

Roundtable on Timothy J. Lynch, *In the Shadow of the Cold War: American Foreign Policy from George Bush Sr. to Donald Trump*

Jeffrey A. Engel, R. Joseph Parrott, Heather Marie Stur, Steven J. Brady,
and Timothy Lynch

Introduction to *Passport* Roundtable: Timothy Lynch, *In the Shadow of the Cold War*

Jeffrey A. Engel

“American policymakers believed.” Most if not all *Passport* readers have written such words, or some useful variation thereof. Perhaps “the White House concluded,” or “her generation remembered Vietnam.” These are useful statements, even if we know they carry an ingrained untruth. Clearly, not every baby boomer carried histories equally, nor did every self-aggrandizing member of the “greatest generation.” Going to Yale upped one’s odds of joining the CIA in the early 1950s, as did being white and male. Yet a pattern of behavior and thought is no guarantee. Some white and male Yalies rallied public opinion against Washington’s foreign policy establishment, showing the same strain—albeit on a far broader canvas—as our own academic departments. We all know similarly-aged colleagues educated at the same institution who can barely agree upon its location, let alone its ideological imprint. They often cannot even agree upon lunch, let alone who should teach the survey.

Our ability as historians to both perceive and convey consistency nonetheless matters, especially when what matters are a nation’s strategic priorities. *In the Shadow of the Cold War*, a thoughtful and ambitious work by Timothy Lynch, seeks and presents consistencies within U.S. foreign policy since the Cold War’s surprisingly peaceful end. That end, by the way, occurred a quarter-century ago. Many a historian’s career was made during the early 1970s writing about Yalta, or the Berlin Airlift, or the origins of the Cold War, each equally distant at the time. Knowing full well his will be a first draft of history revised when new documents and perspectives arise, Lynch’s timely book looks to the past not necessarily to explain the present, though it does that for sure, but also to help explain how the increasingly distant past jived or diverged from what then came next.

The Cold War, he concludes, not only shaped the contours of the strategic questions U.S. policymakers confronted in its wake, but also shaped their very thinking as well. Kosovo, Rwanda, Saigon, and Berlin—or, if you will, the 1990s, 1970s, and 1940s—are not so distant after all when viewed within the Oval Office, Foggy Bottom, Wall Street, or the United States writ large. The Cold War is over. Yet its shadow remains.

Shadows by definition defy easy illumination, and Lynch’s task therefore requires the aforementioned broad strokes. It is no easy thing to at once reveal the nuances of policy debate alongside policies enacted, let alone to discern

their origins in policies conceived and deployed decades before. Yet this was Lynch’s ambitious charge, one pulled off with aplomb according to the reviewers selected for this *Passport* roundtable. Joe Parrot praised his “bold argument within a broad, cogent analysis of U.S. foreign policy since 1989,” noting as well the text’s “neat and readable package.” Heather Stur similarly found it a “compelling and highly readable book.”

Steven Brady, too, found Lynch “quite convincing in his repeated treatment of the shadow of the Vietnam War,” and I, for one, join Brady’s intention to steal Lynch’s succinct description of the war’s ongoing influence over American politics through the start of the 21st century. “Legitimacy in the current war was made to depend upon fidelity to the previous one” is succinct, accurate, and ironic given that the American war in Vietnam, the “previous one” of Lynch’s sentence, ended in defeat. Yet those who called out its flaws and failures at the time found evidence of their prior wisdom a burden a generation later. Those who noted the emperor’s nakedness, in other words, found subsequent emperors—and the American public—less impressed with their prescient insight than dismayed by their honesty.

Each reviewer similarly called Lynch’s tailoring to task in ways that demonstrate their engagement with the text and that should prompt *Passport* readers to join their insightful debate by reading both their analysis and Lynch’s provocation. Stur in particular questions Lynch’s praise of an American-centric world view derived by reviewing the perspective of U.S. policymakers, while Brady found fault in Lynch’s reading of the U.S. Constitution’s 25th Amendment among other vocabulary and factual choices that reveal more wisdom the more they are considered. What seems a quibble at first glance—questioning Lynch’s use of the word “choice,” for example, to describe the geopolitical options for small states during the Cold War—upon reflection leads to insight. Parrot, meanwhile, questioned the author’s fundamental understanding of the Cold War’s causes, continuities, and conclusion, noting the absence of a fundamental rationale for why the conflict occurred and thus no similar deep reading of American rationale following its demise.

All good points, which Lynch equals in thoughtfulness and civility—two increasingly rare qualities a quarter-century after the Cold War’s end—in his response. *In the Shadow of the Cold War* is therefore clearly a book designed to make readers think and, one suspects, designed to include seminars and lecture halls of our students in the discussion. This is a *Passport* roundtable discussion worth reading more than once, before and then after putting its subject on our syllabi as one of the best texts in print for

understanding a period in American diplomacy: post-Cold War, pre- and post-9/11, culminating in whatever Donald Trump's presidency means, thus in sum a period as yet unnamed.

Review of Timothy Lynch, *In the Shadow of the Cold War*

R. Joseph Parrott

It is an interesting time to be a scholar of international relations. Covid-19 has humbled the global economy and upended national politics (and closed libraries!). President Donald Trump spurns collaboration with even close European allies. It feels like the starkest illustration of something international observers have predicted for a decade or more: the decline of U.S. power and influence.

Still, much of the world continues to look to the United States for leadership, even as our politicians fail to respond.

Timothy J. Lynch's *In the Shadow of the Cold War* addresses this conundrum by providing a broad-ranging if relatively familiar account of U.S. foreign policy since 1989 that emphasizes "its durability, elasticity, and popularity—not its infallibility" (3). Though the narrative reveals repeated attempts to move beyond the Cold War, there in fact existed a great deal of continuity from this earlier period in terms of U.S. strategy and its reception abroad. Lynch makes the case that while presidents have waffled in their ambitions and approaches to international policy, the lessons and frameworks created by the Cold War persist and continue to serve the goals of U.S. power relatively well.

