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Kristina Spohr. *Post Wall Post Square: How Bush, Gorbachev, Kohl, and Deng Shaped the World after 1989*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. ISBN: 9780300233827 (hardcover, \$40.00).

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 INTRODUCTION BY SERGEY RADCHENKO, CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

“Wonderful.” “Ambitious and masterly.” “Illuminating.” “Monumental.” The reviewers of Kristina Spohr’s new book are unanimous in praising what by all accounts must stand as a great accomplishment. At 600 pages, this meticulously researched account keeps the reader on the edge of her seat as she follows the overlapping threads of stories that many of us remember as a lived experience but that can now be brought together as a sweeping narrative of the new world order. Now, one might argue that in the end the new world order turned out to be less new and less orderly than many had hoped and expected. Thirty years on, one might even speak dejectedly of missed opportunities, blaming our favourite protagonists for being too naïve and idealistic, or for being too cynical and realistic, for calling the wrong shots for the right reasons, or calling the right shots for the wrong reasons. Or we can be more sympathetic, as I think Spohr is, and follow them from meeting room to meeting room, from policy brief to policy brief, listening to their accounts, adding salt or sugar to taste. As I travelled along with Spohr from page to page, I agreed with her in places, and disagreed with her in other places, and finished the book with a satisfied feeling of time well spent. This feeling, so it seems, was shared by the earnest team of reviewers: Una Bergmane, Julian Gewirtz, Artemy Kalinovsky, and Philip Zelikow.

Bergmane commends Spohr on a “wonderful job” of a book. She seems to be in general agreement with Spohr’s attribution of blame for the Russian shipwreck; that is to say, the Russians are themselves to blame for what happened to their country after the end of the Cold War. All in all, Western leaders treated Gorbachev “with dignity and respect.” Post-Cold War geopolitical visions of Russia’s leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, are described (probably correctly) as “very vague and general.” Bergmane highlights as “particularly interesting” Spohr’s argument to the effect that Bush made an effort to retain the USSR as a pillar of the new world order, even as a fictive one at this. She pointedly notes that “the new world order was planned to be a unipolarity in a legitimising disguise of bipolarity.” Meanwhile, Bergmane’s review registers careful scepticism of the great (wo)man approach to history at the expense of the underlying social and economic forces: “it might be,” she points out, “that the question of the peaceful end of the Cold War cannot be fully answered by tracing the political events in the late 1980s and early 1990s... as the answer might be hidden somewhere in the deep seas of the region’s social and cultural history.”

In his review of the book, Kalinovsky praises Spohr’s skills of granular reconstruction, observing how the narrative flows through the pages, making the book a “real pleasure to read.” He notes that Spohr has accomplished what few historians are good at: writing an academically rigorous study that will be read and appreciated by the general audience. He struggles with placing the book in the broader context of the historiography of 1989. At one level, the book seems critical of the failure to integrate Russia into the post-Cold War order; at another level, Spohr endorses the decisions that led precisely to that failure of integration. Kalinovsky wonders whether this ambiguity is a result of the author’s intense focus on the builders of the new order, i.e. the chief protagonists of the book, including Bush, Kohl, West Germany Foreign Secretary Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and Secretary of State Jim Baker, so much so that “we see their agreements and successes as ultimate accomplishments.” Kalinovsky wonders whether the book fully grasps the disconnect between the brave new world that the post-Cold War was meant to inaugurate and the rather sad world we ended up with. He ends his review with a series of questions aimed at teasing out Spohr’s views on this apparent disconnect. To sum up the questions: if everything went so well, then why did things turn out so badly?

Gewirtz meanwhile looks into Spohr’s treatment of China. The reference in the book’s title to the ‘Square’ (i.e. the Tiananmen Square) seems to oversell China’s importance to Spohr’s project; for most intents and purposes, it is still broadly a book centred on the end of the Cold War in Europe. However, China does come in with greater prominence than in many other studies of the period, Gewirtz notes. Spohr’s contribution to the debate about China’s 1989 moment is thus limited, he contends. She does not address the broader debate (in which Gewirtz himself has prominently participated)¹ as to whether 1989 was a point of continuity for China (in the sense of rejecting democratic reforms) or a point of

¹ The book is forthcoming: Julian Gewirtz, *Never Turn Back: China and the Forbidden History of the 1980s* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2022).

discontinuity (precisely because the reformist thinking of, figuratively speaking, “Zhao Ziyang’s thinktank” was being rejected). I agree with Gewirtz that this is indeed an interesting question, though, like him, I can hardly reproach Spohr for not tackling this issue in greater depth because even those of us who have looked at the sources often do not quite know what to make of them. Moreover, how does one relate this Chinese story to the European story? As someone who has tried to do this (and failed), I can speak to the difficulties: it is not straightforward. These two stories speak past each other, and Spohr has done a fairly good job at making sure that, in her narrative at least, they do not speak at cross-purposes.

Finally, Zelikow, in his detailed, engaging review, offers both praise for Spohr’s work and also measured criticism of the big argument. He identifies Spohr’s big argument as that of the ‘conservative’ approach the major leaders adopted at the time of the transition from the old order to the new. Conservatism, Zelikow argues, implies that there were radical alternatives but some of these radical alternatives were in fact less radical than what the conservatives in the end embraced. Therefore, Zelikow proposes that the book be read more for its insights about particular episodes than about the overarching argument. He commends Spohr on the “well-judged narrative,” including her discussion of German-French relations at the Cold War’s end, of the conflict in Yugoslavia, and the Gulf War. Zelikow draws out a useful parallel between the post-Cold War order of Spohr’s narrative, and the earlier orders of the twentieth century – those, which followed the First and the Second World Wars. Spohr, he points out, accomplishes what few have successfully managed: write a comprehensive account of the post-Cold War order with its many players, institutions, and agendas.

The question that Zelikow does not pose but that almost asks itself is just how the order that Spohr describes compares to those earlier (unquestionably problematic) attempts. Zelikow’s own assessment – which, in my view, dovetails with Spohr’s – is that it worked out quite well: third time lucky. Everyone “wanted to overcome an age of great power blocs” and “they more or less did, for about a generation.” But – and this connects to Kalinovsky’s insightful probing, and to Gewirtz’s reference to roads not travelled in China – there remains that troubling, inevitable question: was it really the case that the new order was quite as cooperative and constructive as its co-creators would have liked us to believe, or were the tensions that would tear through this idyllic landscape already quite apparent, especially if one looked at the landscape with the eyes of the vanquished rather than the victors. Have the vanquished been given a fair hearing – do they even deserve one? (It’s important to note that many of the Russian sources that would tell their side of the story are yet inaccessible or are only now coming to light, leaving plenty of work for future historians). Also (to go back to Bergman’s question): were there social and economic forces that were only tentatively contained within the elaborate structures of what Zelikow calls the post-Cold War “commonwealth”? I asked myself these questions, too, as I flipped through this page-turner of a book. Perhaps these are not questions anyone can ever fully answer, partly because our answers would depend on what side of the new dividing lines we found ourselves when the dust settled. To cite former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin (who cuts an unappealing figure in Spohr’s book but who is well known in Russia for his timeless wisdom): we wanted to make things better; only they turned out the way they always have.

Participants:

Kristina Spohr is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics. In 2018-2020 she was the inaugural Helmut Schmidt Distinguished Professor at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC and is now a Senior Fellow at the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at SAIS-JHU. She was educated at University of East Anglia, Sciences Po Paris, and Cambridge University. *Post Wall Post Square* was published together with a German edition *Wendezeit: Die Neuordnung der Welt nach 1989* (DeutschVerlags-Anstalt, 2019) and a Spanish edition *Después del muro: La reconstrucción del mundo tras 1989* (Taurus, 2021). *Wendezeit* won the prestigious German award “Das politikwissenschaftliche Buch” 2020 for the best political science book published Germany. Recently she also released *The Arctic and World Order* (Brookings Institution Press, 2020), *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security after the Cold War* (Brookings Institution Press, 2019) and *Exiting the Cold War, Entering a New World* (Brookings Institution Press, 2019) co-edited with Daniel S. Hamilton. In 2016 appeared *The Global Chancellor: Helmut Schmidt and the Reshaping of the International Order* (Oxford University Press, 2016). She also co-edited *Transcending the Cold War: Summits, Statecraft, and the Dissolution of Bipolarity in Europe, 1970-1990* (Oxford University Press, 2016) with David Reynolds.

