

# 2009

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## **H-Diplo Article Roundtable Review**

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Volume X, No. 26 (2009)

24 July 2009

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable Web Editor: George Fujii

Introduction by Thomas Maddux

Reviewers: Keith Nelson, William B. Quandt, Andreas Wenger

Responses by Noam Kochavi and by Thomas A. Schwartz

**“Détente and its Legacy”**: Special issue of *Cold War History* 8:4 (November 2008) guest edited by Noam Kochavi

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-X-26.pdf>

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**Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge**

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This special issue of *Cold War History* illustrates the value of gaining a historical perspective on current international events. In the years of détente, extending back into initiatives in the 1960s by President John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, and continuing into the 1976 election when mounting criticism from Republican conservatives and support for Ronald Reagan prompted President Gerald Ford to abandon the use of the word détente, contemporary accounts by journalists, participants, and writers of contemporary history necessarily focused on the most dramatic events and issues. President Richard Nixon's visit to China; Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's shuttle-diplomacy in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of 1973; and Nixon and Kissinger's summit diplomacy with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev culminating in the SALT I accords all attracted substantial attention. Memoir accounts by Kissinger, Nixon and other participants initially reinforced this focus until post-Watergate affair investigations and the continuing quest to expose the methods and contradictions in Kissinger's diplomacy narrowed studies even further. Increased Soviet activity in Africa, the Near East, and, finally, Afghanistan appeared to end détente with an "F" as the final grade.

Commentators and historians, however, lacked the perspective and sources to reach more substantial conclusions about the origins and nature of détente, the relationship of secondary powers on both sides of the Cold War contest to the dynamics of détente, and, most significantly the legacies of détente with respect to international relations and the end of the Cold War. As Noam Kochavi points out in an introduction to the special issue, the post-Cold War period has brought a number of significant studies that have enhanced historical understanding of détente and the issues mentioned above. In December 2005, Hebrew University hosted a conference in Jerusalem, one of the controversial sites in détente relationships in the Middle East, on "New Perspectives on Détente" which led to this special issue. In addition to Kochavi's introduction, the journal includes three essays and three broad reassessments on the overall nature and legacies of détente as follows:

- Vladislav Zubok, "The Soviet Union and Détente of the 1970s"
- Noam Kochavi, "Joining the Conservative Brotherhood: Israel, President Nixon, and the Political Consideration of the 'Special Relationship', 1969-1973"
- Zach Levey, "Anatomy of an Airlift: United States Military Assistance to Israel during the 1973 War"
- Jussi M. Hanhimaki, "Conservative Goals, Revolutionary Outcomes: the Paradox of Détente"
- Thomas A. Schwartz, "Legacies of Détente: a Three-Way Discussion"

- Jeremi Suri, “Détente and Human Rights: American and West European Perspectives on International Change”

The reviewers have divided their attention somewhat on the essays. William Quandt uses his personal experience in the 1973 conflict and his writings to focus on the two Middle East essays; Keith Nelson, author of a 1995 study on détente, discusses all of the contributions; and Andre Wenger, who has written several books that address détente issues, examines the European dimensions of détente.

- 1) As a Middle East specialist on the National Security Council during 1972-1974, Quandt has an insider’s perspective on Nixon and Kissinger’s relationship with Israel in the Yom Kippur war and its aftermath. Quandt and Nelson favorably review the Kochavi and Levey essays, emphasizing the strength of Kochavi’s attention to Nixon’s gradual movement to support Israel and the impact on Nixon of the Israeli government’s support of Washington on Vietnam and against his political opposition. (pp. 460-465) Quandt suggests that “Nixon was a strange duck, and the Israelis were never sure that he was really on their side,” and gives more emphasis than Kochavi to Prime Minister Golda Meier and Ambassador Rabin skillfully using the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to impress Nixon. (1-2) Nelson concludes that Kochavi and Levey could have strengthened their good essays with more attention to the views and influence of Kissinger. With respect to Levey’s study of the U.S. airlift to supply arms to Israel, Nelson would have preferred more analysis of why Kissinger seemed so focused on keeping the Soviet Union out Middle East negotiations and setting a precedent for violating the détente agreements. (3-4)
- 2) Vladislav Zubok’s essay on the Soviet side of détente advances an interpretive model familiar to readers of Zubok’s studies that emphasize the interaction of international affairs and domestic politics in Soviet diplomacy, a “‘constructivist’ approach that takes into account the evolution of [the] Soviet regime, its ideology, economic and foreign policies, as well as the personalities of decision-makers,” most specifically Leonid Brezhnev.<sup>1</sup> Nelson and Wenger endorse Zubok’s assessment of Soviet policy with Wenger noting that Zubok reinforces the emphasis of Jeremi Suri and Jussi Hanhimaki on the conservative impulses behind détente on the sides of both the West and the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> “The two superpowers saw détente as a static, stability-oriented project that needed to be shaped bilaterally,” concludes Wenger. (2) Nelson supports Zubok’s emphasis on Brezhnev’s desire to avoid the confrontational approach of his predecessor, Nikita Khrushchev, but at the same time advance the Soviet Union’s campaign for socialism assisted by a reduction of tensions with the West and access to Western trade and technology. Nelson would have welcomed more analysis by Zubok

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<sup>1</sup> Zubok’s essay reflects his *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (2007), most specifically chapters seven and eight on détente. For an H-Diplo roundtable on this book, see <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/FailedEmpire-Roundtable.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Suri’s two books that focus on détente and Henry Kissinger, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (2003), and *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (2007) have been subjects of H-Diplo roundtables and may be accessed at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/>

of the role of Alexei Kosygin and the impact of West German Ostpolitik on Soviet policy calculations.

- 3) In their assessments of the origins of the détente strategy on the U.S. side, Schwartz, Suri and Hanhimaki reinforce Zubok's emphasis on the conservative objectives of Brezhnev's Soviet policy. Schwartz does differ with Suri and Hanhimaki, as Nelson notes, in pointing to the emergence of détente in the U.S. in the largely unfulfilled ambitions of Kennedy and Johnson. Wengler and Nelson develop the different emphasis of Suri and Hanhimaki on the conservative impulses behind détente with both highlighting the effort of Washington to manage the Cold War relationship with Moscow and contain Soviet power as Washington struggled to extricate itself from the Vietnam conflict. "Hanhimaki describes détente as a new means to fight the old battle with Moscow," Wenger notes, "and he emphasizes that the containment of Soviet power remained the United States' top foreign policy goal." (1) Nelson agrees that what Nixon and Kissinger "offered was a new and hopefully cheaper bag of tools to achieve the same old ends." (5) Nelson, however, would have welcomed a broader assessment of the origins of détente with emphasis on a "historical conjunction of events that coincidentally and in different ways" prompted the major powers to shift their tactics in pursuit of their different agendas. (8)
- 4) In their focus on the nature of détente in Europe, the authors and reviewers emphasize that détente may have started as Wenger suggests, "as a static, stability-oriented project that needed to be shaped bilaterally" and "focused on military security and on the stability of the global status quo." (2) However, they point out that smaller European states transformed détente into a dynamic, multilateral process. Schwartz, for example, explores the impact of Willy Brandt, who took over in West Germany in October 1969, and launched his own version of détente, *Ostpolitik*, against the resistance of Nixon and Kissinger, to significantly reduce the Cold War rigidities in Central Europe through recognition of the Oder-Neisse border with Poland, engagement with East Germany, and negotiations with Moscow. (pp. 516-517) Suri contributes to this perspective by focusing on Kissinger's difficulties in dealing with the initiatives by small European allies such as Belgium on security doctrine, the European Six (France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium) efforts to form a European foreign policy, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. (pp. 535-540) In noting similar demands in the Soviet alliance for greater influence on the major issues, Wenger puts more emphasis than Suri on the emerging differences between Washington and its European allies who resisted a Soviet-American "preference for a top-down détente that reinforced the status quo" symbolized by the Moscow summit agreements on SALT I and nuclear weapons and the Basic Principles of Relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. (2-3)
- 5) The authors and reviewers emphasize that the legacies of détente represented the most radical and unanticipated aspects of the whole process on both sides of the Cold War. Nelson and Wenger support Zubok's assessment on the Soviet side of détente which emphasizes the short-run success of Brezhnev in achieving a degree of legitimacy for the Soviet empire without having to initiate major domestic reform or retrench with