Lynch explores two main themes. First, given that Cold War legacies proved so durable, presidents have struggled to escape them and have fared better when simply adapting the conflict's "strategic lessons" (4). Administrations from Bush 41 to Obama have sought to transcend the bipolar conflict, only for old issues to bubble back to the surface. Al Qaeda had its origins in the mujahideen of Afghanistan, while Russian insecurities and a nostalgia for a glorified Soviet past have led Vladimir Putin to become the *bête noire* of several hopeful occupants of the Oval Office.

It has been largely by adapting and revisiting Cold War solutions that U.S. presidents have most ably managed tensions new and old. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) provides an obvious example; it facilitated a transition from containment to "enlargement" of market democracies. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush also came to rely on military interventions as a means to achieve elusive stability in strategic regions, first in the Balkans and then in the Global War on Terror. Lynch contends that these trends provided an element of continuity in terms of how the United States viewed the world and acted in it.

Second, the appeal of the U.S. system militated against decline, despite foreign policy missteps and the "rise of the rest," which pundits like Fareed Zakaria have predicted since the late aughts. Lynch attributes this surprising staying power to two factors, namely the massive but cost-efficient U.S. military and the popularity of democratic capitalism. While pointing out poor preparation and outright mistakes—including the botched occupation of Iraq and the abandonment of Syria—the author notes that the United States has remained the primary champion of a liberal international order. It has pursued this goal from the creation of institutions such as the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) to a series of controversial if well-intentioned military interventions.

To cite an example that runs through the book, Lynch

provocatively claims that many of the most dramatic U.S. actions abroad from the 1990s onward "aimed to liberate Muslims from bad government" (180). This statement reanimates America's Cold War self-image, even if it simplifies the underlying motivations for specific policies. Still, Lynch finds support for this idea in the Arab Spring movements that demanded political reform in the Middle East, arguing that "the Bush Doctrine, rather than a series of exaggerations, might stand muster with Truman's: as the basis for a world order in which democratic rights expand where many experts have said, then and since, that they cannot" (160). This ideological appeal has allowed the United States to remain the preeminent power in the world despite its involvement in endless wars and supposed arrogance. Rising states like China have chosen to ally with the United States, and alternatives from autocratic Russia to Latin American leftists have failed to overcome the appeal of U.S. values and (though not explored extensively) relative economic success.

In the Shadow of the Cold War sets out these bold arguments within a broad, cogent analysis of U.S. foreign policy since 1989 that ties together disparate policy strands into a neat and readable package. Rather than following trends or examining specific regions, Lynch organizes his chapters chronologically around four-year presidential terms. The focus is on big events that grabbed headlines—military conflicts and high-profile diplomatic negotiations—with an emphasis on the Middle East and Russia. China and a few economic discussions round out the main roster.

This approach obscures subtler trends that stretched across administrations, but it does a good job of recounting the personalities that occupied the oval office and how policies evolved as presidents shifted personnel and learned on the job. The resulting narrative is smooth and accessible, enlivened by Lynch's wry sense of humor. Archival research is understandably limited, given that most records remain sealed, but the author captures the worldviews and actions of the administrations by using a mixture of declassified material, public statements, contemporary reporting, memoirs, and secondary sources. The constant flow of analysis situates these events in their political and strategic contexts in ways both familiar and novel. My copy now has margins filled with notes on what ideas I will steal to update the final weeks of my undergraduate survey of U.S. diplomatic history.

Lynch, a political scientist with previous books on Clinton- and Bush 43-era diplomacy, deserves praise for the work. Since the Vietnam War, the international history field has fetishized archival research, tying itself to increasingly delayed archival declassification schedules and thereby avoiding serious study of the near past.¹ This has contributed to the myth of the distinct break in policy after 1989/91, as historians have remained entrenched in the Cold War era while other fields have trudged on. Political scientists regularly opine on contemporary issues without the advantage of historical studies that traditionally contextualize and enrich their analysis. Lynch has responded by offering an excellent, historically minded overview of this important period, building on the work of historians such as Hal Brands who have pushed beyond this disciplinary Rubicon.² His contention that continuity has defined a relatively successful set of policies provides a corrective to the developing trend that sees post-Cold War foreign policy as fractured, indecisive, or even delusional.³

Still, there are limitations to the book. The most glaring issue is that Lynch never fully explains how he understands the Cold War. American policy during this period—

though guided broadly by the ideas of containment and democratic capitalism—was far from static, and various transformations and redirections occurred over fifty years and half a dozen administrations. There is no sense that any single grand strategy replaced or modified containment after 1989; most of the presidents sought to move beyond the Cold War and repeatedly sought resets for their most challenging relationships, notably Russia and China. Without a detailed understanding of the bipolar conflict, the monograph struggles to establish a clear set of “strategic lessons” for successful presidents.

Moreover, Lynch is prone to generalizing events and cherry-picking examples from conflicting aspects of the Cold War to assess presidents and their policies, making historical comparisons fluid and sometimes banal. Obama displayed “Carterish tendencies” a page before his preference for reaction earns the moniker “JFK-lite” (164–65), while his Middle East policy resembled Ronald Reagan’s. At times, this tendency leads to historical events justifying contradictory actions in ways that paper over distinct worldviews and minimize complex calculations that informed decisions. Aspects of the Cuban Missile Crisis help explain Clinton’s attempt to buy cooperation from a nuclear North Korea, Bush 43’s drive to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and Obama’s version of “Flexible Response” (65, 127, and 207).