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Philip Zelikow is the White Burkett Miller Professor of History and J. Wilson Newman Professor of Governance at the Miller Center of Public Affairs, both at the University of Virginia. He has also worked on international policy, off and on, in five administrations, from Presidents Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama.

REVIEW BY UNA BERGMANE, UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Debates about how to research and write international history are a never-ending process and an integral part of international historians' craft. These debates have certain re-occurring themes. The first involves discussion about what perspective should be adopted when studying the international realm: sometimes this leads to calls for internationalisation, sometimes for national refocusing. The second concerns attempts to deal with the old accusation that diplomatic history (and political history more generally) focuses on the "*agitation de surface*"² that the powerful waves of social and environmental history carry forward. These debates result in either the defence of traditional decision-making studies, or an invitation for more in-depth analysis of domestic sources of foreign policy as well as acknowledgement of transnational non-state perspectives and actors.³

Kristina Spohr's *Post Wall, Post Square* navigates these methodological challenges while offering a comprehensive account of how "a cohort of conservative managers" (8) – President George Bush, Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev and Chancellor Helmut Kohl, as well as President François Mitterrand and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher – dealt with the dramatic events of 1988-1992. The book is very clear in emphasising that these leaders were not the primary makers of the unprecedented change that shook Europe. Spohr argues that the "astonishing upheavals of 1988-1992 stemmed both from structural shifts in the global system and from the rising transnational salience of people power" (581). Yet, the policymakers in Washington, Moscow, Bonn, Paris, and London mattered, as they were the ones who, because of their position in the national and global power hierarchies, had the opportunity and often but not always the capacity to channel the unleashed forces into a new world order acceptable to them. In other words, these managers were trying to ride the waves of economic change and socio-political unrest. In this sense, the book is a constant play of zooming in to peek over the shoulders of decision-makers, and zooming out to gaze at the economic and socio-political context looming over them. While the people's protests that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall opened the gates of possibilities, it was the economy that determined how these possibilities could be used.

While the economic constraints upon Gorbachev's decision making have been often highlighted by scholars, one of the great strengths of this book is that it emphasises the significant role of economic factors across different national contexts. U.S. economic difficulties limited Bush's willingness and capacity to support Eastern European revolutions or to salvage the Soviet economy, while West German economic successes allowed Kohl to obtain Gorbachev's consent to German NATO membership, deliver unification, and provide the bulk of the European Community's (EC) support to Eastern Europe.

Post-Wall, Post-Square is far from being the first or the last account of the end of the Cold War, but it stands out in the existing historiography⁴ because of its ambition to highlight the multiple roads taken to exit the global Cold War. Along with addressing more traditional end-of-the-Cold War topics such as arms treaty negotiations, German Unification, Eastern European revolutions, Tiananmen Square, Soviet collapse and the Gulf War, Spohr refreshingly also focuses on themes that get less scholarly attention, such as French and British end-of-the-cold-war policies, European integration, NATO's reform, the outbreak of Yugoslav wars, peacekeeping attempts in Somalia, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

² Fernand Braudel *La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Colin, 1949) 13.

³ For recent debates see Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, "History United States - Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations," *Texas National Security Review* 3:2 (2020): 38–55; Erez Manela, "International Society as a Historical Subject," *Diplomatic History* 44:2 (2020): 184–209.

⁴ Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment : U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), Mary Sarotte, *1989: the Struggle to Create a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014);

negotiations, and Soviet and American relations with China and Japan. While all of these themes have been studied and discussed separately or in smaller combinations,⁵ they have rarely been blended together to give such a multi-perspective account of the Cold War's end.⁶

The book is especially noteworthy for expanding its analysis to Asia, and in that respect, it goes further than most of the writings about the end of the Cold War.⁷ Spohr rightly highlights the fact that that as the Cold War was ending in Europe, a new era was being born on the Pacific shores. At the same time, the book's account of Soviet and American relations with China and Japan is written very much from the Soviet and American perspective. Although Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping is a significant presence in the book, he is not one of the main characters like are Bush, Gorbachev or Kohl. Thatcher and Mitterrand are presented as second-rung actors, both of whom were wary of a united Germany but chose very different approaches to the German problem. For Mitterrand the solution lay in deeper European integration, while for Thatcher, deeper European integration presented yet another problem.

This rather classical focus on the decision-makers opens a less classical perspective on international relations, once again deconstructing the myth of the state as a rational and unitary actor that pursues its crystal-clear interests on the international stage. While we are used to reading about the internal struggles that Gorbachev had to face during his tenure, this book very efficiently sums up the domestic challenges of other world leaders. Spohr brings fresh attention to Kohl's rivalry with his foreign minister Hans Dietrich-Genscher, Thatcher's disagreement with the British Foreign Office, Bush's clashes with the Congress and the occasional lack of coordination between the White House and the Secretary of State Jim Baker. While none of this strife was as fierce and as dramatic as the internal battles of Gorbachev, its juxtaposition shows the limits of national 'sameness' and foreign 'otherness.' The New European/World order had to be negotiated domestically as well as internationally. While the international negotiations were more decisive, they were not always more challenging than the domestic ones.

A small cohort of powerful men – Bush, Kohl, Gorbachev, and Mitterrand – were able to negotiate a new European order, while Thatcher hesitantly agreed to it. By tracing the negotiation process step by step, Spohr highlights the importance of their interpersonal relations and the high investment in summit symbolism. In this latter aspect, the book raises some intriguing questions for further research about the role of emotions in international relations, both as an intentional performative act and as a lived experience of the individuals who were involved.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its use of an expansive chronology, extending from 1988 to 1992. Bypassing the imaginary milestone of 1991, Spohr explains not only how the Cold War ended but also shows how the beginning of the collective exit from the Cold War bipolarism was managed. While the end seemed promising ("Germany Unified, Europe Transformed" as Rice and Zelikow put it)⁸, its aftermath was marked by economic and political turmoil in Russia as well as regional conflicts.

⁵ See for example: Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, the End of the Cold War, and German Unification* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

⁶ For other attempts to write a global history of the end of the cold war see, for example: Pierre Grosser, *1989, l'année où le monde a basculé* (Paris: Perrin, 2009).

⁷ For notable exceptions see for example: Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Sergey Radchenko, *Unwanted Visionaries: The Soviet Failure in Asia at the End of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Spohr does not explicitly engage with end-of-the-cold war historiographical debates. Still, her stand is unequivocal: no promises were made not to enlarge NATO, and the Soviet Union was treated with dignity and respect through the negotiation process.⁹ According to Spohr, Bush envisaged some “fictive cooperative bipolarity” (592) as a vital pillar of the new order. This point is particularly interesting, as it once again underlines the fact that instead of being in any way interested in the collapse of the USSR, the U.S. rooted for its survival. This support was, of course, far from selfless. The West’s fears of a military coup, civil war, or the general collapse of the USSR that could disturb the favourable international situation has often been mentioned in memoirs and scholarly literature.¹⁰ In this context the “fictive cooperative bipolarity” would serve not just as a face-saving device for the Soviets, but also an efficient tool for U.S. foreign policy: the new world order was planned to be a unipolarity in a legitimising disguise of bipolarity.

Unlike Mary Sarotte’s 1989,¹¹ Spohr’s book does not describe the post-Cold War world-building process as a lost opportunity to integrate Russia. Or more precisely, she does not blame the West for the loss of Russia. Spohr points out that when the USSR collapsed, Bush secured generous economic assistance for Yeltsin’s Russia through the Freedom Support Act of 1992. Both Germany and the U.S. made conscious efforts not to isolate Russia. Spohr concludes that “what happened in Russia during the 1990s was beyond Western control” (591). This point about the limits of Western agency over the Russian situation resonates with Stephen Kotkin’s argument that it was impossible for the West (more precisely, the U.S.) to provide a “Marshall Plan to Russia” because of the country’s economic and socio-political turmoil.¹²

At the same time, as Sarotte does, Spohr underlines that the negotiated world order was a conservative one and based upon reformed Western institutions and structures. The proposed alternatives were short-lived. Kohl quickly ended Genscher’s surprising attempt to offer his vision for a post-Cold War Europe. Mitterrand’s European Confederation project was conservative at its core. It was not meant to replace the European Community (thus overcoming the Cold War divide) but rather aimed to create an alternative space for East-West cooperation. Gorbachev’s Common European home was an ambitious and innovative project which, however, remained very vague and general. In other words, it was not just the economic crisis that weakened the Soviet position during the negotiations, but also the lack of coherence of their projects.