respect to an expansion of Soviet involvement abroad. Zubok, however, highlights the destructive costs of Moscow's overseas adventures and the loss of appeal of the Soviet system internally with increased exposure to the West but only limited access to the technology and trade of the West. (pp. 438-444) "Détente helped to blur the enemy image that had been essential for the Stalinist regime," Zubok points out, and "softened the most vulnerable part of the external Soviet empire, in Central Eastern Europe." (p. 441) In his comparison of the authors' views on the impact of the Helsinki Final Act and human rights rhetoric, Wenger notes some differences in their assessment of the degree to which Western leaders anticipated the corrosive impact of human rights on the Soviet empire, and concludes that Helsinki provided a "normative framework for ensuring a non-violent and peaceful transition to a new European order." The impact of détente on the international system brought unanticipated, revolutionary changes despite short-run stability in the Soviet-U.S. relationship which deteriorated by 1980. Nelson and Wenger review the author's emphasis on the changes on both sides. "In the end it unintentionally set in motion many of the processes that caused the collapse of the system it was supposed to stabilize," concludes Nelson, and Wenger suggests that détente "unleashed the two main trends that would dominate the post-Cold war era: the regionalization of international security and the globalization of the international trade and financial system." (5-6)

### Participants:

**Noam Kochavi** holds a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Toronto (1999). A lecturer of International Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he is the author of *A Conflict Perpetuated: China Policy During the Kennedy Years* (Praeger, 2002), and *Nixon and Israel: Forging a Conservative Partnership* (SUNY press, forthcoming August 2009). His current project explores the roots and *modus operandi* of Israel's shift from affiliation, on the American scene, with the Democratic Coalition to the Republican one.

**Thomas A Schwartz** is a professor of history at Vanderbilt University. Along with Matthias Schulz, he is editor of the forthcoming, *The Strained Alliance: Conflict and Cooperation in U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) and is currently working on a biography of Henry Kissinger. Schwartz is a former president of SHAFR.

**Keith Nelson**, PhD UC Berkeley, 1965, is professor emeritus of American history at the University of California, Irvine. He is author of, among other books, *The Making of Détente: American-Soviet Relations in the Shadow of Vietnam* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and, with Spencer C. Olin, *Why War? Ideology, Theory, and History* (University of California Press, 1980). He is also editor, with Patrick M. Morgan, of *Re-Viewing the Cold War: Domestic Factors and Foreign Policy in the East-West Confrontation* (Praeger, 2000). He is currently working on a study of economic foreign policy in the Nixon-Ford administrations.

**William B. Quandt** received a Ph.D. in Political Science from MIT in 1968. He is currently holds the Edward R. Stettinius chair in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia. Dr. Quandt served as a staff member on the National Security Council (1972-

1974, 1977-1979). He was actively involved in the negotiations that led to the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. Professor Quandt has written numerous books, and his articles have appeared in a wide variety of publications. His books include: *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, (Brookings, 2005, third edition); *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism*, (Brookings, 1998); *The United States and Egypt: An Essay on Policy for the 1990s*, (Brookings, 1990); *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*, (Brookings, 1986); *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil*, (Brookings, 1981); *Decade of Decisions: American Foreign Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976*, (University of California Press, 1977); and *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria, 1954-1968*, (MIT Press, 1969). He also edited *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David*, (Brookings, 1988).

**Andreas Wenger** is Professor of International and Swiss Security Policy and Director of the Center for Security Studies ([www.css.ethz.ch](http://www.css.ethz.ch)) at ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology). His books include *Living with Peril: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nuclear Weapons*; *International Relations: From the Cold War to the Globalized World* and the edited *WarPlans and Alliances in the Cold War: Threat Perceptions in the East and the West*; *Transforming NATO in the Cold War: Challenges Beyond Deterrence in the 1960s*; and *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-75*.

**A**s Special Issue editor Noam Kochavi notes, it is a rich and rewarding season for students of international détente in the 1960s and 1970s. There is much insightful work now being offered.<sup>1</sup>

These are six thoughtful and provocative examples, profiting immensely from new sources, new comparisons, new attention to domestic factors, and a longer retrospect.

## ZUBOK

Vladislav Zubok provides a much needed and persuasive analysis of the Soviet side of détente, arguing that it is not only crucial to understanding the relationship but also a turning point in the history of world Communism. Convinced that détente must be analyzed as a "two level" game (noting the interplay of foreign and domestic), he notes the role that growing Sino-Soviet hostility played in making Moscow's accommodation with the West attractive, but at the same time he recognizes the internal brakes on innovation. Indeed, he finds that the "realist" voices and the "revolutionary" ones were so evenly balanced in Russia during these years that only "political will at the top" could push the country into engagement and bargaining with the capitalist world. (430) To Zubok, Leonid Brezhnev was crucial. Yet Brezhnev as a leader was deeply cautious and abhorred confrontation. What enabled him to take initiative and to risk "tactical alliances" abroad was his conviction that the global "correlation of forces" was inexorably shifting in favor of Soviet socialism. In Brezhnev's view the Soviet Union could obtain from foreigners what it required in respect, lowered military costs, and trade and technology without having to change its style or pace. Thus, ironically, détente became a substitute for economic and political reform and for reassessment of fundamental national strategy. Even the failure of the trade agreements with the United States did not alter this fact, since the fourfold increase in the price of oil allowed Moscow to maintain a semi autarkic posture in the 1970s, exporting only raw materials and squandering what it got from them. The slow decline in Brezhnev's health after 1975 meant that the country remained on a kind of auto-pilot. The U.S.S.R. slipped further and further into costly involvement in places like Africa and Afghanistan; military expenditures remained high and so did the expenses of social entitlements. Meanwhile, the country's semi-opening to the world became a "poison rather than a 'medicine'", not only for the Soviet Union itself but for its Eastern European satellites. (439) As Russians encountered foreign products and ideas, the Soviet model lost its innovative potential, its internal popular support, and its international credibility. In short, the system was set up for collapse. All this, Zubok notes parenthetically, places the so-called second Cold War of 1980-1985 in historical context, "allocating to it a more modest meaning." (444)

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<sup>1</sup> Of immediate relevance are Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston, eds, *Nixon in the World; American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Jeremi Suri, Thomas Alan Schwartz, Jussi Hanhimäki, Edward c. Keefer, and William Glenn Gray, "Debating the New Henry Kissinger Literature", *Passport*, XXXIX (September 2008), 4-21.

Zubok's interpretation of the factors at play in Soviet détente policy is impressive. He takes external influences seriously, but not too seriously (and, one might add, gives scant support to Jeremi Suri's suggestion that détente was an effort to reassert conservative control after it was challenged in the 1960s).<sup>2</sup> Zubok recognizes the role of leadership in creating détente (and he understands Brezhnev's personality), having given serious attention to the power of vested interests and the inertia of ideas and physical conditions. His description of the social unraveling which followed after the mid 1970s is convincing -- he shows better than any previous historian that détente was central to this development. And clearly, the author has an unparalleled mastery of the available Soviet sources.

My qualms are few. I wish Zubok had given more attention to the role of other Soviet leaders and especially to Alexei Kosygin, who, after his own disappointments in modestly altering the economy, became, I think, extremely helpful to Brezhnev. I would also have appreciated more discussion of what Zubok believes was the importance of West German Ostpolitik in Soviet thinking about détente. Wasn't this rather crucial? In addition, I wonder if Zubok identifies the timing of Brezhnev's détente initiatives correctly? Didn't the Soviet leader first reveal his turn to a "peace policy" at the Party Congress in March 1971 rather than in August of that year? Finally, is there any case to be made for the argument that the United States, by giving up on détente under Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, played an important role in creating the strains within the U.S.S.R. that ultimately brought that country down?

