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H-Diplo Roundtable XVII, 27 on Richard Nixon and Europe. The Reshaping of the Postwar Atlantic World

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H-Diplo Roundtable XVII, 27 on Richard Nixon and Europe. The Reshaping of the Postwar Atlantic World

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Introduction by Thomas A. Schwartz, Vanderbilt University

It is with a degree of modesty and some awkwardness that I write the introduction to a roundtable about a book which was inspired by something I wrote. Luke Nichter notes in the acknowledgments that his *Richard Nixon and Europe* seeks to do for the Nixon engagement with the old continent what my *Lyndon Johnson and Europe* did for that presidency's policy toward Europe.^[1] But as Geir Lundestad so helpfully points out in his review, Nichter also rejects the central argument of my book in shaping his account of the Nixon presidency and its 'reshaping' of Atlantic relations. I argued that

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Johnson was a relatively successful custodian of the Atlantic alliance and left it in good shape in 1969, while Nichter's book begins by arguing that when Nixon's presidency begins, U.S.-European relations were at "their lowest point" since World War II (1). Actually this put me in mind of the wise words of my late adviser, Ernest May, when I asked him about a controversial claim I wanted to make in an article. Responding to my excessive agonizing, May remarked, 'You could be wrong, but so what? You just acknowledge the mistake.' In that spirit I would encourage readers to compare our approaches to the issues that consumed American and European diplomats during these years, and to the presidential leadership of Johnson and Nixon, exercised rightly or wrongly. Whatever one makes of our disagreement, Nichter's book does bring new focus to a region of the world which has been largely neglected in the Nixon literature, which has focused much more on Nixon and his famous National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger's Vietnam policies, dealings with the Soviet Union and China, and involvements in the Third World. Nichter, whose publishing credentials include two widely heralded books with Douglas Brinkley on the Nixon tapes, has done an impressive degree of research in European archives, covering five countries as well as the archives of NATO and the European Union, then known as the EEC, or European Economic Community.^[2] All the reviewers marvel at the scope of his archival research, even when they dispute some of his conclusions.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Lundestad is the most severe critic of the Nichter book. Those of us who know and admire Geir from his work at the Norwegian Nobel Institute also realize that he never holds back in his critiques, and as the informal dean of studies of America's 'empire by invitation' in Europe, he makes clear what he regards as the shortcomings of Nichter's argument.^[3] Lundestad faults Nichter for lacking an overarching or central thesis, which might tie together his treatment of such disparate topics as Nixon's attempt to give NATO new dimensions, his decision to end the Bretton Woods system, and the sharp disputes which he occasioned with the allies over their response to the Yom Kippur War. He also points out the irony that in a book about Nixon's European policy that his successor, Gerald Ford, actually emerges as something of the hero, as Ford helped to mend relations with Europe after the particularly nasty turn which things took during the twilight of Nixon's presidency. Lundestad also challenges several of claims put forth in Nichter's book. He is skeptical of the significance of the Year of Europe as well as the argument that Nixon's economic measures led to the European Monetary System. In particular, Lundestad sees the Nixon and Kissinger years as a reversal of the previous position of the United States in support of European integration, and a period when Nixon's sense of America's relative decline led him to see in a more unified Europe a threat to America's interests.^[4] Rather than see Nixon and Europe in the positive light Nichter puts forward, Lundestad quotes J. Robert Schaetzel, the U.S. Ambassador to the European Community during this time, to the effect that the United States lost interest in encouraging a strong and integrated Europe.

The other two contributors to the roundtable are considerably more positive in their assessment of Nichter's contribution. Evanthis Hatzivassiliou singles out Nichter's extensive treatment of the end of the Bretton Woods system, especially Nichter's careful use of the White House tapes. Hatzivassiliou praises Nichter's "excellent analysis" of the Washington battles taking place during this time, especially the struggle between Kissinger and Secretary of the Treasury John Connally, who was far more prone to unilateralism in his treatment of Europe. The one major criticism which Hatzivassiliou makes is that Nichter does not engage as much with the European historiography on these years, especially the treatment of the negotiations over the Commission on Security and

Cooperation in Europe, otherwise known as the Helsinki Commission. Hatzivassiliou sees Nichter's work as covering a period of transition in the Atlantic relationship, and praises it for providing a "convincing picture" of the Nixon and Kissinger attempt to place the relationship on a new foundation.