⁹ See on these debates: Mark Kramer, “The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia,” *Washington Quarterly* 32:2 (2009): 39-61; André Liebich, “Les promesses faites à Gorbatchev : l’avenir des alliances au crépuscule de la guerre froide,” *Relations internationales* 147:3 (2011): 85-96; Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, “Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion,” *International Security* 40: 4 (2016): 7-44; Svetlana Savranskaya and Tom Blanton, *NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard*. Available online https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early#_edn7; Mary Elise Sarotte, “Not One Inch Eastward? Bush, Baker, Kohl, Genscher, Gorbachev, and the Origin of Russian Resentment toward NATO Enlargement in February 1990,” *Diplomatic History* 34:1 (2010): 119-140; Kristina Spohr, “Precluded or Precedent-Setting? The ‘NATO Enlargement Question’ in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990-1991,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14:4 (2012): 4-54.

¹⁰ James Addison Baker and Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: Putnam, 1995), 63; George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1999), 206; Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev: Revisiting the End of the Cold War* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), 132-34; Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 319; James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev’s Adaptability, Reagan’s Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 183; Serhii Plokhy, *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), XVI.

¹¹ Mary Sarotte, *1989: the Struggle to Create a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) eBook, 203-206.

¹² Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon averted: the Soviet collapse, 1970-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), eBook, 139-140.

Spohr describes how in the crucial spring of 1990 the Soviets (mostly because of their internal divisions) failed to propose a coherent alternative to Kohl's and Bush's cherished German NATO membership project.

All in all, *Post Wall, Post Square* describes the work of the 'conservative managers' as a success story despite all of the managers' shortcomings - after all, the end of the Cold War, unlike other transition periods of history, was largely peaceful. It can be agreed that diplomatic negotiations avoided inter-state conflicts. Yet, inter-state conflicts were not the only risk factor in the Cold War endgame: state-violence and civil/separatist wars posed an equally significant threat. To a considerable extent, state violence was limited due to Gorbachev, who (despite his turn to the right in the winter 1990/1991) made it clear that the USSR would neither use force against its own citizens nor tolerate or support it elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. It has been argued that by avoiding an active interference in Eastern European affairs, Bush facilitated Gorbachev's task¹³. However, when it came to U.S. priorities such as German unification, Bush did not hesitate to pressure Gorbachev, regardless of his fragile situation vis-à-vis Soviet conservatives. Civil wars and separatist conflicts did break out in the Caucasus, Tajikistan, Moldova, and of course in Yugoslavia. In each of these cases, no international 'manager' was able to prevent the violence. A top-down approach cannot fully explain the local character of these conflicts and the absence of a larger scale civil war in the former USSR. It might be that the question of the peaceful end of the Cold War cannot be fully answered by tracing the political events in the late 1980s and early 1990s – or by dealing with the “*agitation de surface*” - as the answer might be hidden somewhere in the deep seas of the region's social and cultural history.

The book ends with a poignant comparison between the skilful diplomatic negotiations led by the U.S. in 1988-1992 and President Donald Trump's era, when “diplomacy and statecraft is reduced to a chaotic succession of purely transactional encounters” (600). Trump bookends *Post Wall, Post Square*, appearing not just at the end of the book but also at its beginning. The first chapter describes how during Gorbachev's visit to New York, Trump was fooled by a Gorbachev look-alike and rushed out of the Trump tower to greet the eminent guest. At the time of the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall in 2009, this historical anecdote would have been of little interest to anybody. Now it seems almost as a subtle and grim prophecy for our times. This mirror game – us looking into our recent past to explain our current situation – is what makes recent history “the most exciting one, the richest in humanity, the more dangerous too”.¹⁴ And Kristina Spohr has done a wonderful job in telling it.

¹³ Sarotte, 1989, 38

¹⁴ Braudel, 14.

REVIEW BY JULIAN GEWIRTZ, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Kristina Spohr has written an ambitious and masterly history of what she calls the ‘crucial hinge years’ of 1989–1991, centered on the American, European, Soviet, and Chinese political elites that led their countries during this period. There have been excellent histories of each of these countries’ experience of 1989, and some that have crossed borders between and among them¹⁵, but Spohr breaks new ground in seeking to place these political and diplomatic narratives into one unified frame — extending back into the 1980s and toward a present moment that is still shaped in so many ways by the events of 1989.

Because of the diverse expertise of the other reviewers, I will mainly focus on Spohr’s treatment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). She argues that China must be positioned at the center of our understanding of 1989: “[W]e cannot understand post-Wall Europe without taking account of what happened in 1989 on the other side of the world. Under Deng Xiaoping, the PRC experienced a dramatically different exit from the Cold War — forever synonymous with the bloodshed in Tiananmen Square on June 4” (3). It is indeed remarkable that few prior studies have sought to interpret the transformations of 1989 with China as a central part of the story.¹⁶ Spohr, whose prior work has focused on the international history of Germany, makes a significant and overdue contribution by integrating it into her account.¹⁷

More specifically, Spohr wants readers to see China’s course as a refutation of the ‘fall of communism’ narrative that dominates public perceptions of 1989. “China’s gradual entry into the global capitalist economy was therefore counterbalanced by Deng’s determination to maintain the dominance of the Communist Party,” she writes (3). This is a straightforward argument that the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown “came to mark a historic divide — a fundamental divergence in exiting the Cold War.” She adds, “Post Square would not be Post Wall,” because it underscored that “people power was not an irresistible force; it could be smashed by the military or channeled by politicians” (583), a claim with which few could now disagree, despite the optimistic views of some liberal political leaders at the time.

Generally speaking, while this book is to be commended for engaging rigorously with the elite politics of China, Spohr does not delve especially deeply into the task of bringing forward novel perspectives on Chinese politics or China’s 1989 (one thinks of the archival revelations on China’s 1989 drawn from former Eastern Bloc archives that work by Mary Sarotte has offered¹⁸). In fairness, this is not her stated task — but, to my mind, Spohr’s analysis of China’s 1989 does too little to wrestle with the central dilemma of that moment in China’s ongoing transformations: If we are to see China’s 1989 as a symbol, should it be seen as a symbol of continuity (e.g., the *continued* dominance of the CCP, the *persistence* of socialist-market hybridity, the *enduring* limits on freedoms of speech and association, etc.) or of discontinuity (e.g., the *shift* in how the CCP would rule, the *end* of the experiments of the 1980s, a *change* in China’s view of the wider world, etc.)? Is it

¹⁵ See, for example, Sergey Radchenko, *Unwanted Visionaries: The Soviet Failure in Asia at the End of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); James Mark, Bogdan C. Iacob, Tobias Rupprecht, and Ljubica Spaskovska, eds., *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); and Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ For valuable exceptions, see Mary Sarotte, “China’s Fear of Contagion: Tiananmen Square and the Power of the European Example,” *International Security* 37:2 (Fall 2012): 156–182; Quinn Slobodian, “China is not Far! Alternative Internationalism and the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 East Germany,” in James Mark, Steffi Marung, and Artemy Kalinovsky, eds., *Alternative Encounters: The Second World and the Global South* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 2020; and Radchenko, *Unwanted Visionaries*.

¹⁷ Kristina Spohr, *The Global Chancellor: Helmut Schmidt and the Reshaping of the International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Spohr, *Germany and the Baltic Problem after the Cold War: The Development of a New Ostpolitik, 1989-2000* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁸ Sarotte, “China’s Fear of Contagion.”

possible, and perhaps most profitable, to understand it as both at once?¹⁹ Spohr's book emphasizes the continuities across 1989 in China, in contrast to the immense political discontinuities elsewhere in the world. This leaves open many additional possibilities for understanding the tumult and meaning of this period in China and globally.