As a result, arguments for continuity of action and the analysis they promote vary in quality throughout the monograph. There are worthwhile comparisons that reveal insights into the conduct of American policy during both the bipolar and unipolar eras. Lynch argues that the Cold War and the War on Terror devolved into national debates about means, rather than ends, hinting that ways of assessing threats and imagining U.S. security frontiers carried over from one conflict to the other. Similarities between NATO, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and NAFTA demonstrate that the limitation of legal obligations continuously informed the creation of U.S. alliances.

Less useful are the similes that simplify Cold War ideas or deploy them out of context. One glaring example is the offhand comparison between George Kennan—originator of the decades-long global strategy of containment—and the architect of the more limited 2007 Iraq surge, Frederick Kagan (141). These rhetorical allusions create artificial connections without strengthening the analysis. Instead, they distract from what former State Department official James Steinberg calls “personal (historical) experience” that policymakers gained from post-1989 events, which often subtly reflected the pervasive legacies of the Cold War.⁴

By focusing on uneven strategic lessons, Lynch downplays this more meaningful argument that inherited institutions and intellectual frameworks created continuities in policy. The idea has real value, not least because it explains why policymakers so frequently revisited old ideas even as they consciously sought to escape the shadow of the Cold War. The extent to which NATO expansion promoted democracy while reviving Russian insecurities is the primary example the author explores in detail. Absent is any serious consideration of less sensational topics such as military budgeting and force structure, development schemes in the Global South, or foreign military/police training. Yet it is these understated continuities that best explain why the Global War on Terror and War on Drugs resembled and built upon Cold War actions in Africa and Latin America—regions to which Lynch gives scant attention.

One notable omission is the debate about military funding during the 1990s associated with the “peace dividend.” Mention of this issue appears only in passing

as a reason that George W. Bush had difficulty pursuing wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq (142). Yet this extended discussion revealed competing visions of U.S. international leadership, overseas force commitment, and looming challenges, so the lean toward a militarized foreign policy that predated 9/11 has important implications for understanding the persistence of the Cold War national security state. The fact that Lynch fails to use such issues to develop his allusions to domestic politics and “international architecture” (238) is frustrating, because political scientists and international relations scholars have been effective at explaining the institutional and intellectual frameworks of the Cold War.⁵

Overall, I kept returning to the idea that the book needs a deeper explication of Cold War phenomena. Lynch deploys historical comparisons so quickly that he misses opportunities to use the rich historical literature to frame probing questions about contemporary events. His rapid-fire comparison of “Islamist terrorism” with communism seems especially problematic (161). There are similarities in the ideologies and U.S. perceptions of them, but he does not approach this equation critically. Lynch regularly notes that policymakers came of age during the Cold War, but how they understood the conflict and adapted complex constructions of anti-communism after 9/11 remain unclear. The historiography on the topic—its merging with anti-fascist ideas, perception of monolithic threats, and difficult relationship with Third World nationalism—begs for attention.⁶ Not only might it provide parallels for how the Bush 43 administration defined threats and security, it would help answer how a global war against diverse non-state sponsors of wanton violence came to mirror a bipolar conflict fought with massive economies and nuclear weapons.

In the Shadow of the Cold War has a few shortcomings, but it deserves attention for its ambition, accessibility, and broad coverage of foreign policy. More importantly, its reframing of events over the last thirty years provides a timely intervention. When the Trump administration articulated its narrow national response to the current crisis, I wondered if we had reached the point where the collaborative and ideologically attractive foreign policy Lynch depicts would finally disappear. But after rereading the book, I am not so sure. European lamentations of inaction demonstrate a continuing desire for U.S. leadership. Institutions and informational networks created and funded by the United States continue to promote international collaboration and stability even as politicians balk. And rivals such as China and Russia that have sought to fill the void left by the United States have seen their success limited by international and domestic suspicion fueled by their autocratic tendencies. I find holes in Lynch’s argument, but the book recasts recent history in ways that explain the world just a little better. In our current moment, when no one seems to have many hard answers about what the future will hold, you cannot ask much more of historical scholarship.

Notes:

1. Scholars writing on the Middle East such as Douglas Little, Melani McAlister, and Peter L. Hahn offer one exception, with some contemporary analysis often concluding longer histories of U.S. policy in the region, albeit with limited connections to broader U.S. strategy.

2. Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca, NY, 2016); Brendan Simms and Charlie Laderman, *Donald Trump: The Making of a World View* (London, 2017). Though Lynch overlooks them, see also Mary Elise Sarotte, 1989: *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ, 2014); Chris Miller, *Putinomicon: Power and*

Money in Resurgent Russia (Chapel Hill, NC, 2018).

3. Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York, 2018).

4. James Steinberg, "History, Policymaking, and the Balkans: Lessons Imported and Lessons Learned," in *The Power of the Past*, Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri, eds. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 248. One example is nuclear disarmament. Republican administrations have looked less to Cold War examples than to Clinton's failed efforts in North Korea and Bush 43's success in Libya. See Colin Kahl and Jon Wolfsthal, "John Bolton Is a National Security Threat," *Shadow Government Blog*, Foreign Affairs, March 23, 2018: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/23/john-bolton-is-a-national-security-threat/>; Megan Specia and David Sanger, "How the 'Libya Model' Became a Sticking Point in North Korea Nuclear Talks," *The New York Times*, May 16, 2018: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/world/asia/north-korea-libya-model.html>.

5. See Aaron L. Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State* (Princeton, NJ, 2000); Jeffrey W. Knopf, *Domestic Society and International Cooperation: The Impact of Protest on US Arms Control Policy* (Cambridge, UK, 1998); Sarah E. Kreps, *Taxing Wars: The American Way of War Finance and the Decline of Democracy* (Oxford, UK, 2018).

