INTRODUCTION

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The postwar liberal international order, upheld by organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), seemed to ensure decades of relative stability in international relations.[1] Not that wars did not break out, and all too many people died in conflicts large and small, but some forty-five years after the end of World War II, observers could claim that Europe had experienced its longest stretch of peacetime since the fall of the Roman Empire. Indeed, to some scholars it appeared that war itself had become obsolescent and man less prone to violence.[2] Armed conflicts in the 1990s, from the violent breakup of Yugoslavia—including a vicious reminder that ethnic cleansing was not a phenomenon of an archaic past—to genocide in Rwanda sent stark warnings that the structures that had helped keep the great powers off one another's throats in the Cold War era did not guarantee peace and stability for all.[3] Koreans, Vietnamese, as well as many Africans, Latin Americans, South Asians, and Middle Easterners could have told observers in the West that the system they celebrated had never brought them peace in the first place.[4] And yet the world of the great powers had seemed more stable in the decades after the downfall of Adolf Hitler and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And, of course, the UN and NATO, as well

as other supranational bodies such as the European Union, tried to extend their reach and project their positive impact into the twenty-first century.

Looking back from the twenty-first century, we often take the emergence and evolution of international organizations in the wake of World War II's devastation for granted, and we lose sight of negotiations and nuances that defined the inner working of the postwar order. The UN developed from the wartime coalition against Nazi Germany and had an early founding document in the August 1941 Atlantic Charter, though the UN itself came into being only in 1945 and some of its founders saw it more as guardian of an old order than guarantor of the new.[5] Linked to the framework of collective security were the Anglo-American–run World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which derived from discussions at Bretton Woods in New Hampshire and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC, in 1944 and 1945.[6] Equally linked was the definition of human rights and the pursuit of war criminals in international military tribunals.[7] As Elizabeth Borgwardt notes in chapter 1, collective security, economic stability, and the rule of law were the underpinnings of the new order. Yet all of this was a negotiated process that required compromise. After all, liberal democracies and communist dictatorships had to sign on to the same shared principles, and each side could block the other by veto power in the UN Security Council.[8]

NATO was an even less natural outgrowth of the wartime coalition, not least because it was aimed at deterring the Soviet Union but also because it tied the United States to Europe in its first peacetime military alliance. Postwar strategists and diplomats had not planned for that outcome. At least until 1948, George C. Marshall, the wartime chief of staff turned secretary of state, intended to follow the course of his adviser George Kennan and put the promise of economic recovery at the center of US strategy for stability in Europe. Yet crises between East and West had already taken hold in the northern tier of the Middle East, the eastern Mediterranean, and Berlin, and soon the Soviet acquisition of atomic weapons, the victory of communist forces in the Chinese Civil War, the outbreak of the Korean War, and resulting fears in Europe all combined to turn a political statement—the North Atlantic Treaty of April 1949—into a full-blown military alliance.[9] NATO members could claim to work under the umbrella of the UN, but even in the first half-decade after the war, postwar order had already shifted from promises of cooperation to formation of hostile camps.

For Europeans the postwar system brought considerable stability, albeit at the cost of lack of freedom and stunted economic development in the communist east, and for the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal, and France the retreat from empire, sometimes in bloody wars. Much of the rest of the world could celebrate decolonization and the emergence of new states—the UN grew from fifty-one founding members to seventy-six by 1955, 117 by 1965, 144 by 1975, and 193 by 2011—but also saw protracted political crises, wars, violence, and often abject poverty as the UN struggled to build or keep peace.[10] Frequently, the members of the Security Council—the United States and the Soviet Union but also China, the United Kingdom, and France—intervened in what was then called the Third World, sometimes with military means in wars as destructive as the one in Vietnam.[11] The discrepancy of peace, security, and stability in some parts of the world and warfare, violence, and poverty in others led some observers to theorize about a "zone of peace" in the affluent world.[12] At the end of the Cold War, it seemed that conflict potential was shrinking, but it soon appeared that neither the UN nor military alliances had the means to counter crises of the 1990s and 2000s efficiently. The struggles of the UN in the nascent Republic of the Congo in the 1960s, explored in this volume by Alanna O'Malley, were thus a harbinger of things to come.

Today one may point at President Donald Trump as the embodiment of the critique of the international system and perhaps even, at least in his rhetoric, as a return to isolationist tendencies of an earlier era, but he is hardly alone: the world scene has not appeared this unsettling since the 1930s. The crises of the twenty-first century run deep: terrorist attacks and the war on terror, lethal civil wars such as the one in Syria, refugee streams in the millions, the seeming strain on democratic systems even in Europe, emboldened regional actors such as Iran and North Korea that pose significant threats, and powers such as Russia and China that pursue agendas sharply opposed to the tenets of the postwar order.[13] Under this weight, the pillars of the liberal order have borne massive strain, and they might yet bend or break. Of course, disagreement, at times sharp, within NATO over burden-sharing is nothing new; instead, it has been at the center of debates about the alliance's future since the 1950s, a point noted by both Seth Givens and Stephan Kieninger.[14] Equally so, politicians in the United States from time to time raised questions about whether American payments to the UN were worth the cost. Those voices grew louder in the 1980s and again in

the 2010s. By the end of 2019, even before the onset of the all-consuming covid-19 crisis, Western European leaders disagreed on the state of NATO: France's president, Emmanuel Macron, complained about the "brain death" of the alliance, with US and European interests completely separated, but German chancellor Angela Merkel and NATO secretary-general Jens Stoltenberg emphasized areas of cooperation, Stoltenberg even going so far as to suggest there was now the largest set of joint initiatives under way.[15]