The treatment of China in *Post Wall, Post Square* is most revealing in showing how China's crackdown influenced other Communist countries' handling questions of uprising and reform. Spohr describes Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reaction to the protests, upon arriving in Beijing for a state visit in May 1989, when the protesters began their hunger strike in Tiananmen Square: for Gorbachev, it was a negative example, and he "had told his own staff on arriving that he was not keen to take the Chinese road, he did not want Red Square to look like Tiananmen Square" (51). Although the Soviets were surprised by China's democracy movement — Soviet government spokesperson Gennady Gerasimov admitted, "We hadn't expected this" — it made Gorbachev "even more convinced that *his* strategy, aimed at avoiding violence and building a 'mixed economy' without the extremes of capitalist privatization and social inequality, was the only sensible way forward" (59). However, for the East German leadership, China's crackdown was essential to the preservation of socialism; General Secretary Erich Honecker sent his deputy Egon Krenz to Beijing in October 1989, and "Krenz expressed his pleasure in visiting an 'impenetrable bastion of socialism in Asia' . . . Deng Xiaoping told Krenz emphatically, 'We defend socialism together — you in the GDR, we in the People's Republic of China'" (122). S shows how Tiananmen haunted other key moments in 1989, calling it "another ghost at the feast — an ugly reminder of what could happen if democratic reform went wrong" (100). Spohr also includes, and tells well, the now well-known history of the George H. W. Bush Administration's response to Tiananmen, which has remained so significant in setting the parameters of U.S.-China relations, at least prior to the Trump administration. However, Spohr's book offers little on the question of how events elsewhere in the world — from Poland and Romania to the Philippines and Taiwan — affected decision-making in Beijing in 1989 and immediately thereafter. This is not a major omission given the book's impressive sweep, but it is an area for future scholars to examine further.

Spohr's excellent book will not be the last word on how China fits into the global story of 1989–1991. *Post Wall, Post Square* succeeds in including Beijing as a central site of the global meaning of this historical moment, with great resonance across the other transformations of these 'hinge years.' And like many of the most enduring works of historical scholarship, it will provide a broad and sturdy foundation for much future work to come.

¹⁹ For an examination of this question in the realm of official ideology by this reviewer, see Julian Gewirtz, "Loving Capitalism Disease': AIDS and Ideology in the People's Republic of China, 1984–2000," *Past & Present* 249:1 (November 2020): 251–294, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz068>.

REVIEW BY ARTEMY KALINOVSKY, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

More than thirty years after the collapse of state socialism and the end of the Cold War, we are still fascinated by and trying to make sense of what happened between 1989 and 1992. Part of the reason is surely the momentous nature of the transformations that took place in those years, and the questions they raise about what drives historical change (great men and women? Popular movements? Ideas? Contingency? Structure?) The other is the developments of those years (or perhaps, more accurately, our reading of those developments continue to shape the contemporary world.

A book like Kristina Spohr's *Post Wall, Post Square: How Bush, Gorbachev, Kohl, and Deng Shaped the World After 1989* thus provides an opportunity to reflect on how we should study such a global and complex phenomenon, as well as what historical study can offer the present. The last two waves of books on 1989 – which came out at the twentieth anniversary in 2009 and then at the twenty-fifth in 2014, held to a meta-narrative that took hold in the 1990s and went something like this: 1) the East European states were under a yoke that most people experienced as foreign 2) in the late 1980s they took the streets to protest that yoke and demand western-style liberalism 3) the East European socialist regimes had to concede that the game was up.²⁰

In some of the most recent books on 1989 and its legacy, the message is much less optimistic.²¹ These are written against the background of the migrant crisis, the entrenchment of Viktor Orban in Hungary, of Law and Justice in Poland, and broad support for illiberal policies throughout the region. Scholars have had to revisit the story they have been telling for decades. We are now more aware that disappointment with European integration was already settling in during the late 1990s, grew stronger over the 2000s, and then exploded in the decade after the 2007 financial crisis. Some of this work has drawn attention to the extent of support for authoritarian solutions among opponents to socialist rule, the range of proposals for economic reform, and the complicated relationship between opponents of state-socialism and the post-colonial world that had once found allies in the socialist camp.²²

Kristina Spohr's *Post-Wall, Post-Square*, one of the recent entries into the literature on the end of the Cold War is, by any measure, a remarkable achievement. Revisiting the collapse of state-socialism and the end of the Cold War, Spohr shows how leaders of the USSR, the People's Republic of China (PRC), France, Germany, and the United States dealt with the rapid changes of those years. As Spohr explains in the introduction, understanding the changes that took place requires adopting an "artificial vantage point 'above' the confusion of events" while executing a "granular reconstruction of key episodes" since "the story of what happened in those years was 'co-written' by chief actors" (7). She succeeds on both counts, not only giving the reader a broad overview of geopolitical transformations but reconstructing the day to day and often hour-by-hour maneuvers, evaluations, consultations, re-assessments, and negotiations of her subjects.

Moreover, her skill at granular reconstruction is not limited to areas where she has specialized previously. Often, historians specializing on one country or region who attempt this kind of multi-focal study falter when discussing regions or countries less familiar to them. Though the chapters on Germany are the most detailed, providing an intimate portrait of Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher in these years, Spohr deftly excavates the moves of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to stay atop the revolution he unleashed, and of his eventual rival Boris Yeltsin to outmaneuver Gorbachev and lead a new Russian Federation out of the ruins of the USSR. The chapters on President George H.W. Bush,

²⁰ I reviewed some of the works that appeared around the twenty-fifth anniversary of 1989 in Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "New Histories of the End of the Cold War and the Late Twentieth Century," *Contemporary European History* 27:1 (2018): 149-161.

²¹ See, in particular, James Mark, Bogdan Iacob, Tobias Rupperecht, and Ljubica Spaskovska, *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, *The Light That Failed: Why the West Is Losing the Fight for Democracy* (New York: Pegasus Boks, 2019).

²² Mark et al., *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe*.

a figure who has received relatively little attention from historians until recently, are equally informative, drawing on recent literature and adding to it with original research.²³ In all of these cases, as well as in her discussion of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, the analysis of foreign-policy decision making is firmly grounded in an appreciation of domestic politics. I found the discussion of Bush's Russia policy in 1992, and his struggles with Congress to increase aid to Russia in an election year, particularly illuminating. Finally, the book is a pleasure to read. Spohr accomplishes what few authors are able to do: write a book that covers multiple perspectives, and is accessible to broad audiences while also satisfying academic specialists.

Post-Wall, Post-Square departs from much of the literature on 1989 in several significant ways. First, and most obviously, it takes 1989 as a starting point rather than an end-point. Although the events of that momentous year occupy a third of the book, that discussion is largely a set-up of what comes after: both the more familiar efforts to unwind the Cold War and the debate over German Unification and NATO, and the less familiar attempts to revive U.S.-PRC relations in the wake of Tiananmen and to articulate a new policy to Russia, Central Europe, and former Soviet republics, and the relationship between the end of the Cold War, German reunification, and European integration. Second, while a number of works in the 1989 literature have focused on popular movements and civil society, Spohr firmly anchors her account around national leaders.²⁴ This is, emphatically, not a study of people power, or the transformation of government bureaucracies, or an intellectual history. But precisely because Spohr is able to reconstruct key moments in granular detail while linking individual dilemmas and crises to the larger narrative she demonstrates the value of this kind of political and diplomatic history, even, or especially, when it comes to historical junctures where the subjects who were supposed to have been in control often seem to have been in danger of being left behind by events.

In terms of evaluating what these subjects did, and the broader meaning of 1989, *Post-Wall, Post-Square* takes a kind of intermediate position. The introduction and conclusion suggest something different: Spohr notes in the introduction that the failure to create a truly pan-European security structure building on the CSCE foundation failed because the "post-Wall political reality" was that America would remain a European power (6). As a result, the "West-East asymmetry increased over time" leading eventually to tensions between Russia and the NATO powers (7). She rightly points out that the notion that Russia or the PRC would have accepted subordinate status now appears "hopelessly naïve" (8). But the rest of the text nevertheless leaves one feeling that at each juncture the actors involved came away with the best possible solution. Consider, for example, the discussion on German reunification and its inclusion in NATO, which to this day remains one of the most controversial aspects of the end of the Cold War. Russia has insisted that Gorbachev had been promised that NATO would not move 'one inch eastward' after German unification; U.S. officials insist no such promise was made, and certainly not one that was set down on paper. While historians agree that while there was no formal agreement about NATO expansion, the question of whether or not NATO expansion violated the spirit of the times remains controversial.²⁵ Although Spohr has

²³ For example, Jeffrey A. Engel, *When the World Seemed New: George HW Bush and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

²⁴ See, for example, Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). Gregory F. Domber, *Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Mary Elise Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

²⁵ See Mark Kramer, "The Myth of A No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia." *The Washington Quarterly* 32:2 (2009): 39-61; Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the US Offer to Limit NATO Expansion." *International Security* 40:4 (2016): 7-44; Mark Kramer and Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "NATO Enlargement—Was There a Promise?," *International Security* 42:1 (2017): 186-192; Mary Elise Sarotte, "Not One Inch Eastward? Bush, Baker, Kohl, Genscher, Gorbachev, and the Origin of Russian Resentment toward NATO Enlargement in February 1990," *Diplomatic History* 34:1 (2010): 119-140; Sergey Radchenko, "'Nothing but Humiliation for Russia': Moscow and NATO's Eastern Enlargement, 1993-1995," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43:6-7 (2020): 769-815; Marc Trachtenberg, "The United States and the NATO Non-extension Assurances of 1990: New Light on an Old Problem?" *International Security* 45:3 (Winter 2020/2021), 162-203.

written about this elsewhere,²⁶ here she sidesteps the controversy, instead tracing the evolution of a position between Kohl and Bush on the one side and Gorbachev and the other, and culminating in Kohl and Genscher's meeting with Gorbachev and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze at a government dacha in Arkhyz. Here, the German chancellor and foreign minister slowly got their Soviet counterparts to agree to "full sovereignty upon unification, NATO membership, and total Red Army withdrawal within four years" (243). Gorbachev, it is clear, was hardly a master negotiator, floating various proposals (a united Germany out of NATO, or a united Germany in NATO but not in the former German Democratic Republic), and often playing for time and money. But the agreement cost him domestic support, and set up one of the more contentious problems in Russian-NATO relations in the post-Cold War era.