6. After the introduction, Lynch references few Cold War histories – mostly broad overviews such as Westad's *Global Cold War* (2009) and Leffler's *For the Soul of Mankind* (2007) – while presenting debatable historical arguments as facts. More detailed studies on the strategic and cultural foundations of anti-communism from Melvyn P. Leffler, Marc J. Selverstone, Mark Philip Bradley, Hajimu Masuda, and others would have provided interesting food for thought when considering Bush era anti-terrorism policies.

Idealism vs. Realism: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1989

Heather Marie Stur

On an August afternoon in 1989, a break in the iron curtain on the Austria-Hungary border at the Hungarian city of Sopron unleashed a flood of East Germans into Austria and the Western bloc. The breaching of the boundary between East and West was part of an event nicknamed the "pan-European picnic," a pro-democracy protest during which Hungarian prime minister Miklos Nemeth opened his country's border. Nemeth thought it would be a temporary and symbolic move to allow Europeans from either side to move freely across the border. Soviet troops stationed in Hungary stood down and did not stop the exodus. Timothy J. Lynch, author of *In the Shadow of the Cold War: American Foreign Policy from George Bush Sr. to Donald Trump*, a compelling and highly readable book about U.S. diplomacy in the post-Cold War era, sees the event as marking the end of the Cold War.

Also in the summer of 1989, world leaders met in Paris to discuss options for establishing a government in Cambodia once Vietnam withdrew its troops in September. Vietnam and Cambodia had been at war with each other for a decade following four years of genocidal horror at the hands of the communist Khmer Rouge. At issue was whether a Khmer Rouge representative should be included in a coalition government. President George H.W. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker stated publicly that the Khmer Rouge should have no place in a Cambodian government, but in a private conversation with Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen at the Paris conference, Baker stated that involving the Khmer Rouge in the government was the only way to avoid a civil war in Cambodia.

These stories illustrate the two sides of the Cold War, the era between the end of World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Its name refers to one aspect of the era, the ideological struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union for power and influence that never exploded into direct armed confrontation between the

two superpowers. The other side of the Cold War was hot, and it centered on chaos and conflict in the Third World, also known as the "global South," where decolonization produced new nations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

This is an important distinction that Lynch does not address explicitly but that is implicit in his book. Lynch argues that, regarding U.S. foreign relations, the transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era was one of steady continuity rather than stark change. He focuses on the importance of Russia, and to a lesser extent China, in the minds of U.S. presidents from George H.W. Bush to Donald Trump, but his argument is most convincing when he details how presidents have responded to wars, politics, and perceived national security threats in the Third World.

Lynch takes readers through the foreign relations highlights of each presidency, from George H.W. Bush's through Barack Obama's, and ends with a conclusion focused on Donald Trump's tenure to date. Along the way, he argues that Cold War foreign policy frameworks have endured because they have worked, and U.S. foreign policy has succeeded more often than it has failed. Success defies easy definition, though. Lynch offers examples of certain types of success, such as the quick military victory of coalition forces in Iraq in 1991 or the effectiveness of NATO air strikes in ending the Bosnian War. But the primary continuities from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era that his book reveals are inconsistency, tension between realism and idealism, and a lack of presidential resolve to go all in and stay the course toward lasting political change after wars have ended. Despite policy flaws and missteps, the United States remains a global hegemon, and it has protected national interests and increased its team of allies over the past thirty years. For Lynch, these are measures of success.

George H.W. Bush's presidency bridged the Cold War and post-Cold War worlds. He was inaugurated in 1989, the year of the "velvet revolutions" in the Eastern bloc, and he presided over the first major U.S. war since Vietnam, which began and ended before the official collapse of the Soviet Union. In his foreign policy, Bush was measured and moderate, avoiding involvement in the Yugoslav civil war and remaining quiet on China's human rights abuses in the wake of Tiananmen Square.

In preparing for war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Bush assembled a multinational coalition to demonstrate that Saddam was on the wrong side of international law, not just on the bad side of the United States. Yet even in the most decisive foreign policy action of his presidency, Bush hedged, and left Saddam in power. Lynch quotes Colin Powell as to why. "Our practical intention," he said, "was to leave Baghdad enough power to survive as a threat to an Iran that remained bitterly hostile to the United States" (38).

The post-Cold War presidents all grappled with the questions of what the purpose of U.S. foreign policy should be and to what degree the U.S. military should participate in its implementation. For George H.W. Bush's cabinet, if not for the president himself, there was broad agreement that international interventions should aim to make a world in which America's democracy would be safe. Whether democracy could exist safely elsewhere was not America's concern. When Chinese tanks mowed down citizens demanding democratic political reforms to match China's economic opening, Bush withheld censure. Lynch sees Bush's hands-off response to China as an example of economically driven realism, in which the benefits of a close trading relationship with China outweighed the ideological challenge Chinese authoritarianism posed to democratic enlargement in the post-Cold War era. A cautious Bush viewed the ancient ethnic and religious antagonisms that exploded into the Yugoslav civil war as posing little threat to American security and not warranting a U.S. military response.

If George H.W. Bush practiced cautious militarism, his successor, Bill Clinton, wielded the power of the U.S. military more than eighty times during his two-term presidency. During his first term, Clinton hewed to Bush's line on the use of military force. His policy of democratic enlargement envisioned the power of U.S. economic investment as the strongest tool for shaping the post-Cold War world. When he did deploy the U.S. military, as in Iraq following an assassination attempt on Bush Sr. and in Haiti following a coup that removed democratically elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide from the presidency, critics decried the efforts as half-hearted and weak. In Haiti, all it took was a mob of locals wielding machetes and pitchforks to turn the USS *Harlan County* away from Port-au-Prince. Was the United States really a paper tiger? Where was the commitment to democratic enlargement?