## KOCHAVI

Employing an array of new Israeli sources, Noam Kochavi powerfully clarifies something that has long been none too clear -- Nixon's steady drift over five years in the direction of supporting Israel. In explaining this the author properly, I think, puts the emphasis on Nixon's own ambivalence. Here again, as with Zubok's essay, personality plays a pivotal role. At the outset of his administration the President -- notably anti-semitic and in no way beholden to the American Jewish vote -- leaned to the State Department's view that Israel's intransigence was the prime cause of instability in the Middle East. As a result he entrusted the regional portfolio to Secretary of State William Rogers and for several months made a genuine effort to seek out an "even handed" solution. Before long, however, Nixon became disillusioned with Egyptian and Soviet rigidity, to the point even of sabotaging in December 1969 the peace proposal of his own Secretary of State. Even so, by March of 1970 he had fallen back into an anti-Israeli stance, and he vacillated during the summer before swinging toward Tel Aviv again at the time of the Jordanian "crisis" in September. Yet for Kochavi this crisis was not the turning point that some observers think it was. Only at a meeting with Prime Minister Golda Meir in December 1971, he says, did Nixon really come down off the fence, raising the scale of his government's commitment both to supplying Israel militarily and to supporting its position regarding occupied territories. Kochavi sees a substantial role for Henry Kissinger in producing this change, noting Kissinger's "growing bureaucratic clout" and the fact that his views "generally accorded with the Israeli

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremi Suri states his position in *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 213-65.

perspective." (461-2)

Nevertheless, Kochavi argues that there was much more to the shift than an adviser's influence or growing presidential awareness of shared values, strategic partnership, or interest-group politics in the United States. Also crucial, he contends on the basis of extensive Israeli documentation, was the conscious decision of the Meir government to publicly and loyally support Nixon during 1969-1973 "in the contexts he valued most, Vietnam and prevalence over political opposition at home." (449) The Israeli government and especially the Israeli ambassador were fully aware of the President's obsession with these matters and catered to it so effectively during this period as to have "a palpable impact on his image of Israel." (463) The unexpected thing was that, after two years of American-Israeli closeness, the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 prompted Israelis and American Jews to become openly critical of Soviet-American détente. According to Kochavi, Nixon was furious at this "betrayal" and ended his presidency having reverted to his older image of Israel as untrustworthy. (468)

There would seem to be no reason to doubt the correctness of Kochavi's contention that Nixon gradually drifted during his presidency toward a more pro-Israeli position. What is new and interesting, though, is his interpretation of the stages of change and his assertion that Israel's policy of pandering to Nixon's personal needs was an important cause of this shift. Here the evidence is impressive but not so conclusive as to foreclose debate. It is worth noting that the focus remains almost entirely on Nixon, not on those attempting to influence policy from within the administration. In particular the role of Kissinger cries out for more detailed attention. Indeed, the author leaves us hanging in the last months of 1974. Who was setting policy at that point? Did Nixon break with Kissinger regarding Israel at the end of his presidency? Did his view of Israel as untrustworthy influence the Ford administration in any way?

## **LEVEY**

Zach Levey is more narrowly focused than Kochavi, but he makes a good case that the particular episode he selects to study is a critical moment in American Israeli relations (and by implication much more important than the shift of 1971 that Kochavi emphasizes). Before the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, Levey argues, the United States had pursued a policy of providing Israel "with a level of armament that would circumscribe its strategy" and leave it dependent on Washington. (481) However, the flood of Soviet weapons into Egypt at a crucial juncture following October 8 had the effect of overturning the previous, carefully controlled American policy. Indeed, in the weeks during and following the twenty day war the United States airlifted and sealifted over 60,000 tons of material and equipment to Israel, accelerating the pace and sophistication of supply to an unprecedented extent. Leading historians of the situation have tended to hold Kissinger responsible for this change, but Levey shows that such charges are only partly true. It was Nixon, in fact, who, impressed with the scale of the Soviet airlift to Egypt, made the decision on October 13 to extend a massive airlift; Kissinger held back until after the President had acted. Yet Nixon was so distracted by Watergate that Kissinger had "near complete charge" of the crisis, even before the President's "Saturday Night Massacre" of October 20. And it

was Kissinger who maintained the resupply of Israel into November and December, increasing its dependence on the United States in the apparent belief that without such military stockpiles, Israeli leaders "would agree to no progress on the diplomatic plane." (495) Kissinger, Levey contends, was eager to achieve a breakthrough in the Middle East, a breakthrough that would exclude the Soviet Union. Indeed, Levey agrees with Jussi Hanhimäki in arguing that "Kissinger's strategy was a premeditated breach of the May 1972 détente agreement." (497)<sup>3</sup>

Levey thus argues that Kissinger reversed his tactics but with the same primary object in mind -- to remove Russia from the Middle Eastern equation. The evidence of this intent is substantial, but it is worth pointing out that Levey goes nowhere near as far as historian Salim Yaqub, who contends in a recent essay that in succeeding years Kissinger "deliberately designed the step-by-step approach [in his negotiations] to be a mechanism for Israel's indefinite occupation of Arab land."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Levey's is a serious accusation, and it is worth asking why, if this is true, eliminating a role for the U.S.S.R. was such an obsession with Kissinger, not to speak of Nixon. Do we see here the beginnings of an American belief that the Middle East was simply too valuable to lose? Or is there somehow an assumption being made that the Middle East was particularly vulnerable to Communism? Or is this policy rooted in the personal histories of these particular men? Levey should address these questions.

## HANHIMAKI

Jussi Hanhimäki describes détente as "a conservative project that fits well with the previous decades' foreign policy", though, he confidently asserts, some of its outcomes, especially in Europe, were genuinely "revolutionary." (504) To be sure, Hanhimäki does not use the word conservative in quite the sense that Jeremi Suri does; for Hanhimäki the term does not connote a reactive response to "global social upheavals" (504). Détente was conservative, to his mind, in that it involved "a change of means rather than goals", a change necessitated largely by the effects of war (505). Its principal objective, at least for Nixon and Kissinger, was to maintain America's position as "the key power broker" in world affairs. (506) Thus it is best understood as a new method of fighting the continuing struggle against the Soviet Union and world Communism.

Hanhimäki says in passing that détente lacked domestic support and international respect, though he does not really tell us why. Instead he focuses his attention on the consequences of détente, which he sees as largely unexpected and far reaching. A first result, he suggests, was the institutionalization of summitry, the notion that world leaders should meet each other regularly and take responsibility for the international system. A second was the acceleration of East-West inter-action, increasing trade, freedom of movement, and cultural exchange -- processes that enabled people to see how the other side lived. Beyond that,

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<sup>3</sup> For Jussi Hanhimäki's views on Kissinger and Israel, see his study *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 307-17.

<sup>4</sup> Salim Yaqub, "The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," in Logevall and Preston, 228.

détente, and especially the Helsinki agreements, strongly reinforced conceptions of human rights, giving various minority groups important tools to advance their causes. Meanwhile, a series of international setbacks for the West gave Soviet leaders the impression "that they were riding the tide of history", and this in turn "prompted the overextension of Soviet power that proved detrimental to the USSR's survival."(510) Hanhimäki does not tie these western setbacks explicitly to détente. He does, however, find the emergence of China as a world power "difficult to envisage" without détente. (510)

In sum, according to Hanhimäki, for Americans at least, détente was "a shift in method brought upon by the circumstances of the Vietnam war."(510) It was an attractive option because it would allow them to fight the Cold War with a new "tool kit". It did calm things down, he says, but the international scene was hardly more peaceful, both sides continuing to vie for unilateral advantage around the globe. In the end it unintentionally set in motion many of the processes that caused the collapse of the system it was supposed to stabilize.

Hanhimäki's overview is sketchy, but, I believe, essentially sound. He hardly deals with causes here, but he successfully grasps the point that Nixon and Kissinger had only one purpose in détente and that was to successfully preserve, despite a resource-draining war, what they saw as America's necessary global role. They spoke of a "new structure of peace" but they really saw no way to escape what they believed was a permanent state of East-West war. What they offered was a new and hopefully cheaper bag of tools to achieve the same old ends. They would have been surprised to realize how deeply subversive their maneuvers and their arrangements turned out to be.