Here, I think, we see the downside of focusing on the people who seemed to be 'co-writers' of this history. The problem is not that Spohr ignores detractors or alternatives; she is quite at home explaining conservative, democratic, and nationalist opposition to Gorbachev, for example. Rather, when we see this story through the eyes of a small group of key protagonists (a rather clubby group, as Spohr points out) we see their agreements and successes as ultimate accomplishments. Germany was reunited, the world was transformed, and the cause of European Unity advanced one more step towards its teleological end-goal. Clearly, this is not Spohr's argument actually believes, as she laments the squandering of this unique historical moment in the decades that followed in the introduction and again the conclusion. Inevitably, however, the problems that bedevil the post-war decades appear to be ones that took shape *after* the events discussed in the book.

To put it another way, the book teases a presentist history that speaks to our time, but mostly treats the period on its own terms. Donald Trump makes a few awkward appearances as a brash but failing real estate developer trying to get a moment with Gorbachev (12) or loans to dig himself out of bankruptcy (303). But for most of the book Spohr avoids reading the history of the years after the Square and the Wall as a crucible for our current moment. This is not in of itself a problem, but since the roundtable format provides an opportunity for the author to respond, I would invite her to weigh in on several questions. First, to what extent did the post-wall/post-square years shape the problems we face today? Are the problems of Russian-European and Russian-American relations a failure of the 1990s and 2000s, or do their roots lie in the settlement reached in the post-wall/post-square years?²⁷ Was the post-wall, post-square moment a triumph of leadership that their successors failed to institutionalize? Or was the settlement itself fundamentally flawed? More broadly, did the Cold War settlement contain the seeds of the rise of euro-skepticism, right-wing populism, and figures like Victor Orban and Donald Trump? Second, the book is aimed at generalists, and therefore does not engage in a discussion of historiography. But how does Spohr see her study fitting into recent debates on the end of the Cold War?

²⁶ Kristina Spohr, "Precluded or Precedent-Setting? The "NATO Enlargement Question" in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990–1991," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14:4 (2012): 4–54.

²⁷ See, for example, William Hill, *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions Since 1989* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

REVIEW BY PHILIP ZELIKOW, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Kristina Spohr has written a monumental, traditional narrative account of one of the catalytic episodes of global construction and reconstruction in modern history. Hers is the only account that does this reasonably comprehensively, across all the major powers and investigating available records in all the principal languages – English, German, French, and Russian. Spohr has looked at the limited Chinese materials that are available, in translation. Her work is balanced and factually reliable. It will be one of the standard works on this period for many years to come.

Until the First World War, despite a couple of European experiments, there were no truly *global* efforts to organize purposeful structures of cooperative world order. Any cooperative system of world order is no more than a group of governments (or other powerful institutions) that try to work together to accomplish certain purposes. There have been three such efforts in the last hundred years. All three tried at least to do a few basic things: indicate the major powers or institutions that accept some responsibility for the effective operation of the system; prevent or manage the danger of aggressive armed conflict, including by organizing to deal with common enemies; and set up a working basis for global commerce, including any common rules for trade and finance.

The first system was set up between 1919 and 1925. From the start it had some significant handicaps and limitations, but perhaps it could have lasted for a little while. But it soon collapsed amid a series of ill-managed crises between 1930 and the end of 1933. Zara Steiner may have come closest to offering a satisfactory, comprehensive multi-archival account of this first period of global order-building, but even she touched only lightly on the ‘Washington’ part of the system that addressed naval arms control and the future of China and East Asia.²⁸

The second system, the Cold War system, was a system for a divided world. It was set up mainly between 1944 and 1951. No historian has satisfactorily endeavored to write a full international history of the political and economic constructions and reconstructions of this period.²⁹

The Cold War system was cooperative, but only within the two principal confederations. These confederations organized themselves for global war and competed for advantage in the uncommitted ‘third’ world. The economic side of both confederations began unraveling during the 1970s and the political-military side of the system disintegrated between 1988 and 1990, ushering in a new period of constructions and reconstructions. Some of the reconstructions were not well understood, especially since organizations like NATO or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) retained familiar structures, even as the actual missions of those institutions were transformed.

²⁸ In the first five chapters, plus chapter 7, of Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁹ A chronicler would need to encompass the creation of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods financial system including the IMF and World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the Soviet bloc economic counterparts, the European Recovery Program, the evolving European security structures from Western European Union to North Atlantic Treaty to a North Atlantic Treaty Organization with its associated multinational military command structure (with the European Defence Community along the way), the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and then the complex of security systems that had solidified in East Asia by 1951, dominated by a U.S. network of alliances sitting uneasily alongside the shakily reconstructed British and French imperial domains, with these facing the Soviet and Chinese network of alliances. By 1951 the rival confederations and their core organizations were perfectly visible. Although the dividing lines in Europe and Korea and the Taiwan Strait had settled into place, there was ongoing war in Indochina and the future of the Middle East and North Africa was entering its own period of turmoil and reconstruction, where the paramount British role came under great stress, starting in two of its cornerstones -- Iran then Egypt. The best recent efforts at summarizing the features of this divided global order are Lorenz Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), chapters 1-4; and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), chapters 2-7.

Spohr has taken on the enormously ambitious task of chronicling the principal constructions and reconstructions of this third system of world order. This system, meant to provide the foundation for a growing global commonwealth, was mainly set up between 1989 and 1994, though Spohr focuses her attention on the period between 1989 and 1992. (The global financial structures were created beginning in 1978.)

As this system is now declining, it is worth taking stock. Spohr does not know what to call this third system. “Unipolarity proved the best,” she writes, “or least inadequate, term for a post-Cold War era that still has no name” (594). By calling unipolarity the “least inadequate” term, Spohr is too kind. In our own recent stocktaking, Condoleezza Rice and I acknowledged the illusion of what we called a “unipolar mirage.”³⁰ It was a conceit. It was an abstraction. But unipolarity was, and is, not an adequate depiction of the historical reality. Americans deluded by such mirages found this out if they journeyed through the distant, shimmering haze out into the world, to arrive at the concrete problems there.

Rice and I do have a name for this era since 1989. We call it a global commonwealth. This is, after all, exactly what all its creators aspired to build – as they repeatedly explained. In 1989 and 1990, President George H.W. Bush referred repeatedly to his hope for a “commonwealth of free nations.” Spohr has an especially memorable emphasis on Bush’s explanation of a “new world order” in September 1990 (349-351).

Yet these aspirations were not at all unique to Americans. Other leaders had analogous views, which is why their common project progressed so far. That is, these leaders in Europe, Asia, and America *wanted* to build the system of globalization that has universally been acknowledged as a feature of the world created at the beginning of the 1990s.

These leaders in Europe, Asia, and America *wanted* to overcome an age of great power blocs and replace it with the possibility of global cooperation to promote notions of common security. They hoped that these aspirations would evolve constructively. As they more or less did, for about a generation.

The great temptation in writing such a broad, complex narrative is to pick out some unifying theme, or argument, and turn it into a hook that can readily be distilled at a book talk. For instance, Steiner’s big argument was that World War One’s outcome did not predetermine World War Two. The intervening developments of the 1920s and 1930s did not have to end in horror; the choices in those years really mattered.

Steiner was right about that. But it is unlikely that all but a few will actually read her giant volumes to imbibe that one point. They will read them for a series of rather masterly summaries of various specific episodes and topics, assessed from a broad base of research.