The Srebrenica massacre in July 1995 pushed Clinton to action. UN dithering had prevented Bosnians from accumulating arms to fight the well-equipped Serbians in the Balkan conflict. A UN peacekeeping contingent of mostly Canadian and Dutch forces could only stand by as Serbs bused Bosnian Muslims out of town as part of ethnic cleansing efforts. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the Security Council's obsession with egalitarianism and unanimity prevented NATO air strikes until Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke demanded authorization of air strikes in the wake of Srebrenica. It was the first time NATO had used military force in its history, and its intervention stopped the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II.

Lynch asserts that NATO is key to understanding why the massacre of nearly eight thousand Bosnians motivated Clinton to intervene when the Rwandan genocide, which killed one hundred times that many Tutsis and their sympathizers, did not. The expansion of NATO to include former Warsaw Pact nations was central to Clinton's policy of democratic enlargement. If Clinton did not prove that NATO had the chops to bring peace to the Balkans, it would be difficult for him to convince Eastern Europeans that NATO was worth joining. It is through the expansion of NATO that Lynch draws a line of continuity from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era. Locking Russia's former allies into the U.S. orbit looked like the old geopolitical power play between the United States and the Soviet Union.

By the time President George W. Bush took office, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were already plotting the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. Taliban support of al-Qaeda put Afghanistan in the crosshairs of the U.S. military and its NATO allies. In less than three months and with only about five thousand American ground troops, coalition forces seemed to have achieved military success in taking out the Taliban. A war won with five thousand troops might win public approval, but in order to prevent the Taliban or another extremist group from taking power again in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies needed to build a new nation. Nation-building was the longer, more difficult, and more critical fight, but Bush and his cabinet, taking cues from the Kosovo war that ended the twentieth century, were obsessed with "military minimalism." Just as his father left unfinished business in Iraq by not taking out Saddam Hussein in 1991, Bush was unable to commit to nation-building in Afghanistan and thus created the conditions that have kept the United States at war there for nearly two decades.

Lynch identifies 9/11 as the catalyst for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, too. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon shattered America's illusion of security and revealed the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in

1993 and the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania to be part of a terrorist plot against the United States that culminated in 2001. Clinton had missed the signals, so the Bush administration took the opposite approach and made preemption central to the Bush doctrine. When Bush and his advisors realized that democracy would not easily take root in Iraq, Bush authorized a troop surge meant to establish enough stability so that Iraq would not be in chaos as the U.S. military withdrew from the country. Americans would be liberators, but they would not be occupiers, even though occupation was necessary for nation-building.

President Barack Obama entered office promising to coax belligerents over to the "right side of history" (197), and he captivated international audiences so effectively with his diplomatic style that he won the Nobel Peace Prize less than a year into his presidency. But Obama's approach assumed that global menaces cared about the ideals that defined the right side of history. Not even the most charismatic president can shame the leaders of Communist Party of China, ISIS operatives, or Syria's Bashar al-Assad into addressing their human rights abuses or illiberal politics. Obama sought the advice of "humanitarian hawks" like Samantha Power but also selected Republican Chuck Hagel, a Vietnam veteran and opponent of Bush's Iraq War, as his secretary of defense in 2013. The tension between "Obama the realist and Obama the liberal" (197) made the Obama Doctrine stand for everything and nothing. Lynch contends that Obama's foreign policy was mostly a continuation of Bush's international strategy.

The election of Donald Trump in 2016 may have seemed like the dawn of a new era to both his detractors and his supporters, but Lynch argues that Trump's foreign policy remained grounded in a Cold War worldview, just as his predecessors' had been. From a symbolic standpoint, his meeting with Kim Jong-un in June 2018 was not much different from Obama's trip to Cuba in 2016. Lynch also points out that Trump continued Obama's policies toward Syria and Afghanistan. The differences between the two presidents were matters of style rather than substance. Obama on al-Qaeda: "To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism—it is a recognizing of history; the imperfections of man and the limits of reason" (178). Trump on ISIS: The United States will "bomb the shit out of 'em" (232). One statement was graceful, the other crass, but both conveyed a message about America's willingness to use force against international terrorists.

Lynch's conclusion about the success of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era and its connection to the Cold War rests on the continued existence of NATO; Russia's and China's dependence on global capitalism; and regime change in rogue states such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. NATO outlasted the Warsaw Pact, capitalism bested communism, and the United States still eliminates leaders and organizations that threaten its national security. America's more limited success in nation-building abroad is not a sign of failure, Lynch argues, but of the tension between realism and idealism across presidencies since 1989. Lynch opens his book with the hopeful story of the pan-European picnic because it validates his view of the U.S.-led Western bloc's victory over Soviet totalitarianism. Had he opened with the story of George H.W. Bush's willingness to accept a world in which the Khmer Rouge had a place in a new Cambodian government, he would have told an equally true but uninspiring tale of U.S. realism regarding nation-building in the third world.

By privileging the former as the primary measure of U.S. success, Lynch obscures the latter, even though much of his book focuses on American presidents' tendency

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toward realism. Readers seeking an indictment of U.S. intervention in the post-Cold War era may bristle at Lynch's analysis. He does not pass moral judgment on U.S. foreign policy decisions and does not privilege humanitarianism or democracy promotion over national security concerns as political ends that U.S. foreign policy should emphasize. Other readers will find his take refreshing. Lynch illustrates is that the United States is a force, sometimes for humanitarianism, and sometimes for its own geostrategic interests, and both are legitimate reasons for global intervention.