Nigel Bowles is the most enthusiastic reviewer, calling *Richard Nixon and Europe* a "commanding book." Bowles emphasizes its extraordinary archival richness as well as its chapters on the end of Bretton Woods, which he terms "outstanding pieces of historical analysis." Bowles is particularly intrigued by the parallels between the events of the Nixon era and the contemporary 2016 issues affecting U.S.-European relations. The fact that a great deal of Nichter's book concerns the relationship between Britain and Europe, both in Prime Minister Edward Heath's efforts to join and then Prime Minister Harold Wilson's attempt to stay in Europe, conjures up strikingly similar parallels to David Cameron's current campaign to prevent the BREXIT referendum from passing this coming June 23. Bowles also sees a parallel in the degree to which the Nixon era was one of overall American retrenchment, with a strong emphasis on the need for the Europeans to do more for their own security. Finally, just as in 1973 the issues of the Middle East would roil the alliance during the October war and the oil embargo, now in 2016 the Middle East disturbs Europe's equilibrium with the migration crisis and the threat of terrorism. As Bowles sees it, history "does not offer repeat performances, but themes in relations between nation states and alliances nonetheless recur in modified forms," a rather more sophisticated way of stating the Mark Twain aphorism that 'History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme a lot.' For Bowles, the Nichter book is very welcome, coming at a time when both Americans and Europeans need to be reminded of the history of their relationship, and especially the importance of the American security guarantee in helping to keep Europe together as a political force.

Luke Nichter's book is clearly an important contribution to the historiography of America's most important post-1945 relationship, and one which has played an essential role in maintaining international peace and global prosperity. Yet our current political situation leads one to doubt Bowles's expressed belief that "the transatlantic relationship remains vital to the United States and its European partners for reasons of politics, security, trade, and culture." These words strike a chord in my internationalist heart, but in an election season when 'America First' has resurfaced as the foreign policy principle of the Republican nominee, it is an open question whether the relationship will survive intact. The thought of a future "Donald Trump and Europe" book is frightening enough.

Participants:

Luke A. Nichter is an Associate Professor of History at Texas A&M University - Central Texas, and a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the University of Oxford's Rothermere American Institute. He earned in Ph.D. in Policy History from Bowling Green State University. Luke's other publications include the *New York Times* bestseller *The Nixon Tapes: 1971-1972* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014) and *The Nixon Tapes: 1973* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015), both co-authored with Douglas Brinkley. His current project is tentatively titled *Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. and the Decline of the Eastern Establishment*, to be published by Yale University Press.

Thomas Alan Schwartz is a Professor of History and Political Science at Vanderbilt University.

Most recently he is the co-editor with Matthias Schulz, *The Strained Alliance: US-European Relations in the 1970s*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009). He is currently working on a study of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger entitled *Henry Kissinger and the Dilemmas of American Power*.

Nigel Bowles was from 2008-2015 Director of the Rothermere American Institute at the University of Oxford. His research interests are in the United States Presidency. He is currently writing a book about what the politics of American monetary policy from 1945-1988 show about Presidents' use of authority and power.

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou received his Ph.D. in International History from the London School of Economics in 1992. He is Professor of Postwar History at the Department of History of the University of Athens. He is a member of the Academic Committee of the Constantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy; of the Publications Committee of the Eleftherios Venizelos Foundation; and of the Greek-Turkish forum. His publications include *Greece and the Cold War: Frontline State, 1952-1967* (London: Routledge, 2006), and *NATO and Western Perceptions of the Soviet Bloc: Alliance Analysis and Reporting, 1951-1969* (London: Routledge, 2014). He currently studies the NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society during the 1970s.

From 1973 to 1989 **Geir Lundestad** was professor of history and American civilization at the University of Tromsø. From 1990 to 2014 he was Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute and Secretary of the Norwegian Nobel Committee (which awards the Nobel Peace Prize.) From 1991 to 2014 he was also an adjunct professor of international history at the University of Oslo. He has published numerous books on international relations after 1945, particularly on the origins of the Cold War and on transatlantic relations.

Review by Nigel Bowles, Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford

In his evaluation of the British Labour Party's opposition to the terms on which Britain became a member of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, and of the Labour Government's renegotiation in 1974 and 1975 of those terms, Luke Nichter quotes an editorial comment of 5 April, 1974 in the *Financial Times*. The paper's editorial writer noted that the

“death of President Pompidou and Foreign Secretary Callaghan's speech April 1 on renegotiating terms of entry have brought Europe to a period more dangerous and confused than any since the mid-50s. Weak or uncertain governments in Britain, France and Germany; nationalist bickering, menacing external pressures, both economic and military, weak American government and energy crisis create a backdrop for the last act of Götterdämmerung” (178).