Spohr too has such a hook. It is to refer repeatedly to the ‘conservative’ approach that all of the major leaders, from China to the Soviet Union to Western Europe to the United States, adopted in trying to manage great change. She argues that “the leaders of the transition years did ultimately embrace transformative change but, at least initially, they tried to cloak it in garments from the past” (586).

This is true, as far as it goes. It does not go very far. If all the leaders were ‘conservative,’ then how does one describe their differences? These were considerable. For instance, if a pronounced outlier in her story like British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is lumped with all the others, what value does the label ‘conservative’ actually add?

If the transitional leaders are labeled as conservative, the label implies that there were radical alternatives. But then why were these alternatives sometimes advocated by some of the conservatives? For instance, in the Chinese case, the radical

³⁰ Philip Zelikow & Condoleezza Rice, *To Build a Better World: Choices to End the Cold War and Create a Global Commonwealth* (New York: Twelve, 2019), 464 (“unipolar mirage”).

alternative might have been a democratic transition, led by someone like China's 'Gorbachev,' Zhao Ziyang. Spohr does not analyze this possibility, except to describe its defeat.

In the German case, the radical alternative might have been to reject both Communism and the existing West German system, including NATO membership, in order to vote in a Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD)-New Forum coalition. They would also have sought unity, but under Article 146 of the Federal Republic of Germany's (FRG) Basic Law (rather than Article 23) and negotiated a new all-German constitution, creating a new kind of federal German republic, one that was nonaligned between East and West. But the supposedly 'conservative' choice also ushered in quite radical change, and this was done in a much more revolutionary manner and rapid timetable than what their radical opponents had envisioned or preferred. In this case at least, the 'conservative' label conceals more than it reveals.

Or consider the Soviet case. There was a radical economic alternative offered in August-September 1990 (the 500-day plan), which President Mikhail Gorbachev effectively rejected. There were various radical political alternatives offered by Boris Yeltsin, Russia's leader (then chairman of its Supreme Soviet). At the core of those was his advocacy of a Russian democratic republic to replace the Soviet Communist empire. This was paired with Yeltsin's initial advocacy, from 1990 to 1992, of a revolutionary market-oriented economic approach as well (including Yeltsin's support for the 500-day plan).

But how, then, should historians understand what happened to Russia once Yeltsin took over as president of an independent Russia in the absolutely pivotal years of 1992 and 1993? Spohr has quite a good narrative of the great power politics of policy toward Russia in 1992, including a well-researched summary of the arguments about Western aid and IMF support, in part of chapter 8 on the 'Dawn of a New Era' (455-485). By her account, this is a story in which Yeltsin effectively abandoned his own democratic and economic revolution by the end of 1992.

But did the installation of the "experienced Soviet apparatchik" (484) prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, mark a victory of conservatism? Or was this, as I believe, really a kind of counterrevolution, in which elements of the old elite banded with elements of an emerging new elite to exploit the world of partial reforms in the formation of new, lawless, oligarchies?

To some academics, the radical alternative to the 'conservatives' might have been democratic socialism, the socialism that would have viewed capitalism and the preoccupation with individual and property rights as incompatible with true democracy, the socialism that would have scorned 'third way' social democrats and their compromises with "neoliberalism."³¹ But Spohr does not spend much time on this academic alternative, since it was not a major feature of actual political life in Europe, North America, and East Asia. Politicians espousing such views were neither egalitarian nor democratic in their ways and most voters rejected them when given a chance.

In sum, the "conservative" tagline is a hindrance to Spohr's analysis. It actually obscures the many insights Spohr offers in her topical treatments. Therefore, I recommend reading Spohr's book for the same reason as I recommend Steiner's, which is to mine the well-judged narrative distillations on particular topics of interest. These are usually sections of chapters. *Post Wall, Post Square* will be a lasting resource for this.

In organizing the topics into a narrative flow, Spohr faced a great challenge. A strictly chronological approach is practically unreadable. There are too many characters, too many issues going on simultaneously. There were at least six major issue vectors: China, Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, European security, Germany, and Western Europe integration.

That is before one gets into wider issues of the future of global security, initially catalyzed by the Iraq crisis of 1990-1991. Then there were, at the same time, the wider issues of the global economy, catalyzed particularly by the Uruguay Round/World Trade Organization (WTO) cluster of issues and the IMF/post-Communist reconstruction cluster. The

³¹ This is the dominant theme, for instance, of Simon Reid-Henry's polemic, *Empire of Democracy: The Remaking of the West Since the Cold War, 1971-2017* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019).

problem for the historian is that, at the time, many of the characters were actually juggling all or most of these – and the different issues interacted. But few readers can handle that.

My own imperfect solution to the problem of narrative structure in my recent book on this period was to organize the account around sets of choices on each of these vectors.³² Spohr's solution is a set of overlapping chronological narratives, mainly oriented around meetings of leaders. So, for instance, one of the challenges in her 'Germany' chapter is to go through that chronology but then go back over the chronology again when she does her 'Western Europe integration' account in another chapter, and then try to match up the layered story.

As for Spohr's treatment of some major topics, I have one complaint and several points of praise. The complaint is that the book is too disparaging about the solutions for European security. Spohr's discussion of key issues and moves in the CFE negotiation (Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) is problematic. She argues that, amid the uncertainties of the early 1990s, "no new security institutions had emerged in post-Cold War Europe to cope with that sense of uncertainty" (485). This treatment of the CFE, along with Spohr's underestimation of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council which was created in 1991 and her dismissal of the Helsinki/OSCE process as a "damp squib" (486), leads her to overlook the whole pan-European security system, one which, though now diminished, performs dangerous and valuable work right now, in the Donbass.

The CFE Treaty managed the verified reduction of more than 50,000 pieces of heavy military equipment, including tanks, other armored combat vehicles, artillery pieces, combat aircraft, and combat helicopters. In addition to the reductions, all of these categories of equipment were comprehensively limited in size and area of deployment. The scope of the disarmament was so large that countries like Germany, Russia, and the United States spent billions of dollars each just to cut up and destroy all these systems, actually devoting a massive effort to convert swords into plowshares on an epic scale.

To monitor both the reductions and the limits, just in the agreement's first years CFE states from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains accepted and conducted literally thousands of intrusive, on-site inspections of military installations across the length and breadth of Europe. Both NATO's North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) did very hard work in the early 1990s to adapt an agreement that initially set NATO and Warsaw Pact limits into one that set national limits, including limits on where forces could be stationed, including quite difficult and important negotiations involving Russia and Ukraine. This was all supplemented by the Open Skies system, involving dozens of countries, another product of the transition years Spohr describes, and that is also linked to the OSCE.³³

Given the history of Europe during the past few centuries, this story would have seemed inconceivable only a few years before it became a reality. No one should have taken this system for granted, just because it did not stop conflict in the Balkans or Azerbaijan.

It was therefore a tragedy of the first importance when, in 2007, Russia suspended its compliance with the CFE treaty. We can all now see that this suspension was an essential prerequisite to subsequent conflicts between Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine. The American withdrawal from Open Skies is another blow. The significance of such a pan-European security system when it was in operation should be acknowledged by scholars so that citizens will be able to notice the significance of

³² Zelikow & Rice, *To Build a Better World*.

³³ See Jane M.O. Sharp, *Striving for Military Stability in Europe: Negotiation, Implementation, and Adaptation of the CFE Treaty* (London: Routledge, 2006); Jenonne Walker, *Security and Arms Control in Post-Confrontation Europe*, SIPRI Research Report (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Celeste Wallander, *Mortal Friends, Best Enemies: German-Russian Cooperation After the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), esp. 104-115.

its loss. I also wished for more from Spohr on the post-Soviet ‘loose nukes’ and biological weapons issues (the latter being a highly secret dimension of the delicate negotiations in 1990 and 1991, known only to the Americans, British, and Soviets).

With that complaint out of the way, let me turn to some illustrative examples of how well Spohr handles the topical treatments in this remarkable book. My first example is Spohr’s treatment of the transition from the European Community (EC) to the European Union (EU). Spohr has a tightly written, well-researched account of the story, in which France was emphasizing monetary union, the West Germans emphasized political union, and the two countries hammered out a convergence in the winter of 1989-1990.