## **SCHWARTZ**

After a bow to Jeremi Suri's "argument for considering détente a fundamentally conservative response", Thomas Schwartz takes an essentially different tack, suggesting that the American drive toward détente "emerged from the Left", especially during the presidencies of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. (513) What Nixon and Kissinger did, he argues, was help to legitimize it (or at least the European part of it) to conservatives in the United States. In doing this, they were making a virtue of necessity, since one noteworthy effect of the Vietnam War was to make defense appropriations highly problematic. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) were more important to them in reassuring U.S. public opinion than in showing good faith to the Soviets. On the other hand, Nixon wanted to fortify America's alliance with western Europe with both audiences in mind, but, as he discovered, once committed to this policy he was vulnerable to changes in Europe that pulled him further Left than he had planned to go. The prime example was Willy Brandt's election in West Germany, following which the United States found itself "led by its left-wing ally into the new era of détente."(516) Kissinger himself was very unhappy about this fact, and, according to Schwartz, his pessimism about the situation persisted long after he claimed in 1970 to have safely linked the ratification of Brandt's eastern treaties to Washington's approval of a Berlin agreement. Indeed, whatever conservative function détente played generally, "in the specific case of Germany it worked to advance the cause of the Left...."(517)

Schwartz tells us that the Moscow summit of 1972 enabled the United States to regain the leadership of the West in pursuing détente, but that in one important respect this would not last -- in the economic realm --, where West German desire to forge close economic ties with the Soviet union set important European developments in play. Nixon and Kissinger ultimately adjusted their views on trade to something like Brandt's, but the collapse of Soviet-American trade agreements under the weight of the Jackson-Vanik amendment proved fateful, creating different roots and longer staying power for détente in Western Europe than in the United States. Détente may have stabilized the international situation for a time, Schwartz maintains, but "its emergence from the left ... and the ways it pushed [West] Germany toward a very different foreign policy" made détente a "revolutionary change." (518)

Schwartz is skeptical of John Lewis Gaddis' claim that détente prolonged the Cold War by propping up Communist regimes<sup>5</sup> and in fact he cites Kissinger himself as a believer in the power of détente to transform Communism. But, of course, Schwartz concedes, Kissinger really meant that this could occur if détente were managed at the top by tough-minded practitioners like himself working through established regimes. And for this reason one of Kissinger's principal worries was that the Western alliance might begin to lose its unity. Yet his attempts to strengthen the alliance were clumsy, and his persistent effort to exclude the Soviet Union from the Middle East was almost guaranteed to generate a serious clash within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Europe's rejection of America's policy during the Yom Kippur war resulted in "the most serious crisis in trans-Atlantic relations since the founding of [the alliance]." (521) It left serious scars, but, fortunately for NATO, a raft of new national leaders appeared in the mid 1970s and the onset of the energy crisis helped to generate new cooperation before Kissinger left office. Even so, the Secretary of State retained a strong pessimistic streak, continually despairing about anti-Americanism in Europe and "actively searching for new opportunities to assert the power of the United States in the world." (522)

Schwartz's focus on Europe, and especially Germany, assists us a great deal in recognizing the variety among nations in their movement toward détente. So does his examination of the Kennedy and Johnson years, which demonstrates that the "urge" toward détente can come from Left as well as Right. On both these fronts, however, one would like to see a greater effort made to get at the sources of the urge. As for the effects of détente, here too Germany is the key to Schwartz's thinking, since it is the economic relationship that Germany maintains with the Soviet Union that ultimately leads Europe to champion détente while the United States abandons it. Israel also plays a part by becoming a wedge issue between America and its allies as Kissinger and European leaders split on how to deal with that country. Both of these points of divergence demonstrate the differential impact of the détente process, but they by no means exhaust the examples that Schwartz could mention.

## SURI

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<sup>5</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*. (New York, Penguin Books, 2005), 195-7.

In this essay Jeremi Suri is determined to show that notions of human rights were present in Soviet-American and Western European-American deliberations about détente but that, despite that fact, human rights agreements involving Americans and Western Europeans were **not** designed to end the Cold War. Some scholars, he notes, have tried to make the case that (1) Realpolitik as practiced by Henry Kissinger had no provision for human rights, and (2) Western Europeans came to espouse human rights (and embodied these ideas in the Helsinki agreements of 1975) as an indirect way of challenging the Cold War. These views are mistaken, according to Suri. Western European and American approaches to détente were not mutually exclusive. They did differ in emphasis -- the European was more multilateral, the American more bilateral. They did differ in tactics -- disagreeing about which institutions should play the role of monitor. But both approaches were attempts to respond to a security landscape that seemed extremely dangerous after the Berlin crisis of 1962, and both sought **not** to end the Cold War but merely to make it "easier to live with"(529). The fact that the Europeans after 1969 came to dwell upon human rights in their security doctrine did not imply that they saw them as other than a factor reinforcing stability. That dissidents later used the baskets of the Helsinki treaty as a means of attacking totalitarian control in Eastern Europe does not mean that this was the intention of the treaty's authors.

In a rather co-optive statement, Suri begins by noting that his colleagues Thomas Schwartz and Jussi Hanhimäki have written works that point to "both the conservative and revolutionary elements of détente."(529) He writes that he agrees with "their focus on the cautious, even fearful impulses behind policy-making during the period."(529) He also agrees with "their analysis of the transformative effects this period had on great power diplomacy."(529) The implication seems to be that while the intent in détente was generally and intentionally conservative, the results were frequently and unintentionally radical. But then he goes on to say that "negotiations about human rights, like détente as a whole, involved an uneasy combination of conservative and revolutionary motives on both sides of the Atlantic."(529) Unfortunately, none of these statements is as clear as it could be. What was the "mix" in motivation? Is it found within each individual involved? Or are certain people more radical and others less?

Suri is very clear and insightful, however, when he turns to Kissinger's own thinking and behavior regarding the place of human rights in détente. Though Suri does not explore the roots of Kissinger's ideological conservatism in this article, he does continually reassert its implications in terms of the ongoing foreign policy debates. Thus Kissinger did **not** assume that the international system (or Cold War) will ever be substantially transformed. On the other hand, he **did** assume that the principal actors will continue to be (and should be) the larger nation states, with the most powerful -- the super-powers -- being the most influential. Moreover, he was predisposed to believe that a well-ordered national foreign policy will be run from the top down, that is, by the traditional policy elites and by skillful authority figures like himself. And he did accept the responsibility, newly affirmed in the revised western security doctrine of the early 1960s, that there must be emphasis on managing change and achieving stability.

How do human rights enter this picture? In part at least, suggests Suri, as a result of the

strong trend toward European integration and a renewed emphasis there on the common values of Western civilization. Human rights are in any case central to a liberal democratic society, though, in Kissinger's view, they cannot be the starting point in discussions of international security. They are instead a by-product of security. This contention, and, according to Suri, the best illustration of Kissinger's determination to build an inclusive thrust for European security, is seen in the Agreement on Basic Principles that was signed with the Soviet Union in Moscow in May 1972. "It enshrined his vision of détente as an international framework for stability," promising great power cooperation on specific issues, all with the intention of preserving peace. (534) It concentrated management of European security in the hands of the dominant states, and it assured "that the right men, with the right perspective, made the decisions." (534)

The conclusion of the story, however, lies in Kissinger's response to the efforts of Western Europeans, led in particular by representatives of the smaller states like Belgium, to integrate an extended version of human rights into their ideas about security. Beginning as early as the Davignon Report (1970), these spokesmen had called for a "European" foreign policy, sharing a vision of peaceful integration across the continent and speaking of security that required far more than just stable borders. Kissinger was at first profoundly put off by such notions, which obviously challenged to the predominance of the super-powers, but, to his credit, Suri suggests, by the summer of 1974 he had persuaded himself that they did have merit and could in fact be used to strengthen international order and stability. This is exactly how he attempted to employ them at Helsinki in 1975. He did not foresee the subversive role that they would ultimately come to play for the Cold War framework that he could not escape but had worked so hard to render safer.