Where do we stand some seventy-five years after the end of World War II? Britain's wartime prime minister—by then opposition leader—Winston Churchill referred to the UN framework as "the temple of peace" in his 1946 speech in Fulton, Missouri, which is typically identified by his remark about the "iron curtain," and he maintained there and elsewhere that alliances could help provide necessary stability so that free people could prosper, both economically and politically.[16] The history of the West since 1945 could be read in that fashion. Does it still apply? The pillars of international order remain in place, but in a world defined as much by populism and protest, leaders in the United States no longer seem inclined to allow the country to serve as the indispensable power in an alliance framework that is built on shared values, human rights, and an admixture of hard and soft power. Perhaps rising powers will step in, but as of mid-2020, fears of anarchy in the international system seem to outweigh such hopes.[17] In this book, nine scholars and practitioners of diplomacy explore that issue. At the conference in spring 2019 where they debated in person, retired admiral James Stavridis, former commander of NATO and US Southern Command, opened the proceedings with an impassioned plea for the continued importance of international cooperation and of organizations such as UN and NATO. Even though the pace of their operations may be frustrating, it is much better, Stavridis held, to work through issues with great conflict potential in their conference rooms than engage in the field of battle, in whatever dimension (land, sea, air, space, cyberspace) that might take place in the future.[18] Even though there is a great deal of skepticism in these pages, we could all agree that for all its flaws, international cooperation in the past seven decades has been a boon to peace and stability.

In the first chapter, Elizabeth Borgwardt describes what she terms Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal for the World," a grand strategy that extended beyond the national interests of the United States and embedded American goals in deeper international foundations. Key elements of this

process, she notes, were the founding of the UN itself but also the international military tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo and other structures that linked economics and the need to provide aid for the restoration of war-torn countries to establish the promise of prosperity that served to underwrite postwar stability. Collective security negotiated at the UN Security Council, economic stability provided by World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and accountability to legal structures, Borgwardt argues, served as the crucial tools. Seth Givens follows up with a chapter on the emergence of NATO's command structure and the role played by the alliance's supreme commanders as soldiers and diplomats. This was particularly critical, Givens notes, because NATO was the embodiment of the new transatlantic relationship that served to promise security as well as prosperity. Cooperation among former enemies, once West Germany joined in the mid-1950s, was not always easy, and NATO was from the outset beset by questions of fair burden-sharing, concrete concerns over nuclear war, a pessimistic assessment that most of Western Europe could not be defended on the ground, and the ever-present tensions between Atlantic and continental orientations that eventually found their expression in crises precipitated by French president Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s. It was in these stormy seas, Givens holds, that the steady hand of Dwight Eisenhower and his successors at NATO's military headquarters became particularly important. Armin Grünbacher completes the set of chapters on the initial underpinnings of the system. Grünbacher considers European-American economic cooperation through the surprisingly understudied lens of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which is typically overshadowed by the luster of the Marshall Plan. He acknowledges that there were other factors that explain the growth in economic productivity across Western Europe in the 1950s—notably the European Coal and Steel Community, which would later grow into the European Economic Community—but Grünbacher holds that the contribution of the OEEC was quite important and should not be overlooked. If nothing else, he notes, its inner workings offer a window into how Europeans and Americans negotiated the practical processes of their cooperation.

The middle chapters of the book consider the evolution and performance of the UN and NATO as well as Australia's perspective on regional stability in Asia and the Pacific region. On the latter, Laura Seddelmeyer argues Australia learned in the 1960s and 1970s that it had to carve out its

own role as a regional power or, as she calls it, a "neighborhood power." Australia may have seemed far removed from the Cold War's hot spots, but the war in Vietnam and the grave crisis in Indonesia—very much within Australia's perceived buffer zone—combined with the United Kingdom's gradual retreat from most positions east of Suez forced Canberra to act more assertively in defense of national interest and regional stability. While Australia provided for a degree of stability in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, neither the UN nor NATO were particularly effective outside of the Northern Hemisphere. As Alanna O'Malley shows, the UN's response to the Congo Crisis in the first half of the 1960s underscores its difficulties addressing the crises of the Cold War and decolonization, but she also illustrates the decisive leadership of UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld and the role of the organization as actor, incubator of ideas, and forum for discussions that could diffuse tensions. The UN mission to the Congo, O'Malley concludes, had multiple dimensions that went well beyond peacekeeping, and the UN more generally contributed to the dismantling of empires both on the ground and, perhaps even more so, in people's minds.

