been a staple of international politics for over seven decades, we have surprisingly few histories that put NATO front and center and survey the Alliance over the decades. I would like to see even more work dedicated to the Alliance proper, looking at NATO's evolution, the continuities and changes over the years, and the interplay between allies both large and small.

I also think there's space for historians working on NATO to be in conversation with other historians thinking about international organizations and alliances to help us better appreciate what was (and was not) exceptional about NATO. I hope that a project I'm currently working on with Simon Miles, a joint history of NATO and the Warsaw Pact we're calling *Red Team, Blue Team*, has something to say on this front by telling the history of the two Cold War alliances together.

JHM: Let me begin answering this question by first making the distinction between Cold War NATO and post-Cold War NATO. With the latter there are an endless number of questions for which we still need to wait many years until the archives open to get more comprehensive answers, ranging from NATO's survival completely intact after 1991, to the debates about enlargement, the relationship with Russia, its roles in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Libya, and so forth. The future research agenda is enormous in this respect. I will focus instead on several issues from the Cold War I think merit some more attention. How NATO would have responded had the Cold War turned hot is one of these. Naturally as no war took place it is a very difficult topic to address. Nevertheless, the dynamics of how NATO would transition to war, how its alert system was expected to function, what political decisions would need to be made to initiate and control the Alliance's mobilization and defense, what political warnings would be communicated to the Soviet leadership, NATO's authority to direct and control important elements of the civilian sector in wartime, how the Alliance practised its transition to war in military exercises, and similar types of issues, have yet to be sufficiently explored. More generally, archival-based works examining the diplomatic role played by the NATO Secretary General would be most welcome, especially as some key books that have looked at this topic, both during the Cold War and post-Cold War, particularly those by Robert S. Jordan and Ryan C. Hendrickson, were non-archival-based studies. Yet, the relationships that NATO Secretaries General will establish with the American President, for instance, or with other member state leaders, particularly the difficult ones, is often vital to ensure the relatively smooth functioning of the Alliance, but this topic has not received as much attention from historians as is probably warranted. In addition, to return to my earlier point about still not knowing how NATO policy is made, more work is needed on NATO-related diplomacy that occurs informally at the Brussels HQ, such as the Quad, as well as member state leaders and senior diplomats coordinating their NATO policies at a bilateral level, usually in their home capitals. Although many studies will often touch on these issues indirectly, a dedicated focus would be useful. As for what questions need to be reconsidered by contemporary scholars, I would highlight the degree to which France's withdrawal from the integrated military structure undermined the Alliance's defence planning, especially since quite strong military links remained in place despite the

political fallout.

TAS: There is a ton of work left to do in NATO history. I'm not sure it will get done. Someone should write a history of the efforts within NATO to coordinate the national defence policy of a dozen or more allied states (I can't write "NATO's efforts" because NATO is not really an actor—see #4, point 1). I think a history like this would be exceptionally useful because the NATO allies today continue to try and coordinate their national defence policies within a NATO framework. It is also important because these decisions shaped the balance of military forces in world affairs for more than half a century. But is a Ph.D. committee going to support this topic? Is this going to help you find work in a History Department. Umm... No. Also, it will be boring in the sense there are no capes swishing on your pages and no best-seller lists in your future. Sadly, there is no guarantee that something useful and important won't be boring.

I think historians need to reconsider questions related to the development and application of power in international affairs, and we need to keep looking for ways to connect our questions and answers with the world outside of academia. SHAFR historians have developed all sorts of great tools and approaches that allow us to explain the history of state power with nuance and care. But I am worried that History Departments have ceded the study of hard power to other academic units, and increasingly the academy has ceded these issues to nonacademic pundits. Governments are going to continue to try and make foreign and defence policy, and people are going to continue to make public arguments about how the world works in a bid to shape those policies. I would prefer if these arguments or policies did not develop without everything that professional historians can bring to them.