Together with the valuable study of Kissinger's younger years in Suri's earlier work, his discussion here helps us to understand this crucial statesman better and surely to avoid dismissing him as (in Suri's words) "an ineffective and destructive force in Europe." (540) One sees Kissinger more clearly as the product of his deeply conservative ideology, which, after all, like most ideologies, is plausible, subtle, and well-intentioned once you accept its basic assumptions.<sup>6</sup> Still, one is left wondering if the author appreciates just how unusually vain, fearful, controlling, and psychologically fragile Kissinger really was?<sup>7</sup> And one wonders if Kissinger's insensitivity to basic human rights in historical situations like those in Chile and East Timor does not show how far down the ladder of importance he tended to place this subject when he thought that the power and influence of the United States were at stake?

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<sup>6</sup> On this, see Keith L. Nelson and Spencer C. Olin Jr., *Why War? Ideology, Theory, and History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), especially 8-33.

<sup>7</sup> Thus a case might be made that Nixon and Kissinger, for psychological reasons, were much more frightened of the domestic "mob" than most western leaders, and that this shows up in Nixon's recurrent and extraordinary worry about his re-election. Of course, historians may be misled by the unusual intimacy of the sources for this administration, the likes of which we will probably never see again. But as near as we can tell, Nixon and Kissinger were as neurotic as any American president and his principal adviser in our country's history. On this, see Robert Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), especially 89-93, 249-52. See also William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 513-20.

Let me add that, to my mind, the portrayal of international détente in the early 1970s as an extraordinary spasm of conservative fear does not do justice to the phenomenon and puts it into a kind of procrustean bed, obscuring the variety of the process in the several countries involved. As I have attempted to show in my own study, *The Making of Détente*,<sup>8</sup> détente is better understood as a historical conjunction of events that coincidentally and in different ways generated a shortage of the material and emotional resources upon which the major powers had previously relied in protecting themselves and pursuing their agendas. Foremost among the shortage-producing factors in the late 1960s, and especially in the United States, was the exhaustion of the Vietnam War, but there were other developments that reduced the employable power available to leading nations, events ranging from such things as the declining dominance of the US economy to Russia's growing economic rigidity, from the projected costs of a new missile race to the growing enmity of the Soviet Union and China. Moreover, though Vietnam was an unprecedented catastrophe for the U.S., such a painful military intervention was not always necessary to generate the imbalances that led leaders to redesign foreign policy tools or even (if rarely) try to break out of the Cold War. Sometimes a military scare (or change in weaponry) could be enough to do this, like the one the world experienced during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 or at the time the Cold War appeared on the horizon in 1947. Suri's point about the panic of elites in the face of cultural revolution cannot be ignored, but many different kinds of considerations could force recalibration of technique, and a variety of concerns could prod the political Left or Right, or both, into action. Years ago John Lewis Gaddis was thinking along these lines when he focused on the interesting oscillation that occurred in the 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s from "symmetry" to "assymetry", and back again, in American defense posture.<sup>9</sup> This insight could be worth a second look.

Comparative history should help us in studying détente. In the course of the Cold War there were a number of situations analogous to the one which Nixon and Kissinger faced (and we should not overlook today's experience, as America attempts to disengage from extended war in the Middle East). George Kennan, a conservative in a new atomic age, tried to get his country to "cool it" with the Russians via Containment. Dwight Eisenhower, a conservative, reformed the tool kit with covert action and threats of massive retaliation after the Korean conflict badly exhausted the United States. John Kennedy, a liberal, created new instruments to manage an enlarged Cold War and later sought to cut dangers and costs with a hot line and nuclear test ban. None of these men had experienced popular turbulence like that of 1968, but they had in common the fact that the various means at their disposal (manpower, economic power, public commitment, etc) had changed and were insufficient to fight the Cold War as they had known it. Thus they strove to balance their resources with the demands, usually assuming that the Cold War would continue to challenge the great powers indefinitely. In this light what Nixon and Kissinger subsequently did, though it dramatically exploited a fracturing of enemy ranks and

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<sup>8</sup> Keith L. Nelson, *The Making of Détente; Soviet-American Relations in the Shadow of Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), especially xvi-xviii.

<sup>9</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment; A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

involved limited agreements with the foe on weapons and trade, does not appear so unique or unprecedented. Nor does the fact that Americans turned their backs on détente as soon as they regained their normal energies and needed someone to blame for economic and social frustration. What was truly new was the way in which détente impacted on the Communist side, and how the Russians were transformed by the process even as they hardly realized it.

**N**oam Kochavi, "Joining the conservative brotherhood: Israel, President Nixon and the political consolidation of the 'special relationship', 1969-1973", **Cold War History**, November 2008 and Zach Levey, "Anatomy of an airlift: United States military assistance to Israel during the 1973 war", **Cold War History**, November 2008.

As it happens, these two authors address events that I lived with quite closely as a Middle East specialist on the National Security Council staff in the period 1972-74. I have also written about both topics. This does not mean, of course, that I have the final word on such complex matters, but I do have some experience that may help round out these very good analyses.

First, on the U.S.-Israel relationship, Kissinger was a big supporter of a close relationship with Israel from the outset, and his thinking was shaped, at least in part, by his perception of Israel as an ally in the global struggle against the Soviet Union. Nixon was more skeptical of the value of the link to Israel and sometimes expressed the view that the US and Soviet Union should impose a settlement on the region. Nixon's view seemed to change after the Jordan crisis of 1970, at least to some degree. Kochavi acknowledges this point. But he goes on to argue there was more to Nixon's shift. First, Rabin quite blatantly supported his reelection in 1972, and second, Israel supported Nixon's stance in Vietnam. I think Kochavi is right that these were important points in Israel's favor and that they reinforced Nixon's turn toward Israel for strategic reasons.

The only point I would add is that Nixon was a strange duck, and the Israelis were never sure that he was really on their side. Even when he went to the Middle East for his last fling in summer 1974, he said things to Asad in Syria that suggested he was still quite prepared to push Israel hard to make concessions on the Golan.

A couple of minor points – p. 457, Kochavi talks of "incontrovertible confirmatory evidence" of the Egyptians violating the 1970 standstill ceasefire agreement. My recollection is pretty clear that we thought Egypt had moved some missiles forward, but we did not have an accurate baseline measure. We had good photo imagery from a few days before the ceasefire went into effect and from a few days after, but none from the precise moment when the ceasefire was to have started. We also had some minor evidence of Israeli infractions. So we didn't feel it was worth spending a lot of time arguing over violations of the ceasefire, provided that they were not ongoing, which they were not.

On p. 469, Kochavi buys the line that the airlift in the 1973 war "turned the tide" in Israel's favor. As the next article shows, the tide turned on October 13, just as Nixon was making the decision. Israel destroyed most of two armored columns moving out beyond the range of missile cover. From that moment on it was a matter of time before Israel got the clear upper hand on both fronts. Nixon's decision on the airlift gave Israel confidence to take more risks, but the crucial battles were fought with arms already at hand, not ones that arrived on C-5s beginning October 15-16.

Finally, Kochavi takes a swipe at the Mearsheimer-Walt thesis. It is true that AIPAC was not such a big factor in 1972-73. But Nixon was a pure politician and he knew that AIPAC could make things difficult for him. Thus, when Rabin essentially offered (via Kissinger) to rein in AIPAC provided that he could have privileged access to the White House, Nixon was happy to comply. This does not exactly mean that AIPAC was unimportant – rather that Rabin cleverly held it in reserve. He knew perfectly well that he could unleash it if and when needed. I recall an intercept of a Rabin-Meir conversation – yes, we did occasionally listen in – in which they were talking about how to deal with some unwelcome pressure from Nixon. Rabin asked Meir if he should unleash the troops, or something to that effect.