To observers of European politics in 2016, these themes from more than four decades ago have a decided resonance. As the EEC was in the early 1970s, so in the second decade of the twenty-first century the European Union (EU) appears to be in almost perpetual crisis. For all that the international political and monetary orders in the two periods are dissimilar, U.S.-European relations both then and now are characterized by discord. Nichter shows that President Richard Nixon and

senior members of his administration resented the growing disparity between American defence spending on European defence and European NATO members' own low and declining expenditure; President Barack Obama and senior members of his administration view European NATO members' feeble expenditures similarly in 2016. External pressures were during Nixon's administration indeed 'menacing'; they remain so. In 1973-74, some of those external pressures originated in the Middle East; in 2016, they do so with even greater turbulence and ramifying risk. If the governments of Britain, France, and Germany did not then reliably demonstrate the combination of strategic grip and resolution appropriate to the needs of the moment, they are in 2016 largely bereft of any such grip and resolution. Edward Heath, the Conservative British Prime Minister for whom Britain's EEC membership was an absorbing political commitment, at least had a clear sense of strategic purpose in matters European. For David Cameron, Heath's Conservative successor as British Prime Minister in 2016, the quality of Britain's relations with Europe have distilled into negotiations with Polish, Czech, and Hungarian politicians about 'in-work' benefits for those of their nationals working in Britain. Such are the shrivelled terms of conduct for British foreign policy in the twenty-first century.

Whatever else might be said of him, it cannot be said that Richard Nixon lacked strategic purpose. The topic consumed him. And for all that he appeared to be preoccupied with questions of strategic policy towards the Soviet Union and China in a world moving from bipolarity to tripolarity in nuclear matters, Nixon made more serious attempts to engage with Europe than many gave him credit for, either then or since. Nichter's commanding book *Richard Nixon and Europe* is, accordingly, thoroughly welcome. Nichter has to excellent effect used archival sources in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States. His legendary industry, which has made possible the astonishing public good of transcribing Nixon's taped conversations, finds comparative archival and organizational expression in this admirable monograph. Learned though it is, *Richard Nixon and Europe* is also a publication readily accessible to the wider reading public interested to know more not just about what American policy towards Europe was but how it came about. The chapters on the closing of the gold window in 1971, and on European responses to that extraordinary act of policy, are outstanding pieces of historical analysis. So, too, is Nichter's consideration of the tension between the United States' conduct of relations with European allies through the EEC and NATO, and its bilateral relations with Britain, France, and Germany.

Nichter begins the concluding chapter to this fine book by quoting Nixon's handwritten note to himself on the occasion in June 1974 of the celebration at NATO Headquarters in Brussels of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Alliance's creation: "It took great courage and statesmen to create... it will take greater [courage] to preserve" (216). Nixon knew that the United States' relations with Europe were of the first importance to both sides. As Nichter shows, the President's inheritance was awkward: NATO had been weakened by France's withdrawal from the alliance's integrated military command, and by the Alliance's feeble indecision in the face of the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Nixon thought his inheritance in European matters unacceptable and unhelpful. Accordingly, he sought to reframe relations, culminating in his 'Year of Europe.'

The question that necessarily follows is one to which Nichter appropriately devotes much time: why did Nixon's grand initiative in 1973, the year of British, Irish, and Danish accession to the Community, fail? Here was a President, after all, for whom Europe mattered, and who knew why it did. He came to office bent upon strengthening the NATO alliance. Once in office, he succeeded in re-establishing bilateral relations with France (which had left NATO's integrated military command in

1966). Nichter argues – indeed, he shows – that the vaunted ‘Year of Europe’ failed for four reasons:

First, because, the U.S. impaired its credibility with European allies not just because of its inability to achieve a ceasefire in Vietnam but also because of Nixon’s decision to escalate bombing in Vietnam in December 1972.

Second, because British leadership was inadequate. At No. 10, Edward Heath did not match his commitment to British membership of the EEC with a clear-minded shaping of the implications of that stance for Britain’s relationship with the United States. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office could not compensate for that weakness because, in British government, no venture can long survive without Prime Ministerial leadership that is both active and sustained.