Deep Continuity

Steven J. Brady

There are advantages and disadvantages to writing the history of recent events. One advantage is the likelihood that all future historians of the episodes under investigation will address one's work. This gives one's scholarly labors legs. On the negative side of the ledger, it is certain that future historians will be addressing that work in order to "revise" it. This assures that a skeptical eye will be turned on the work of those bold enough to go first. Doing diplomatic history presents a special challenge. Given the (over-long) declassification process, future revisionists will have access to a wealth of documentation unavailable to those who went before. Thus, the newspaper articles, memoirs, and interviews on which pioneers had to rely will, without a doubt, prove inadequate at best.

With *In the Shadow of the Cold War*, Timothy J. Lynch has taken up the challenge. In this engagingly written book, he addresses and assesses the foreign policies of Ronald Reagan's successors in the presidency, arguing forcefully that these men all made policy in what he calls—as the title suggests—the "shadow" of that long twilight struggle. By this he means above all that the Cold War "conditioned how they made foreign policy the way they did, and why" (4). According to Lynch, this shadow "was the cause of considerable continuity in foreign policy from one era to the next and of continuity in the post-Cold War years themselves." This assessment leads him to the striking conclusion—no doubt to be debated in this roundtable—that the end of the Cold War "was not a decisive turning point, and neither was 9/11" (4).

One of the most important questions to address is the extent to which the continuity that Lynch detects was in fact an outgrowth of matters specifically related to the Cold War—if, in other words, continuity was evidence of the "shadow" cast specifically by that conflict. If one stipulates that there was plenty of continuity to be found in post-Cold War American foreign policy—and on this, Lynch is generally convincing—the questions remains: Continuity with what? Here, things become less clear than Lynch would have them be.

Lynch hints at this point when discussing, for example, the war in Kosovo, "the most controversial war since Vietnam" (90). Anglo-American policy in this conflict was informed, we are told, by a "more ancient enmity toward Russian interests" (92). This is certainly the case on the British side. The British effort to check Russian power in the eastern Mediterranean would in fact cast a "shadow" of its own when Truman proclaimed his famous doctrine after London declared its inability to continue trying to contain communism in Greece and Turkey. American relations with Tsarist Russia had traditionally been far more irenic than Britain's; writing about the period between American independence and the purchase of Alaska in 1867, Norman Saul labels the two nations "distant friends." Indeed, the

United States would offer its good offices to the Russians during the Crimean War, when they contended with an Anglo-French-led coalition almost one hundred years before the onset of the Cold War.

That offer of help, together with the lack of any real disputes between the two nations, had left a reservoir of goodwill towards America in St. Petersburg. In fact, had Britain and France intervened in the American Civil War, Russian entry on the side of the Union was a strong possibility. The Bolshevik coup in 1917, however, radically altered Russo-American relations and helped set the stage for the hostility that would follow the temporary alliance against Hitler. The Russians never forgot the American intervention in their Civil War, an intervention that lasted from 1918 to 1920.

Here one is struck by a lacuna in Lynch's book, namely, the complete absence of any reference to Woodrow Wilson. Even when mentioning the "Slavic alliance that helped spark the First World War" (93), America's twenty-eighth president—in office at the time, and thus dealing with this conflict—never rates a mention. Regarding the war in Kosovo, Lynch asserts that "its character was rooted in the Cold War" (94). Yet its "character" was certainly shaped prior to the Cold War, prior even to Wilson's ascendancy to the presidency. Similarly, British interests in the Balkans were not created during the Cold War. Nor was the perceived imperative to "contain and constrain Russian power" (94) a Cold War development. British opposition to a "big Bulgaria" prior to the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty of 1878 was, rather, a

use of diplomatic power to contain Russian influence in that region. Lynch is certainly correct in stating that the war in Kosovo "was waged by and through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Cold War international institution par excellence" (94). However, employment of tools developed during the Cold War does not demonstrate that the policies those tools were supporting resulted from traditions that had their roots in that conflict.

Wilson's curious absence is palpable at other points in the book as well. When discussing the aggregation of presidential power in wartime, Lynch makes a hat tip to Lincoln but not to Wilson, whose power grew exponentially during the Great War (120). Most strikingly, "Wilsonianism"—whatever one means by that protean term—makes no appearance in the discussion of Bill Clinton's foreign policy. Madeleine Albright enters the story as Clinton's first UN ambassador and was later elevated to become the first-ever female secretary of state. The reader learns that Albright's "frame of reference was explicitly the ideological struggle of the Cold War; the world remained a moral arena in which the righteous must be prepared to make war" (78). This was vintage Wilson. So too was Clinton's second-term foreign policy ideology of liberal interventionism (80). Lynch describes Clinton's second term as being marked by the "return of old think." But the "think" is older than he seems to realize.

A similar observation can be made regarding American post-Cold War interventionism in the Caribbean Basin. This also had pre-Cold War precedents, especially during the Wilson years, when the United States intervened militarily in Mexico (twice), Cuba, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. One cannot challenge Lynch's assertion, made in the context of George H. W. Bush's military intervention in Panama, that the United States rarely sought UN sanction for its foreign interventions. But even here one must note that prior to the Cold War, the United States felt little compunction about unilateral intervention in Latin America, intervention unsanctioned by international law. In this sense, both Cold War and post-Cold War U.S. interventions in the Western Hemisphere were conducted

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in the shadow of a much older pattern.

One may also raise an objection to Lynch's assertion that American fear of surprise attack—realized on 9/11—is “grounded historically in the Cold War” (127). That fear has deeper roots than the Cold War; it is inextricably linked in the American mind with the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. While Lynch does not mention Pearl Harbor, American policymakers during the Cold War certainly did. Dwight Eisenhower justified U-2 reconnaissance flights over the USSR by referring to the need to avoid “another Pearl Harbor” in the nuclear age. Bobby Kennedy recalled opposing an American surprise attack on Soviet missile installations in Cuba in 1962 because he didn't want his brother to be the “Tojo of the 1960s.” The point is not that post-Cold War presidents did not live in the shadow of the Cold War, but rather that the Cold War was fought in the shadow of a much older set of traditions in American foreign policy. Some issues were definitely new—the fear of nuclear annihilation being a monumental example. But other tendencies in U.S. Cold War policymaking were conditioned by previous shadows that outlasted the Cold War itself.