Spohr then advances that story to another level. In part of her chapter 5, “Building a Europe ‘Whole and Free’” (256-288), she more carefully develops the contrasting visions for Europe among Gorbachev, President François Mitterrand, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Bush, and Thatcher, very much including the vision for the EU. She explains that, in fact, Gorbachev’s and Mitterrand’s visions (the Soviet “Common European Home” and Mitterrand’s 1989-1990 idea for a “European confederation”), were quite close. Both excluded or assumed the absence of the United States and downplayed the extension of the EU into eastern Europe. Bush and his secretary of state, Jim Baker, were focused on NATO as a way to keep the U.S. in Europe, but as an organization transformed into a more political role, and Bush/Baker were prepared to support an ambitious future for the EU. In relation to the U.S. vision, Thatcher was an outlier on both NATO and the EU.

In Spohr’s convincing analysis, it is Kohl’s vision (which closely aligned with that of European Commission President Jacques Delors) that was the most broad-gauged and far-sighted in balancing both the NATO and EU dimensions. Kohl also more clearly envisioned the future role of the EU in eastern Europe. She especially notes the importance of a crucial Kohl-Mitterrand dinner on February 15, 1990, a meeting which I overlooked in my work. Thus, it is the U.S. alignment with Kohl, as much as Kohl’s alignment with the U.S., that cemented a distinctive vision for the way Europe developed in 1990 and onward.

Another illustration of the breadth of Spohr’s topical analysis is her treatment both of what the ‘new world order’ was in its emerging years, 1990-1992, and of what it was not. Skipping across the archives, she has perhaps the best summary now in print of the international summitry of the diplomacy surrounding the Iraq crisis of 1990-1991. She follows this with an adept summary of the diplomacy surrounding the Yugoslav conflict that followed, including both the European interplay and a quite accurate rendition of the Bush administration’s great reluctance to intervene in the Croatian or the subsequent, more horrifying, Bosnian war. She adds a sharply observed treatment of the initial U.S. and UN involvement in Somalia in 1992 which, in that stage, was “carefully calibrated, short-term.” (526)

Bush, she observes, “had no intention of assuming for America the role of global *peacemaker* and even less of global *peace-enforcer*” (526, emphasis in original). Yet she notices some of the lesser-known examples of how effective multilateral cooperation could be, as in Asia. She points to the extraordinarily promising progress achieved with North Korea in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse. With help from Russia and China, in 1991-1992 the North Korean nuclear issue and North-South Korean relations never came closer to successful resolution (534-541). Spohr also describes the major multilateral and UN effort to restore order and build a new state in Cambodia. This also had its critical phase in 1991-1992 (563), an operation involving 22,000 peacekeepers from 22 countries, with a strong role played by Japan, yet with vital negotiation of acquiescence from a Chinese government that was then, post-Tiananmen, in a phase of tense relations with much of the world.

“In practice, then,” Spohr writes, “the ‘new world order’ required flexible response rather than rigid blueprints” (529). She is certainly right about that. Her book is timely. The period she chronicles should be a source of insight and inspiration for those who, in the 2020s, may embark on their own journeys of construction, and reconstruction.

 RESPONSE BY KRISTINA SPOHR, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

I appreciate the enthusiastic reception of my work by the four expert commentators – Una Bergmane, Julian Gewirtz, Artemy Kalinovsky and Philip Zelikow – and the highly stimulating and detailed responses to my book from them. I also thank Sergey Radchenko for his thoughtful introduction. *Post Wall, Post Square* is a long read, and I am grateful to these five colleagues for devoting a significant amount of time to engage in conversation with me. Their incisive critiques are invariably constructive and their thoughtful reactions agreeably positive. Since they have approached my interpretation from several different angles while raising important questions, let me address some of these in turn.

The first area concerns method: the way I, as an historian of international affairs, approached the overall task of telling the story of the global exit from the Cold War.

As Una Bergmane highlights, “the debates about how to research and write international history” appear to be “a never-ending process.” She stresses, first, the tension within the academy between “calls for internationalization” and demands for “national refocusing.” Second, she points to the trend of accusing political historians of concentrating exclusively on the “*agitation de surface*” (Fernand Braudel) which are merely passengers carried forward by “the powerful waves of social and environmental history.” Third, we should mention here the lobby pressing for the study of trans-national movements as opposed to leaders and leadership styles, national interests and shifts in state power whose variations might effect the transformation of the *inter-national* system. More generally, historians today are grappling with how to straddle successfully the deep cultural divide between those who favour in-depth niche or micro-histories as selective reflections of bigger developments and those who seek to explain epochal systemic change itself.

As I spelled out in the introduction of *Post Wall, Post Square*, my aim was to combine the “granular reconstruction of key episodes” with the “synoptic study of macro-historical change” on the basis of deep multi-archival research and broad multi-national historiographical reading. As I zoomed in on the tumultuous “hinge years” 1988-1992, I chose an “artificial vantage point from above the confusion of events,” while at the same time looking to “find space for the narratives with which the leading protagonists made sense of the world and justified their actions” (7-8).

I further argued, that while the “astonishing upheavals” stemmed both “from structural shifts in the global system and from the rising transnational salience of people power,” the policymakers in Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Bonn, Paris, London and Tokyo did matter (81). Because, as Una Bergmane rightly surmises, these men and women were the ones who, by virtue of their position in the national and global power hierarchies, had the “opportunity” even if not always the “capacity” to “channel the unleashed forces into a new world order.” They were conscious “makers of history in their own right” (7).

Linking the history of politics, diplomacy, and ideas with findings from the relevant social and economic historiography and drawing on theoretical impulses from IR and the political sciences, I explored the national bouleversements – in Europe and Asia – within the context of global epochal exchange. The aim was to show how, after revolutionary upheaval around the world, a new international order was forged – without major conflict.

I set out to present the palimpsest of multispeed events, evolutionary developments, and political choices in an integrated way. To that end, aside from combing through a vast range of primary sources, I needed to bring together findings from a very atomised and fragmented literature that has grown up around geographically and thematically separate areas.

There were the “traditional end-of-the-Cold War topics,” as Bergame so aptly notes, such as arms control negotiations – on intermediate nuclear forces (INF), the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE)– Tiananmen Square, the Eastern European revolutions, German Unification, Soviet collapse, and the Gulf War. And these had to be linked to and enmeshed with the more rarified subjects of European integration, NATO’s reform, Yugoslavia’s bloody implosion, humanitarian intervention in Somalia, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

negotiations, rogue states and the problem of nuclear proliferation (e.g., North Korea and the post-Soviet space), and Soviet/Russian and American relations with China and Japan.

Regarding the challenges of such a venture, all four reviewers agree both how necessary and also how difficult it is to write a truly blended, multi-perspective account of the ending of the Cold War and the rebuilding of the world. It necessitates piecing together a mosaic, without losing track of the big explanatory vectors that can help us to understand the meaning of this historical moment.

But, as Philip Zelikow highlights – in his distinctive role as a scholar and a former political practitioner – it really mattered to tell this complex story in all its breadth, not least from an applied history perspective because we are looking at one of the key “catalytic episodes of global construction and reconstruction in modern history.” An episode from which much may be learned.

This brings me to the second area on which the reviewers focused – questions pertaining to content and argument. Why and how did the Cold War so suddenly come to an end and why at that particular juncture? What did that mean? And in which ways did the dual exit – “post wall” (in Europe) and “post square” (in Asia) – come to shape our present times? What were the main flaws in the post-Cold War systems created under the pressures of that moment? And why is that order now in decline? Why did we fail to see the potential consequences?

As we take stock of the “collapse” and the “re-building,” we must not be tempted by *ex post facto* rationalizations. Nor should we map ideological belief systems or neat theoretic concepts onto historical developments in order to create implicit, “inevitable” assumptions. The reality of decision-making is almost always more complicated than the simple presentation by political leaders of preferred policies, apparently without alternatives. International politics, after all, is suffused with contingency.

Questions abound of course about what might have been, had other routes been taken out of the Cold War. As historians, we are not in the business of producing prescriptions or designing ideal solutions. But through careful research and by reading the sources against the grain, we are able to dissect and understand the contemporary constraints, political considerations, and mental maps of the key protagonists, and how these aspects came to inform their choices and affect how these were implemented, as they sought to re-build the world after 1989.