As for Levey's careful study, I really have just two points to make. I was surprised that he pays no attention to the evidence that Nixon and Kissinger were holding back on a big airlift through October 12 because they were hoping to get a ceasefire at about this time. The British had been asked to put forward such a resolution. The Soviets had indicated that they would support it. Golda, under pressure from Nixon and Kissinger, and still not getting the green light on the airlift, agreed, reluctantly. It was only when Sadat told the British (they were not supposed to ask him) that he would not accept it, that Kissinger and Nixon agreed to launch the full-scale airlift. By then the Soviet airlift had been underway for several days and pressure was mounting on the White House to act. Kissinger denies this in his memoirs, but I was there in the WSAG meetings as note taker (except for one meeting) and am clear in my recollection of the link between the airlift and the ceasefire initiative. I've written what I know about this in *Peace \Process* and Levey should have at least noted this point.

The only other quibble I have has to do with the Soviet airlift. It is true that Kissinger was determined to show that we could get more arms by air to the Middle East than the Soviets could. So each day we got running totals of how much they were sending and how much we were sending. The problem is that we had no idea of what was in the Soviet planes – just their capacity. Egyptians have subsequently argued that many of the planes arrived half full, and with items that were not really relevant to the war underway. I have no idea if this is true or not, but it is worth noting the possibility that the Soviet airlift, like the Soviet equipment, was not all that it was cracked up to be.

On p. 487, Levey says that Israel was running out of ammunition by October 12. Some have argued, and we heard at the time, that Israel had plenty of stocks, but was having difficulty managing them and getting the right items to the right front. Again, I don't know if this was true, and it could be that front line troops were running short of specific items, but there is reason to believe that there were ample supplies of most things in Israel and that the war was fought and won largely with those existing stocks. It is also worth noting that getting tanks or aircraft to Israel during the war was very difficult. We could only get one or two tanks into a C-5. These heavy items were put on ships and did eventually arrive, but after the fighting was over. A few demonstrative flights were made with tanks, but that was for show. It had no real impact on the battlefield.

Levey is right in his conclusion - -that HK and RN greatly raised the ante in aiding Israel during the war – the airlift and the \$2.2 billion. In part this was because they had already reached the conclusion that in the aftermath of the war they would need to be active diplomatically and that the aid would give them some leverage with Israel. I can assure you that the first meeting after the war between Golda Meier and Nixon was not a very friendly one, despite all the aid. She felt that we had deprived Israel of a glorious victory right at the end. A final point – the US airlift was a response to the Soviet airlift in large measure, as Levey said. But Kissinger never said that he thought the Soviets had breached the rules of détente with their airlift. He, after all, had authorized resupply of arms to Israel even before the Soviet airlift got underway. By the time the first Soviet deliveries had arrived on October 10, Israeli planes had been ferrying ammunition and consumables for several days, and the Syrians were already back beyond the October 6 lines.

There were two reasons for my enthusiasm when I was asked to comment on some of the articles in the special *Cold War History* issue on détente and its legacy. First, in the past few years, we have witnessed a fascinating debate on détente. The scholars whose articles are published in the special issue promised a variety of interpretations of the topic, so I knew they would offer a comprehensive overview of the current state of détente research. Second, the focus of the volume was to be on American-Soviet détente and its legacy. My own modest research on the topic, by contrast, focuses on the origins of European détente, and hence I looked forward to seeing how these two perspectives might complement each other.<sup>1</sup> As an added bonus, two of the contributing authors, Jussi Hanhimäki and Jeremi Suri, both good friends, have influenced my own research in many ways, making the assignment even more interesting – and more challenging.<sup>2</sup> My comments on the discussion deal first with the sources of détente and subsequently with its legacies.

In his introductory chapter, Noam Kochavi identifies the fact that American policymakers launched détente with conservative goals in mind as one of the key points on which most détente scholars agree. Indeed, in this volume Jussi Hanhimäki and Jeremi Suri state that American détente was not a revolutionary concept, describing Washington's détente initiatives as a move to “[manage] the competitive relationship with the Soviet Union” (Hanhimäki, p. 507) and as aiming to achieve “superpower coexistence and controlled change” (Suri, p. 528). However, although the contributors to the forum agree on the fundamentally conservative nature of American détente, their opinions diverge when they discuss the factors that drove Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon, the two main architects of American détente, to action. Hanhimäki describes détente as a new means to fight the old battle with Moscow, and he emphasizes that the containment of Soviet power remained the United States' top foreign policy goal during the détente years. He depicts détente as the main tool that allowed Kissinger and Nixon to regain the upper hand at a time when U.S. forces were still heavily engaged in Vietnam. In practice, so Hanhimäki argues, détente was a series of diplomatic breakthroughs – “the opening to China, the SALT agreements with the Soviet Union and the Paris settlement ending the Vietnam war” (p. 507) – negotiated behind closed doors.

For Hanhimäki, the American architects of détente reacted primarily to changes in the international environment, while Suri, in his influential book *Power and Protest*, has portrayed détente as the fundamentally conservative response of worried policymakers to the domestic upheavals of the late 1960s. Combining these two approaches, Vladislav

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas Wenger and Vojtech Mastny, “New Perspectives on the Origins of the CSCE Process,” in *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975*, ed. Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist (London: Routledge, 2008), 3-23. Where my comments are based on contributions by other authors in this book, I refer to their chapters in the footnotes below.

<sup>2</sup> Together with Jeremi Suri, I explored the coming together of diplomacy and social change in an article on the early American détente: Andreas Wenger and Jeremi Suri, “At the Crossroads of Diplomatic and Social History: The Nuclear Revolution, Dissent and Détente,” *Cold War History* 1, 3 (2001): 1-42.

Zubok suggests that Soviet détente was a “two-level game” of international affairs and domestic politics. If Kissinger and Nixon were the key architects of American détente, then Soviet détente was “largely the product of the personal motivations of General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev” (p. 430). Zubok ultimately comes to a conclusion similar to Hanhimäki's and Suri's: Brezhnev's approach to détente, he shows, was profoundly conservative. He “detested risky reforms and changes in domestic politics, yet he also abhorred confrontation and extremism in foreign affairs” (p. 430). Thus, rejecting the brinkmanship and crisis-mongering that characterized Nikita S. Khrushchev's foreign policies from 1956 to 1962, Brezhnev aimed to build a firm foundation for world peace based on a pact between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The similarities between American and Soviet approaches to détente outlined above show that the different conceptions of détente – reflecting differences in size and power – cut across the line that divided East and West. The two superpowers saw détente as a static, stability-oriented project that needed to be shaped bilaterally. In designing their détente strategies, both Washington and Moscow focused on military security and on the stability of the global status quo, and neither side expected a fundamental change in the domestic social and political forces that were driving international politics at the time. However, I would argue that many small and medium-sized states on both sides perceived détente as a dynamic, multilateral process. They regarded political détente as an opportunity to re-establish their sovereignty and legitimacy, and more generally as their chance to show leadership in the international arena and to increase their role in international affairs. The view that détente was the result of often quite revolutionary policies is less visible in this special issue, however, since the main focus of the volume is clearly on the evolution of the Soviet-American détente.

Not all policymakers had conservative goals in mind for détente in general, and this is especially true of European policymakers and regional détente. For example, Thomas Schwartz, whose article discusses the evolution of West Germany's détente policies, underlines the revolutionary effect that Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* had on European politics. Détente in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) emerged from the left, pushing Germany “towards a very different foreign policy from that of the Adenauer years” (p. 518). As the superpower détente of the United States increasingly stagnated, Willy Brandt drew a reluctant Washington into a quick European détente, turning “pronounced anti-communists such as Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger into advocates of extensive trade and contacts with the Soviet system” (p. 518). Schwartz thus shows that the revolutionary domestic social and political changes in the FRG and in Western Europe were, in fact, preconditions for the emergence of détente in Europe. Yet whereas Schwartz' analysis emphasizes the differences between the American and European motivations for détente, Suri's tends to stress their compatibility, pointing to the essentially conservative nature of both American and European conceptions of security, and arguing that both European and American policymakers believed that “geopolitical stability and cooperation must precede value changes within societies” (p. 529).