On some points of Cold War history, Lynch paints his picture with an overbroad brush. He is no doubt correct in stressing “the importance of American hegemony in stabilizing global politics” after the end of World War II. But was it true that “states were given a choice: to side with Washington or Moscow” (233–34)? A number of states had this choice, but some—e.g., Poland—did not. And other states—Indonesia, for example—never made the choice at all.

Finally, some of Lynch's attempts to draw parallels between Cold War events and developments after 1989 work better than others. The comparison of Clinton's policy toward Northern Ireland with that of Dwight Eisenhower during the 1956 Suez Crisis is not terribly convincing. George W. Bush's reelection in 2004 may bear comparison to the unlikely turn of events that sent Harry Truman back to the White House in 1948, but Bush held on to the office despite getting the United States mired in an unpopular war. Truman was able to run for office two years prior to doing the same. Nor is it factually correct that Truman was term-limited by the Twenty-second Amendment, which specifically exempted the person in office when that amendment was proposed by Congress (88). The stalemated war in Korea helped Truman decide not to run for re-election in 1952. Bush, despite the fiasco in Iraq, won a narrow victory over Democrat John Kerry. In this sense, the experiences of the two presidents differed significantly.

Yet Bush's 2004 victory over Kerry points to one of the many strengths of this book. Lynch is, for example, quite convincing in his treatment of the shadow of the Vietnam War, America's most controversial Cold War conflict. Kerry, though a Vietnam veteran, was damaged significantly by a Republican campaign to besmirch his war record. As Lynch puts it, “legitimacy in the current war was made to depend on fidelity to the previous one” (135). It is difficult to think of a more efficient way of phrasing this important insight. Lynch, moreover, sees “profound” similarities between the wars in Vietnam and Iraq—so much so that “Iraq became a direct echo of Vietnam” (144–45). If this appears hyperbolic, then it is an overstatement that was similarly expressed by policymakers who followed Bush. Chuck Hagel, Barack Obama's ill-starred secretary of defense—like Kerry, a veteran of the Vietnam War—had proclaimed in 2005 that Iraq was a “new Vietnam” (199). In detecting a significant parallel between the two wars, Lynch is in good company.

On reflection, Wilson does indeed merit greater attention, though he is mentioned in the text and his influence can be detected in the general tenor of the book's argument. In a longer book, the development of Wilsonianism would have been tracked against the Clinton and Bush 43 democracy promotion efforts.

He is likewise on solid ground in asserting that the attraction that America exerted during the Cold War has survived the end of that conflict. Geir Lundestad has written of America's Cold War “empire by invitation.” Lynch holds that this gravitational pull is still very much in force: “All the advantages that gave the United States the edge in the Cold War still obtain” (235). In fact, the “the great fear of America's allies is that Donald Trump will withdraw and retrench US power—not that he will overextend it” (237). Given how long it takes to get a scholarly book in print, it is understandable that Lynch does not deal with American foreign relations under Trump after 2018. Thus, a key question will have to await scholars yet to come: Has Trump escaped the shadow of the Cold War in a definitive way?

Lynch couldn't say as of the time of his writing. He asserts that the sight of presidential advisor Steve Bannon reading *The Best and the Brightest* “illustrates how far the Cold War still colors American thinking” (227). Yet he also concedes that “the transactional emphasis [Trump] placed on diplomacy” during his presidency “was deliberately crafted to downplay values as the source of Western cohesion” (226).

This issue—Western cohesion—raises a final point. Lynch—with justification—makes much of NATO and its durability as a Cold War institution that has served a significant purpose in the post-Cold War period. It is worth adding, however, that the purpose of NATO was never simply the limited one of containing the Soviets. NATO was also meant to be a means of maintaining American engagement with Europe and thus cementing the unity of the West. If Trump has in fact set U.S. foreign policy on course to undermine Western cohesion, then the Cold War shadow over American foreign policy has lifted in a conclusive way. If that “shadow” has lifted, we may come to regret it.

Author's Response

Timothy Lynch

I am very grateful to these three scholars for the time they have taken to read and respond to my book and its arguments. Each reviewer captured the thesis of the book well: that to understand post-Cold War American foreign policy our essential (though not exclusive) lens is the Cold War itself. While each enjoyed the style and ambition of the book, they all highlight various omissions.

Steve Brady identifies a key lacuna in the book: the absence of Woodrow Wilson. On reflection, Wilson does indeed merit greater attention, though he is mentioned in the text and his influence can be detected in the general tenor of the book's argument. In a longer book, the development of Wilsonianism would have been tracked against the Clinton and Bush 43 democracy promotion efforts. I am not persuaded these presidents gave much intellectual space to Wilson (he gets no more than passing mentions in their memoirs or in Madeleine Albright's), certainly not as the godfather of their foreign policies, but the attribution of Wilsonianism to them was worth comment.

By claiming that Wilson should frame more of my assessment, Brady is not disputing that the Cold War cast a shadow; he is arguing that the shadow was actually a penumbra of World War I. I have some sympathy with this argument. Rooting Cold War rivalry in 1918–20, when Wilson made U.S. troops part of a multilateral invasion

of Russia, would have further extended my analysis of Putin's grievances after 2000. The same holds true for Kosovo in 1999. Russian animosity to Western intervention did not begin in the Cold War. That bipolar struggle has an important genesis in the decades that preceded it. The containment of Russia, as Brady reminds us, did not begin with George Kennan.