Considering the changing nature of warfare, Steven Metz explores the evolution of insurgency and revolutionary people's war in three waves since Mao Zedong put into practice his blueprint in China in the 1930s and 1940s. Maoist insurgency aimed to take over the state, it was typically defined by Marxist ideology (though it could also be nativist), and it unfolded in the classic model of three phases (mobilization and consolidation of political ties, guerrilla warfare, and conventional and larger-scale operations). This, of course, bedeviled Western states in the Cold War from Vietnam and Algeria to the Americas, and it posed challenges to an international order written for states with a near monopoly of war. The second wave, ongoing in some areas, came to the fore in the 1970s and 1980s; it featured transnational and nonstate actors and straddled both sides of the line between organized violence and organized crime. Motivation could be commercial, religious, or ideological, and most insurgent groups still intended to control territory and claim political power. In the third wave, now only beginning, Metz perceives a "network-and-node" organization model, and he fears that twenty-first-century insurgents may no longer be intent on claiming power in the same ways, which would make it much harder to combat their strategy.

Stephan Kieninger shows that NATO managed to muddle through its own political crises from the mid-1960s into the post–Cold War years but

also that policies that were enacted helped transform Western Europe. Some of the issues that bedeviled the alliance were similar to earlier concerns: uncertainty about what exactly constituted effective deterrence, what was the proper balance of conventional armament (in the early 1960s pushed by the John F. Kennedy administration) and nuclear weapons, and who should pay how much for the security of Western Europe and the North Atlantic. A new item of disagreement, or at least mild distrust, included détente, a foreign policy approach of engagement with the Soviet Union that was defined rather differently in Washington, Bonn, and Paris. But, as Kieninger notes, from the Harmel Report of 1967 forward, wherein NATO placed détente next to deterrence as a twin strategic goal, the allies found ways to address their disagreements satisfactorily, and the alliance adapted in the Euromissile Crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s and again in eastward expansion and engagement of Russia in the 1990s.

The final pair of contributions strike a more alarmed and pessimistic tone. Mary Nolan expands on the cultural decline of the Atlantic partnership, which negatively affects both NATO and the UN. Her pessimistic reading of the present is rooted in the recognition of an erosion of shared values since at least the 1970s, which now finds expression in the unilateralism of Donald Trump, the rejection of Trump and his unilateralism by most European allies, and the populist turns in Hungary, Poland, and elsewhere. Nolan concludes that the liberal postwar order and its core agreements are under sustained and very serious assault. Equally, retired ambassador Jennifer Brush, an expert in the politics of the former Soviet Union and the Balkans, offers little optimism. She sees Russian president Vladimir Putin at the center of the assault—unlike Nolan, Brush considers this more outside attack than internal rot. The problem, as both Brush and Nolan imply, is that the UN is powerless in the face of such fracturing and the pillars that have upheld the Pax Americana no longer seem sound. Nolan, in particular, concludes that the world has changed since 1945 and that politics, economics, and ideologies are very different today. In other words, structures that were fitted to crises of the 1930s and 1940s may no longer work in the 2020s, even if there were more widespread agreement on core principles. Collectively, the authors in this volume seek to address questions of how the liberal international order was built and maintained and what challenges it has faced, and they offer perspectives on what could be lost in a post-American world.

NOTES

1 John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
2 John E. Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).
3 Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era,* 3rd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).
4 Paul Chamberlain, *The Cold War Killing Fields: Rethinking the Long Peace* (New York: Harper, 2018).
5 Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
6 Benn Steil, *The Battle of Bretton Woods: John Maynard Keynes, Harry Dexter White, and the Making of a New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).
7 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/; Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 1992).
8 David L. Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All: The UN Security Council and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
9 Ingo Trauschweizer, "An Alliance by Default: Marshall and the North Atlantic Treaty," in *George C. Marshall and the Early Cold War: Policy, Politics, and Society,* ed. William Taylor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).
10 For UN membership, see "Growth in United Nations Membership, 1945–Present," United Nations, accessed November 8, 2019, https://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/growth-united-nations-membership-1945-present/index.html.
11 Odd Arne Westad, *Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
12 Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 570–637.
13 For an argument that links new and older forms of warfare as a threat to Western conceptions of world order, see David Kilcullen, *The Dragons and the Snakes: How the Rest Learned to Fight the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
14 Seth A. Johnston, *How NATO Adapts: Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance since 1950* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017); Timothy A. Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).
15 "Merkel weist NATO-Kritik von Macron zurück," *Der Spiegel,* November 7, 2019, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/nato-angela-merkel-weist-kritik-von-emmanuel-macron-zurueck-a-1295417.html.

16 Winston Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace," speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, March 5, 1946, International Churchill Society, https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace/; David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 133–34.

17 For perspectives on a multipolar world, see Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), and Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2018). For a pessimistic perspective on both international relations and domestic repercussions, see Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018).

18 "Stavridis Discusses National Security Risks, Opportunities at Baker Peace Conference," *College of Arts and Sciences Forum,* Ohio University, April 3, 2019, https://www.ohio-forum.com/2019/04/stavridis-presents-thoughts-on-national-security-risks-and-opportunities-in-baker-peace-conference-keynote-address/.