Although I take Suri's point that West European and American views of détente were not mutually exclusive (p. 528), I would argue that although both American and European

policymakers had realized by 1963 that their citizens demanded a more active détente policy, the elites strongly disagreed about who should lead negotiations towards an opening up between the West and the East. The possibility of a top-down détente dominated by Washington and Moscow raised fears within both NATO and the Warsaw Pact that a superpower condominium might emerge. The fact that the United States and the Soviet Union were discussing the German question (which was also closely linked to questions about post-World War II borders in Central Europe) and nuclear control and non-proliferation undermined the sovereignty and political independence of individual allies in each alliance. As a consequence, the Eastern allies, just like the Western allies, demanded a greater say in political détente.<sup>3</sup> U.S. and Soviet reactions to these demands were telling: Moscow pushed for closer military integration within the bloc, and after the Czechoslovak crisis it decided to use the planned Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to reaffirm its political hegemony over Eastern Europe. Washington, however, decided during NATO's Harmel exercise to hand over the lead in the development of political détente in Europe to the FRG and also to act as a loyal partner to the EC Nine throughout CSCE negotiations. Given that European and American policymakers – despite major disagreements about the pace and aims of political détente in Europe – were able to uphold alliance solidarity in negotiations with the East, their visions of détente were indeed not mutually exclusive.

Yet this does not mean that the “differences between West European and American conceptions of détente centered on tactics” (p. 529), as Suri suggests. I would go further than Suri and propose that the differences between Western European and American conceptions of détente reflected the fundamentally different views on either side of the Atlantic about the future of the European order. As long as the German question dominated the East-West dialogue on the future of Europe, Western preparations for the CSCE remained tied to NATO's institutional structures. With the help of its allies, the FRG was thus able to delay the CSCE long enough to conclude the key steps in its bilateral *Ostpolitik*. The breakthrough came in 1970, with the Moscow and Warsaw treaties, in which the FRG recognized Poland's borders and the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. However, as the German question became less acute, disagreement among NATO members on the objectives and substance of Western détente policies intensified. In Washington, the focus of policymakers shifted to superpower détente, resulting in a series of bilateral agreements with the Soviet Union. The SALT I treaty on nuclear armament control, the Basic Principles of Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War indicate the superpowers' preference for a top-down détente that reinforced the status quo.

Not surprisingly, in the early 1970s, the Europeans were becoming increasingly irritated by the American conception of détente. Kissinger's secret deal to separate MBFR and CSCE negotiations aggravated old fears of a superpower condominium. While the FRG became

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<sup>3</sup> For an excellent analysis of the dynamics of the détente debate within the Warsaw Pact, see Douglas Selva, “The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference, 1964-1969: Sovereignty, Hegemony, and the German Question,” in *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975*, ed. Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist (London: Routledge, 2008), 85-106.

progressively more interested in the freer movement of citizens between the GDR and the FRG, Washington saw freer movement merely as a factor in its political warfare strategy.<sup>4</sup> Bonn, by contrast, favored a gradual approach – a continuation of *Ostpolitik* by multilateral means with the aim of long-term changes in the GDR. But NATO was unable to agree on freer movement, and so the FRG took the issue to the EC, where free movement rapidly became the linchpin of Western CSCE strategy. Thus, while Washington was still trying to restrain Europe's enthusiasm for a European security conference, the CSCE gave the EC countries a chance to define security according to their own ideas about how the division of the continent could eventually be overcome. Within this process, as shown recently by Daniel Möckli, the human rights issue became a major catalyst for the rise of the EC as a foreign policy actor. From a French point of view, the launching of European Political Cooperation (EPC) and the Monetary Union was also seen as a hedge against German neutralism and as a means to integrate the FRG firmly into European structures.<sup>5</sup>

The differing American and European conceptions of détente, in my view, reflected the differing European order each hoped to achieve through détente. Focusing on the global effects of détente, Hanhimäki notes that “détente changed the international system and unleashed many of the processes that ... helped bring an end to the Cold War” (p. 508), but I would argue that the reverse is also true: The international system also changed détente politics. The European roots of détente were triggered by – and thus reflected – a number of interlinked structural forces. First, the changing military balance – from U.S. nuclear superiority to U.S.-USSR nuclear parity – undermined NATO's consensus on military strategy and nuclear control. Second, the changing economic balance facilitated the development of the EC and shifted economic power away from Washington to Europe. In an era when military security and economic prosperity could no longer be separated from each other, NATO, as the only multilateral political structure, was increasingly overwhelmed by the huge task of coordinating and harmonizing the West's Cold War policies. The economic causes and effects of détente in combination with various political and social forces may well be the most under-represented issue in the literature on détente.

Turning to the legacies of détente, the three contributors to the forum agree that there is no direct link between the Helsinki Final Act and the end of the Cold War. However, their views differ, at least implicitly, regarding their assessment of the impact of the West's human rights rhetoric on the evolution of the Cold War. Suri suggests that American and European policymakers failed to anticipate how dissidents would use the human rights

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<sup>4</sup> On the evolution of the FRG's détente policies, see Petri Hakkarainen, *Amplifying Ostpolitik: The Federal Republic of Germany and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1966-72* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, forthcoming). Petri Hakkarainen, “From Linkage to Freer Movement: The FRG and the Nexus Between Western CSCE Preparations and Deutschlandpolitik, 1969-1972,” in *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975*, ed. Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist (London: Routledge, 2008), 164-182.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy During the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

provisions of the Helsinki Final Act to discredit communist regimes.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, much courage was needed by dissidents in the 1980s to reinterpret human rights in anti-communist and anti-Cold War terms. They were supported by a new group of Western politicians, led by U.S. President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who, according to Suri, “shared their discomfort with the status quo qualities of détente” (p. 530).

Schwartz focuses on the continuous belief of American policymakers – both Democrats and Republicans – that the Soviet system would eventually be transformed. While Nixon, Kissinger, and Ford may not have expected or planned the Eastern European revolutions, suggests Schwartz, they were nevertheless convinced that “communism’s rule over Eastern Europe was fundamentally unnatural and sustained only by the presence of Soviet forces” (p. 522). Hanhimäki goes one step further, arguing that while the CSCE “may not have caused the dissident movements to emerge ... it ultimately gave the various groups important tools to advance their cause and undermine the totalitarian controls that, in the end, were at the heart of the bipolar Cold War structure” (p. 509). I would add that while the Helsinki Final Act did not cause the end of the Cold War, it did provide a normative framework for ensuring a non-violent and peaceful transition to a new European order.

The single article in the collection that deals with the Soviet Union assesses the link between détente and the collapse of the Soviet bloc very differently. According to Vladislav Zubok, Brezhnev’s diplomacy initially “appeared to be a resounding success, legitimizing and consolidating the Soviet empire and allowing it to expand its spheres of influence” (p. 443). Yet in the long term, he suggests, the domestic and international consequences of détente proved fateful for the Soviet socialist project. On the international stage, the highly personalized and conservative nature of Soviet détente resulted in the USSR’s stagnation, overextension, and isolation. While Moscow was pushed out of the Middle East and suffered a strategic defeat in Afghanistan, China emerged as the great winner in the Far East. At the same time, détente became a substitute for economic, financial, and political reform in the USSR. The partial opening up of the Soviet economy to the outside world in the 1970s and 1980s quickly exhausted the country’s innovative potential and limited its integration into the rapidly growing international markets to the selling of raw materials, primarily oil and gas. Thus, as détente with the West exposed the Soviet people to an alternative (Western) way of life, the Soviet model started to lose its appeal inside Soviet society.