Brady sees the book as wanting the Cold War to be the definitive start of things, when in reality that conflict itself was a bag of continuities, some of which obtained after 1989. Again, I accept some of this critique. My one reservation would be how far any war could cast a shadow without inviting a continual regression in the focus of inquiry. My intention was not to trace the evolution of every twist and turn of American foreign policy of the last thirty years—to identify the source of every Nile—but to highlight how far what was post-Cold War was explained by the Cold War.

So while I accept, of course, “that the Cold War was fought in the shadow of a much older set of traditions in American foreign policy,” as Brady says, the book does not set out to examine all of them. It could not have done so and fulfilled its own design and that of the Cambridge Essential History series, of which it is a part.

I will come back to the ambition issue later on—since each reviewer both commends the ambition and wants it to be larger—but in response to Brady, let me make clear the parameters of the book. These were to offer a critical assessment of over three decades worth of foreign policy with enough coverage to make the narrative and the attendant argument digestible—not inexhaustible. I am happy if that narrow approach to a large historical terrain, which grew inexorably with every day that the book went unfinished, invites consideration of themes, issues, and arguments that it necessarily had to elide or ignore in order to fulfil its design. I note that even large historical accounts of U.S. foreign policy miss what some might consider key episodes. George Herring's *From Colony to Superpower* (2008), for example, makes no mention of Panama, the first U.S. invasion of the post-Cold War era.

Several other omissions are tabulated constructively by Joe Parrot. Again, my thanks for another very close reading of the book. While the gaps, Parrot says, are several, he does acknowledge how I have situated the work in research terms: as an attempt to document an essential continuity when the paucity of actual archival documents post-1989 creates the illusion of a decisive break. Time and archivists will ultimately decide whether that claim is validated.

Whereas Brady wants to extend the regression into the first half of the twentieth century, Parrot wants the book to deal with the post-Cold War events that informed subsequent post-Cold War policymaking. What provided a template for dealing with nuclear states was not so much the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), suggests Parrot, as it was North Korea (in 1994) and Libya (after 2001). The book does not disavow this connection. It does prioritize a different interpretation: that Clinton mimicked JFK's approach by appeasing Pyongyang, as his predecessor had Moscow. If Clinton had made this allusion would we be more persuaded of the shadow the book describes? Could that precedent not operate in ways unseen or unacknowledged by the policymakers subject to it?

Parrot takes issue with the book's “cherry-picking” of the Cold War itself. The narrative progression of analysis post-1989, divided by four-year presidential terms, has not been met, Parrot says, by a similarly close reading of the Cold War itself. I will not belabor the “that isn't what the book is about” defense here. The book deals with a shadow of the Cold War, not its mirror. It does not link every notable Cold War event with its post-Cold War refraction. All scholars are tempted to find greater consequence in

the issues that fascinate them than in those that do not. Winston Churchill's *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (1956–58) was gently criticized for containing only the parts of the story Churchill liked. Could I have been more systematic in raiding Cold War history? Yes, possibly. But the method did not require it. I have not argued that the Cold War was the exclusive template for what came after it. Rather, the book depicts a substantial shadow, but one that is shifting and from which escape, post-1989, was possible. It did not dictate a perfect continuity. Rather, as shadows do, it threw issues into a certain relief.

Parrot's claim that the book needs to systemize more and cherry-pick less is well taken. However, to have incorporated his preferences—which include military budgets, force structure, Global South development schemes, foreign military/police training, and the War on Drugs—would have meant writing a different book entirely (certainly a longer one). The danger of traveling across three decades with reference to the preceding four is that subject specialists in each will inevitably demand coverage that cannot be realized—at least without the project being, like Herring's, a decades-long one. Again, I hope the book succeeds in tempting its readers to explore further some of the fare that these reviewers think is undercooked. I am grateful for Parrot's claim that “the book recasts recent history in ways that explain the world just a little better,” though, inevitably, not fully.

Heather Marie Stur, in the same constructive vein, identifies gaps that, if filled, would have enhanced the book's analysis. Her addition to the August 1989 Hungarian picnic, which I use to open the book and which, I argue, marks the end of the Cold War, would be the nearly contemporaneous Paris negotiations over Cambodia. The compromises at Sopron (by the USSR) and at Paris (by the United States) make for a fascinating parallel disavowing of ideology (and a newfound realism) by both Cold War protagonists that I had reluctantly chosen not to include.

Stur also does a fine job of laying out my central arguments as well offering emendations. I agree that the realist character of U.S. foreign policy in this period was worthy of more assessment. I do think, though, that my treatment of George H. W. Bush (over Tiananmen Square) and of Barack Obama (over Syria) reinforces their realist credentials. These were men who spoke about new world orders and change we can believe in but who, when we might have expected hawkish humanitarianism, delivered hard-nosed realism. Heather Stur is right to acknowledge my fence-sitting on this tension. The book more often indicts the insufficiency of military power in pursuit of liberal ends (in Iraq most obviously) than it applauds the avoidance of conflict in conformity to realist dispositions (as in the former Yugoslavia). But it engages in both.

The coronavirus pandemic and race protests have necessarily shifted the focus of our assessment away from the usual foreign policy terrain. In his approach to China, Trump has disavowed the decades-long pursuit (from Nixon to Obama) of Beijing's integration into the global economy. Likewise, he has abandoned the friendly discourse between America's Cold War and post-Cold War allies, preferring to see them as freeloaders. However, he remains wedded to the instruments of U.S. power that have obtained for over sixty years: military preeminence, economic power, and, despite appearances to the contrary, reliance on allies because they are friends, whereas China has allies because they are clients.

I want to thank these reviewers once again for their patient and close reading of the book. I am delighted that they found the work accessible, readable, and clearly argued—even if they did not share my all of my ideas about those arguments.