Nothing was inevitable, there were no teleologies, as Kalinovsky suggests; some of the roads taken out of the Cold War were, even in retrospect, the best options available at the time. The process of change and stabilisation achieved in these years should be seen as a genuine historical feat. In Germany, for instance, since 1945 an open wound at the heart of the East-West conflict. Post-wall, the re-establishment of unity had to be painstakingly negotiated at home as well as with the victor powers and neighbours. In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – the lifting of the iron curtain thanks to Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev allowed the CEE to pursue what they called the “re-unification” of the continent after forty years of division. By 1990/91, they had freed themselves from the oppression of the “empire by imposition” (previously manifested through the Warsaw Pact and the Kremlin-imposed Brezhnev Doctrine) and started to make their home within the “empire by invitation,” NATO (69). An early, successful coup in Moscow could have changed this course of history in an instant, as could a “Chinese solution” in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) or Czechoslovakia which might have thwarted a 9 November and a velvet revolution (135, 149).

Once we explore the ideas on the table for a postwall pan-European security architecture (from Gorbachev’s “Common European home” that was based on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to French President François Mitterrand’s “European Confederation,” an idea anchored in the European Union (EU)) and enquire why these visions of the late 1980s were not converted into policy, it becomes clearer how much contingency mattered – the speed of events, evolving economic and political processes, and changing power dynamics on the domestic and international plane. But we come to appreciate as well that what looked to all protagonists like the best solutions at the time, also contained the seeds of future problems (82-3, 164, 217, 256-61, 289, 311).

Important as the structural flaws in the new architecture were, we should not overlook the genuine goodwill and ‘cooperative spirit’ among the contemporary political actors, especially in the former Cold War cockpit of Europe, and their desire to conduct constructive diplomacy in order to achieve win-win situations, rather than zero-sum solutions, even if, naturally, all sides pursued their national interests.

As Zelikow writes: “These leaders in Europe, Asia, and America *wanted* to overcome an age of great power blocs and replace it with the possibility of global cooperation to promote notions of common security. They hoped that these aspirations would evolve constructively. As they more or less did, for about a generation.” One reason for this success may be that the leaders of this era behaved like “managers” (4, 8) of change. And their approach to their task was “conservative” – but not (pace Zelikow) in the sense of political values or partisan affiliations. What mattered was that they all preferred to proceed from the ‘known knowns.’ There was no tabula rasa in 1989 on which something wholly novel was built. Instead, we witnessed processes of preservation, modification, and reinvention: in China, USSR/Russia and the post-Soviet space, and of the organisations NATO, the European Community (EC)/EU and CSCE/ Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)) to fit the new post-Wall realities. We witnessed the making of a new world out of the institutions of the old.

The most surprising thing about the Cold War was that it did not end in hot war – in World War III or nuclear Armageddon, as so many had feared, or even expected. No such prolonged, often bitter, deeply antagonistic and indeed global face-off between great powers had ever ended so peacefully. The bipolar order dissolved almost silently – leaving America as the ‘unipole.’

The new post-Wall trajectory for the world, as seen from Washington and Europe, including Russia, appeared to be one of a growing “global commonwealth of nations” (in the words of Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice)³⁴ – built around common, universal values, and international law and principles guarded by UN authority. Democracy and open global markets were seen as hallmarks of this new, rules-based world order.

China notably followed its own track, one of CCP-led authoritarian-capitalism. And it did so without hesitation. In this way, the Chinese events of 1989 were highly significant. I agree with Julian Gewirtz that Deng Xiaoping’s reform economic policies constituted a major rupture and departure from Maoist China, and that the Tiananmen events revealed both the “the *end* of the experiments of the 1980s” (including some marginal political liberalisation within the party) and “the *continuities*” of authoritarian CCP rule – against the background of the continuous pursuit of an evolutionary road out of inferiority towards the status of the strongest economic (if not yet political) player in the world. As Deng himself declared in 1989, he would only be truly be satisfied if “history” proved “the superiority of the Chinese socialist system.”³⁵

This persistence of a Chinese developmental model was in itself sufficient to cast doubt on the notion, which was popular in the transition years out of the Cold War, that the world had reached “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” and was witnessing “the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”³⁶ There was no “end of history” in 1989. And yet, many commentators and historians joined Francis Fukuyama’s line in declaring the United States the victor in the ideological conflict between “East” and “West.” And one can see why: Germany had been unified on Western terms, NATO had survived, while the Warsaw Pact had disintegrated, the Soviet Union had gone, a

³⁴ Quote from Condoleezza Rice & Philipp Zelikow, *To Build a Better World: Choices to End the Cold War and Create a Global Commonwealth* (New York: Twelve, 2019), 305.

³⁵ Deng quoted in Andrew J. Nathan, “The Tiananmen Papers,” *Foreign Affairs* 80:1 (January-February 2001), 2, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20050041>.

³⁶ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History,” *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989), 4, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>.

new normative global regime would surely come into being, borne forwards on the tide of neo-liberal thought. America and the West had won the Cold War – both materially and ideologically. The arc of history was bending toward liberal democracy – the spread of capitalism would go hand in hand with the universalisation of democracy. Eventually, all the dominos would fall, even China.

That they got it wrong is obvious in the light of the rise of a revisionist Russia under Vladimir Putin and the staggering ascent of Xi Jinping's China, though these were hardly foreseeable evolutions. But the exalted vision of the "victors" was itself beset by dangerous illusions. Today, as we struggle to find a coherent U.S. or European narrative of the future, the evidence of deep political anxiety is everywhere – and not just because of COVID-19 and climate change. In the former Soviet satellites, especially Poland and Hungary, but also former East Germany, the narrative is one of reckoning, even revenge, some 30 years after the fall of the wall. Political and social forces, from nationalism to outright xenophobia, that had seemed to belong to a past that was overcome and neutralised, have since resurfaced, disturbing the balance of Europe's post-war political cultures.

There has been a growing resentment of what is perceived as the post-national liberalism associated with the EU. The East Central European populists are now repudiating the process of integration into the West – the very prize that the protestors of 1989 had dreamed of when they called for freedom, democracy, and European 're-unification' and elected non-Communist governments. The decision to apply 'shock therapy' to the bankrupt Soviet-style economies from Poland to Russia, was not imposed, as is sometimes claimed today, by Western governments and a horde of alien economic advisers forcing their solutions on reluctant peoples and their leaders. From Budapest to Bucharest, Eastern European governments themselves embraced the break with state capitalism in favour of radical free market reforms, as they looked for entry into the global economy and the EU. But who in 1992 could have foreseen the impact on future world events, for example, of the Yugoslav Wars, of 9/11, or of the internet and digitization on populations, financial flows, and politics. We need to re-remember the familiar truth that nothing ever escapes the tide of change. Peace and stability are never permanent. To avoid miscalculations and conflict, what's key is communication, consultation, and cooperation, and these demand constant cultivation. They are among the diplomatic lessons to be taken away from the moment of massive systemic transformation in 1988-1992.

To me it seems that the really vital point that emerges from an exploration of this transition out of the Cold War endgame into the building of a new world order is that politics and policy do in fact matter. For the readers of newspapers and the consumers of podcasts this observation will doubtless seem banal. But there is a danger right now that our profession will turn its back on the complex questions related to power, leadership, and governance. It is certainly true that the study of these questions once crowded out other fields of enquiry, but in redressing the balance, it is important that we do not simply avert our eyes from certain hard and undying realities. These include the need to understand the dynamics in the hierarchy of states; the functioning of domestic as well as international institutions; the nature of policy- and decision-making in historical context; and their relationship with the projection of power. All of these are central to comprehending and analysing the world we inhabit. That our study of these phenomena must be as open to methodological renewal and refinement as every other field within our discipline goes without saying.

Working on this book underlined for me the importance of leaders and leadership. In 1988-92, a small group of leaders worked against the clock – balancing zeal and pragmatism, ingenuity and prudence. They did not know what would be next. They learned to improvise, seizing their moment. In the process, they used the whole machinery of government, created trans-governmental networks, forged agreements, and reinvented institutions as they adapted to the changing realities. They discovered whom to trust and how far.

At that catalytic moment in modern history, politics was crucial. And yet in recent years archivally based political history and the history of foreign affairs have been sidelined in universities across the Western world. As Fredrik Logevall and Daniel Bessner rightly observed in 2020: for all the desire to pursue new trends and conceptual paradigms, "we must also be

careful not to embrace innovation for innovation's sake."³⁷ The experience of the Trump presidency and the storming of the U.S. Capitol in January 2021 reminded us all of the salience of political leaders. That's why I believe a thorough grasp of the history of power, politics, and policymaking must remain at the heart of our discipline.

³⁷ See Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, "History United States - Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations," *Texas National Security Review* 3:2 (2020), 38–55, <https://tnsr.org/2020/04/recentering-the-united-states-in-the-historiography-of-american-foreign-relations/>.