JRS: NATO is nearly eighty years old, yet it is stunning how little we really know about the alliance and its operations. I'll flag three matters that need real work. First, we need sustained study of NATO's military performance during and after the Cold War. NATO was and remains first and foremost a military alliance. With a few exceptions, however, historical treatments of NATO's plans, preparations, limitations, and so on in the military domain are missing. Ultimately, how successful was the alliance in mobilizing and organizing military power during the Cold War? Was—as many people claim—American "leadership" necessary to orchestrate a successful military coalition against the Soviet Union? How did extended deterrence operate in practice, and why did so few NATO allies go nuclear, especially given perennial concerns with American protection? How did NATO's post-Cold War bargain—with the European and North American allies trading American geopolitical suzerainty for cheap security—form and evolve? How is it that most non-American members of NATO, despite having amassed impressive military capabilities during the Cold War and having pledged fidelity to NATO military standards afterwards, ended up with little functional military power only three decades later? We need answers. We do not have them.

Second, we need to understand NATO's post-Cold War dominance in Europe. The core issue—why did NATO become preeminent post-Cold War European geopolitics—is simple enough, and has been tackled in whole or part by Goldgeier, Kay, Sarotte, and others. Still, the matter is puzzling: given all the uncertainties with NATO cohesion during the Cold War, the push for novel post-Cold War security structures, intra-NATO rivalries, and the wide swings in Europe's post-Cold War security environment, it is not obvious why NATO emerged and endured as the continent's overriding security institution. With the post-Cold War era now three decades old (and counting) it's time to tackle this seminal question. Closely related, one wants a retrospective answer to whether Western and Central Europe were primed for peace after the Cold War—such that NATO and a continued American presence were largely superfluous to the continent's

peaceful integration—or whether, as many analysts had it at the time, Europe without NATO was ready to descend back into the sorts of internecine conflict that defined the first half of the twentieth century. We know that NATO helped dampen intra-Western European tensions during the Cold War—did it perform a similar function after the contest with the Soviet Union? Even if so, was it necessary (as opposed to sufficient) for peace?

Finally, it's shocking the extent to which the East—meaning the USSR and Warsaw Pact during the Cold War, and Russia after the Cold War—is missing as an active subject of inquiry in histories of NATO. Indeed, if NATO was in part founded to keep "the Soviets out" while shaping the USSR's long-term containment, we have a dearth of serious work on Soviet policy and attitudes *vis-à-vis* the alliance during the Cold War. That Soviet archives were open for much of the 1990s and 2000s—and that we have access to former Pact records throughout Central and Eastern Europe—only makes this general absence all the more notable. Key questions include whether Soviet leaders were generally deterred by the alliance; the process by which Moscow's attitude toward NATO formed and changed; and the extent to which Soviet policy was designed to split or instead accommodate the alliance. Similarly, at a time when NATO-Russian relations cut to the heart of policy and scholarly concerns, we need much more robust research on Russia's post-Cold War approach toward the alliance, including Moscow's threat perceptions (or lack thereof) and approaches to managing NATO enlargement. Surprisingly, for all we speak of transnational and multinational approaches to historical scholarship (and delving deep into causality within political science), the target of much of NATO's behavior remains absent from the conversation.

6. For someone wanting to start out in the history of NATO, what 5-8 books do you consider to be of seminal importance—either the "best" or the most influential titles?

SC: I would encourage anyone to start with *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* by Timothy Andrews Sayle. It's the best one stop shop we have on the Atlantic Alliance's first four decades. On the origins of the North Atlantic Treaty, *Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947-1949* by Escott Reid remains a classic. A Canadian diplomat involved in negotiating the treaty, Reid captures the thinking and worries that drove officials to sign onto an alliance like NATO.

If I were to round out a top five right now with a SHAFR crowd in mind, they would be: Marc Trachtenberg's *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963*, Francis J. Gavin's *Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age*, and Mary Sarotte's *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*.