Zubok, writing from the Soviet perspective, gives a comprehensive evaluation of détente, discussing it as a vital stage in the development of 20th-century global history, during which “the rise of Soviet communism stopped and the collapse of the Soviet bloc began” (p. 427). In the present collection of articles, there is no equally comprehensive assessment

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<sup>6</sup> Floribert Baudet has recently argued that some Western European policymakers, notably within the Dutch government, sought deliberately and purposefully to undermine the communist regimes’ hold on power. Floribert Baudet, “It was Cold War and We Wanted to Win’: Human Rights, ‘Détente’, and the CSCE,” in *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975*, ed. Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist (London: Routledge, 2008), 183-198.

that looks at détente from a Western perspective. In fact, Hanhimäki's observation that "détente, rather than stabilizing the international situation as many of its architects had hoped for, fundamentally altered the Cold War international system" (p. 503), probably offers the most general explanation of the legacy of détente in Western terms. He shows how détente unleashed many of the processes that brought the Cold War to an end. At the superpower level, the institutionalization of summitry made the process of East-West interaction – regarding goods, information, and people – "for the most part irreversible". In Europe, détente introduced the notion of human security "as an important element of European (if not necessarily global) security" (p. 509), while in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the Cold War intensified, prompting an overextension of Soviet power, which then gave way to "the gradual integration of the PRC into the international system over subsequent decades" (p. 510).

From a Western point of view, détente may best be seen as a turning point in the evolution of the international system from the Cold War's state-centric, bipolar system to the globalized, post-Westphalia system. Détente unleashed the two main trends that would dominate the post-Cold War era: On the one hand, détente accelerated the regionalization of international security. It laid the foundation for a peaceful transformation of the European order that was compatible with the rising political, economic, and even military aspirations of an expanding European Union. Outside Europe, détente triggered changes to regional power bases. This often resulted initially in an intensification of the Cold War, but later, after the end of the Cold War, it brought about increased regional instability and associated attempts at restructuring the regional order. On the other hand, détente accelerated the globalization of the international trade and financial system, thus preparing the world for the enormous growth in trans-border flows of capital, services, and goods that shaped international affairs in the 1990s.

Overall, the biggest short-term effect of détente was that the Western European states and the United States managed to adapt the West's governance structures in such a way that the West was subsequently able to deal with both the regionalization of security and the globalization of the economy. This was no small feat, as Schwartz notes, in the middle of the most severe transatlantic crisis, which included the American unilateral dismissal of the Bretton Wood system, the Arab-Israeli October war and the question of how to deal with the Middle East, and the consequences of the asymmetric unfolding of the energy crisis. Together, these events exposed the limits of Europe's foreign policy clout, restored U.S. leadership within NATO, and confirmed the hierarchical structure of the West. Yet the Europeans had established themselves as a soft power, and EPC gave them a political structure that they could build on in the post-Cold War era. At the same time, NATO remained limited in scope, recognizing that all its political functions remained linked to its military strengths. Finally, the G6 – established as a means for dealing with the pressing economic and energy issues that had begun to encroach upon security issues – quickly

became the steering tool for the globalization of the West's financial and economic relations.<sup>7</sup>

Let me conclude with the obvious: The analyses of détente presented in this volume reflect different interpretations of the history of détente, each complementing the others. Vladislav Zubok's study of Soviet détente policy follows a constructivist approach: It analyses détente as the joint product of international affairs and domestic politics. Our understanding of the causes and effects of détente on the Soviet Union depends on how well we grasp the many interactions between the ideological, political, economic, and social aspects of détente. Zubok aims to go beyond diplomatic history and places Soviet détente within the context of 20th-century global history.

Jussi Hanhimäki analyzes détente primarily as a triangular relationship between the United States, the Soviet Union, and the PRC. One of the advantages of this approach is that it allows for a discussion of the paradox between the conservative global goals of American détente, on the one hand, and the wide variety of its regional, often quite revolutionary, long-term outcomes. Jeremi Suri's sees détente less as a product of balance-of-power issues and more as the conservative response of worried elites to the domestic upheavals of the 1960s. His focus is on the ways in which social and diplomatic history intersect and, more specifically, on the relationship between human rights and *Realpolitik* in the security conceptions of American and European policymakers. Finally, Thomas Schwartz brings to this collection a vital discussion of the alliance perspective, positing alliance politics as a bridge between the bilateral superpower détente and the regional European détente.

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<sup>7</sup> Duccio Basosi, "Helsinki and Rambouillet: U.S. Attitudes Towards Trade and Security During the Early CSCE Process, 1972-75," in *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-1975*, ed. Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist (London: Routledge, 2008), 237-258.

**Response by Noam Kochavi, Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

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**L**et me thank the editors of H-Diplo, and the roundtable participants, for the careful and thought-provoking reviews of the volume, and offer two brief responses to the assessments of my own article. As William Quandt notes, my article indeed takes issue with the Mearsheimer-Walt thesis, arguing that Israel's policies of publicly supporting Nixon's Vietnam stance and re-election were conducted not in concert with American Jewish leaders but rather despite their expressed disapproval; it does not argue, as Quandt seems to suggest, that Meir's government had never coordinated its policies with AIPAC. Second, Keith Nelson would have preferred the article to provide a more detailed analysis of the role played by Nixon's aides, particularly Kissinger. I chose to keep the spotlight on Nixon, precisely because this was a lacuna in the literature. Kissinger's role, and the other questions raised by Nelson, are covered both in Suri's *Kissinger and the American Century*, and my own book, *Nixon and Israel*, to come out from SUNY in August.

Response by Thomas A. Schwartz, Vanderbilt University

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I am very grateful for the serious attention given to our discussion of détente by Keith Nelson, Andreas Wenger, and William Quandt. These scholars were rather generous in their comments about our work, so let me just focus on a few points directed toward me. Nelson inquires into the sources of the “urge” to détente, both in the United States and Europe. This is obviously a topic of great importance, much too big to explore in a short essay. Perhaps it’s my fatal affliction, but I would stress the politics of the “urge.” My point here is that within the political spectrum of the United States, the hope for curbing the arms race and easing of tensions with the Soviet Union was much stronger on the political left. This isn’t that surprising. The Republican embrace of McCarthyism and the “soft on communism” charge was something the Democrats had to guard against, but it also reflected the reality that many on the Left wanted to rekindle Franklin Roosevelt’s vision of a more cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union. It was hoped that such a relationship would also allow for the freeing up of domestic resources to complete the social democratic vision of the New Deal. Adlai Stevenson had certainly given expression to these sentiments in the 1950s. After the Cuban Missile Crisis had demonstrated his toughness toward the Soviet Union, John Kennedy could give his American University speech, and talk about the common interests that the two countries shared. Despite Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson continued to pursue negotiations with the Russians and successfully completed the Non-Proliferation Treaty. He might even have hammered out a SALT Agreement if the Kremlin had put off invading Czechoslovakia. In many respects the Nixon-Kissinger detente helped make the policy of détente bipartisan, in the same way the Eisenhower administration institutionalized containment, even after criticizing the policy and calling for a rollback of communism during the election campaign.

Professor Nelson also notes my discussion of the degree to which the alliance fractured during these détente years, with issues such as the economic relationship with the Soviet Union and the Middle East highlighting the “differential impact of the détente process.” He points out that there were many other examples I could have mentioned where détente divided the allies. Professor Wenger mentions that NATO, “as the only multilateral political structure, was increasingly overwhelmed by the huge task of coordinating and harmonizing the West’s Cold War policies.” Later this year, a book which Matthias Schulz and I have edited, *The Strained Alliance: US-European Relations from Nixon to Carter* will be appearing, and this will document many of these alliance divisions in the 1970s. But having spent so much time and energy documenting the Atlantic alliance’s quarrels and disagreements, I have begun to think that we may want to correct the balance. The history of the disagreements certainly serves as a welcome antidote to those presentists who are always bemoaning a U.S.-European disagreement as the “worst” crisis in the history of the alliance. I would even argue that as serious as the recent disputes over the Iraq War were, there were plenty of parallels in earlier inter-allied clashes, from Suez through Vietnam and the Yom Kippur war. A more fruitful agenda for research might examine the institutional and structural shock-absorbers that came to develop and evolve within the Atlantic world after 1945, be they security organizations like NATO, or the various economic groups that intertwine the industrialized countries. Even the domestic politics of the alliance

occasionally served that purpose, as leaders could be punished for a perception of having aggravated relations with important allies. This is not meant to be a rose-colored glasses approach to the topic. But it does seem to me that the more important phenomena to be explained after 1945 has been the persistence of cooperation and coordination among the North Atlantic states and Japan, and the degree to which they have tried to broaden that model of cooperation and integration to the global arena.

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