JHM: The following are eight books I have found particularly useful:

1. *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* by Timothy A. Sayle
2. *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949-2000* by Beatrice Heuser
3. *Time of Fear and Hope* by Escott Reid
4. *A History of NATO: The First Fifty Years* edited by Gustav Schmidt
5. *Propaganda and Intelligence in the Cold War: The NATO Information Service* by Linda Risso
6. *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* by Lawrence S. Kaplan
7. *Generals in International Politics: NATO's Supreme Allied*

8. *The Nature and Practice of Flexible Response* by Ivo H. Daalder

TAS: As I wrote above, an astounding number of SHAFRites have touched on NATO's history in one way or another, and it is difficult to narrow down the list. I am going to leave people out here and I am sorry. But the show goes on. I think anyone interested in this subject should read all the work by Marc Trachtenberg on this subject. *A Constructed Peace*, and the relevant essays in *History & Strategy* and *The Cold War and After*. The strategic and diplomatic puzzles Trachtenberg examines are the core of NATO's history. They are difficult subjects, intellectually, and I'd suggest trying to gauge whether they pique your interest before you end up in the Verbatim Records of the North Atlantic Council. I would also try and get some flavour of NATO's early years by reading Robert Wampler's 1991 dissertation "Ambiguous Legacy: The United States, Great Britain, and the Foundations of NATO Strategy, 1948-1957." Kenneth Weisbrode's *The Atlanticists* is important. I also recommend the biographies or autobiographies of those there at the beginning: Acheson, Bevin, Pearson, etc., etc.

For the early but especially the "middle" Cold War, I would strongly recommend books and some assorted works on NATO nuclear history by Beatrice Heuser, Catherine Kelleher, and Helga Haftendorn. The next smash hit on NATO's Cold Warslashnuclear history is going to be Susan Colbourn's book *Euromissiles*. And as I mentioned before, if you are interested in the end of the Cold War and onward, I recommend everything written by Mary Sarotte.

JRS: As noted earlier, it's incredibly difficult to identify works—let alone just books—of seminal importance given the scope and sprawl of "NATO." In lieu of a definitive list, it might be useful to instead think of works that help frame key debates, topics, conversations, etc for those interested in NATO. Keep in mind that these might reflect my idiosyncratic reading of the literature as a political scientist.

For high politics, one can do no better than Trachtenberg's *A Constructed Peace*, which brilliantly defines NATO's role in US and highlights the complex interplay of international security concerns, economics, diplomacy, and military developments driving NATO policy through the middle of the Cold War; his follow-on collection of articles (*The Cold War and After*) does much the same for the later Cold War. On the purely military side, Robert Wampler's unpublished but widely available dissertation, "Ambiguous Legacy," Duffield's articles on NATO force levels, and Beatrice Heuser's *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe* draw attention to the alliance's core military functions during the Cold War (one wishes for similar studies covering the post-Cold War era). John Baylis' *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism* joins Heuser in rightfully pointing out the centrality of European—as distinct from American—concerns in driving NATO forward.

For post-Cold War NATO issues, James Goldgeier's *Not Whether But When* remains foundational to understanding NATO enlargement while showing how good history can be done without access to archives; even recent treatments of the subject by Mary Sarotte (whose *Not One Inch* merits attention for its impressive research!) and others with access to archival evidence supplement rather than overturn Goldgeier's core argument. Meanwhile, Susan Colbourn's forthcoming *Euromissiles* brilliantly illustrates the importance of fine-grained attention to domestic politics for understanding NATO's history; Timothy Sayle's *Enduring Alliance* and Kyle Lascuresses' *Orders of Exclusion* bring a similar attention to detail and multi-causality for thinking about NATO's role in shaping postwar international processes (what some call "order"). Elsewhere, the excellent *NATO in the Cold War and After*—edited by Sayle, Christian Ostermann, and Sergey Radchenko—goes far in laying out a research agenda on many of the themes noted earlier. Similarly, the briefing books

and documentary collections assembled by Svetlana Savranskaya and Thomas Blanton for the National Security Archive remain indispensable for bringing primary sources to light and for their fidelity to the archival evidence on a host of topics. As for the USSR/Russia, Gaddis' *We Now Know*, article-length studies by Kimberly Marten and Radchenko, and William Hill's *No Place for Russia* are good starting points.

Again, this is not intended as an exhaustive list so much as a broad overview of some of the works that have influenced my own thinking on NATO and which may help others engage some topics of interests. Others will no doubt have other helpful suggestions.

7. For someone wanting to teach a course on the history of NATO or add NATO to an existing course on U.S. foreign relations, what core readings and/or media would you suggest?

SC: Anyone teaching a course on NATO would be hard pressed to find a better central text for the Cold War years than *Enduring Alliance*. For those looking to bring NATO into a US foreign relations course, I would recommend adding basically anything that deals with the Alliance between, say, 1955 (when the West Germans join) and 1989. Usually, NATO is founded, they figure out how to bring the West Germans in, and then the Alliance just disappears into the background, referenced obliquely, but seemingly irrelevant to the major issues until the 1990s when NATO expansion becomes a big-ticket item. The French withdrawal and the so-called NATO Crisis of the 1960s would be a great candidate—and then, a chapter from Thomas Schwartz's *Lyndon Johnson and Europe* is a must. Lastly, surprising absolutely no one, I can't miss an opportunity to say that NATO's nuclear policies, especially the widespread popular protesting against the Euromissiles in the early 1980s and the links to the Nuclear Freeze movement at home, are another excellent option. The media alone is worth it! Think *War-Games*, *The Day After*, "99 Luftballons."

In the post-Cold War world, NATO's expansion eastward to include former members of the Warsaw Pact and newly-independent states of the former Soviet Union is an obvious topic with clear contemporary relevance. The National Security Archive has amazing briefing books of conversations between Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin that make for great classroom use. Anyone teaching a methods class or just looking to bring methods into a US foreign relations course could assign parts of James Goldgeier's *Not Whether But When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* and Mary Sarotte's *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*—both fantastic!—as a way to consider the relationship between interviews (the backbone of Goldgeier's research) and archival documents (which Sarotte used to revisit many of the same episodes as Goldgeier) in the research process.

JHM: The most important text is the North Atlantic Treaty itself. At least 95 percent of my students have an incorrect idea about what Article 5 stipulates, and virtually none are familiar with any of the other parts of the Treaty.

After the Treaty, the most important NATO document is the Strategic Concept, of which eight have now been produced, and all of which are either unclassified or declassified. These documents should also be considered essential reading.

In addition, there are a handful of communiqués that stand out. For instance, any discussion of NATO in the aftermath of Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea would require some engagement with the communiqués issued after the 2014 Wales Summit and the 2016 Warsaw Summit.

As a general text highlighting the US relationship with the Alliance through the late 1990s, I'd recommend Lawrence S.

Kaplan's *The Long Entanglement: NATO's First Fifty Years*.

The forthcoming 54-chapter Oxford Handbook on NATO coedited by Mark Webber and James Sperling will also be essential reading, especially as it updates and expands upon Gustav Schmidt's edited three-volume history that was published more than 20 years earlier.

I can also highly recommend Vojtech Mastny's survey article "The New History of Cold War Alliances," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring 2002, pp. 5584.

TAS: I know Susie Colbourn did a course on NATO at Yale, so she'll have a great answer. And, look, I am biased here because I tried to write a history of NATO's Cold War that would help us understand NATO's history. Mary Sarotte's work is going to allow us to teach about the 1990s and 2000s in a totally different way. The Russian invasion of Ukraine highlights important strands of post-Cold War international history that are crucially important to understand today's world and tomorrow's (if we get there).

The question about incorporating NATO into US foreign relations is a bit more interesting now that the end of the Cold War has come into historical perspective. I think it might have been fairly standard in the past to teach about the origins of NATO in the

"start of the Cold War" section of the course. (I never took a "U.S. foreign relations" undergraduate course, but that is where it appeared in the once-standard "History of Canadian External Affairs" course.) After NATO gets created in one of these courses, it just sort of hangs around in the background. Now, I think it would be interesting for an instructor to compare the arguments for the North Atlantic Treaty made in 1949 with those made in 1989, 1990 and 1991. They are, in some ways, strikingly similar. You might pair an account of the alliance's origins with work done by Mary Sarotte, or Jeffrey A. Engel, (or me,) on why the alliance continued after the end of the Cold War.

JRS: I am beginning to sound like a broken record, but it depends on the level of the course and specific focus of the class. Many of the above books—some of which also have article-length treatments—would work for either undergraduate or graduate courses. Some, such as Trachtenberg's *A Constructed Peace* and Gaddis' *We Now Know*, could serve in a course covering postwar U.S. foreign policy or international history. The documentary collections and essays put out by the National Security Archive are wonderful starting points for incorporating archival materials into the classroom. I'm going to stay general on this one.

Congratulations!

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