Third, because France publicly opposed most of the Year of Europe initiative, particularly those elements that provided for a timetable for closer European cooperation or that threatened Gaullist sensitivities on defence cooperation.

And fourth, because the Social Democratic government in Germany sought a *détente* with the Soviet Union on terms that Nixon and Dr. Henry Kissinger judged likely to be unacceptable to the United States.

History does not offer repeat performances, but themes in relations between nation-states and alliances nonetheless recur in modified forms. That is not the least of the lessons to be drawn from Nichter’s searching and intelligent account of U.S. foreign policy towards Europe during Nixon’s Presidency. More than four decades since Nixon resigned, to the extent that Europe still coheres as a political force, it does so for the same reason that it has done ever since NATO’s creation in 1949 – because of America’s security guarantee. Though formally confined to members of NATO, that guarantee actually extends rather beyond them. Just how far and under what conditions it does so is, alas, unclear. If we did not know that before 2014, we certainly know it in the aftermath of Russia’s annexation of the Crimea and its suzerainty over eastern Ukraine.

United States Presidents and Secretaries of State have invariably found their European allies in NATO and trading partners in the EEC and EU a source of irritation, as well they might. Kissinger’s oft-cited frustration on the point of whom in Europe he might contact to discover the EEC’s policy on any given matter remains *au point*. Except for trade, the EU has but weak common expressions of external policy, as its flailing response to the Syrian and Libyan migration crises painfully reveals. But the transatlantic relationship remains vital to the United States and its European partners for reasons of politics, security, trade, and culture. Nixon understood that, as his predecessors in the Oval Office had done, and his successors have in their turn also done. It is in the nature of things that Europe needs American leadership but often finds its exercise inconvenient, overwhelming, or both. That, for the United States, is but one of the burdens of its hegemony.

Review by Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, University of Athens

This is the first monograph that attempts to evaluate comprehensively President Richard Nixon’s

impact on U.S.-European relations. As recent scholarship has argued, the late 1960s and the early 1970s was a period of important transitions. Apart from the move towards détente that raised huge questions about the Cold-War international system, these years were marked by the transfer of Cold War tensions to the global south- in other words, the full globalization of the Cold War. There was also the growing significance of monetary, trade, and energy problems in international affairs, the ascent of the human rights agenda, and the need for international scientific cooperation necessitated by rapid technological progress in diverse issues that ranged from computers to satellites, and from the Sea Bed to the environment. Moreover, the cycle of the West's postwar economic expansion, the *trente glorieuses*, was coming to an end. Sections of the new postwar generations were becoming radicalized: they put forward new demands, sometimes ideologically confused, thus creating novel problems over the legitimization of the postwar social systems. In other words, as we know now, this was the beginning of the post-industrial era.^[5] It was natural that events of such magnitude would call for major adjustments in the fabric of the postwar West.

This crisis of adjustment was handled by one of the most idiosyncratic presidents of the United States, Richard Nixon, aided by another unique figure, Henry Kissinger, who - as the British noted - was a 'philosopher' who was given huge powers by his chief as National Security Adviser and later Secretary of State (132). In many respects, the Nixon-Kissinger team did not play by the rules; they came to power with very clear ideas, and were prepared often to brush aside the State Department. They scored impressive successes in their dealings with the West's adversaries - the Soviet Union and China - and ended the Vietnam War, but their policies, mostly towards small states, often sparked adverse reactions. Regarding transatlantic relations, there is an excellent and growing bibliography on the West's policies in the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the Anglo-American special relationship, human rights and monetary problems,^[6] but there has not yet appeared a comprehensive interpretation of Nixon's full impact on what Nichter correctly terms on the cover of the book as the "closest and most important alliance in the world," at a time when "the postwar period came to an end, and the modern era came to be on both sides of the Atlantic." The central question is relatively simple: Was the Nixon administration successful in adjusting intra-Western relationships to the new era? As usual in the history of international relations, simple questions lead to complicated answers.

The book is based on extensive multi-archival research in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Italy, as well as the NATO, Council of Europe, and European Economic Community (EEC) archives. The author has consulted a huge spectrum of published sources, while he places special emphasis on the White House tapes, a large part of them published and co-edited by him in 2014-2015. Thus, he is in a position to present an authoritative interpretation of Nixon's European policies.

The author carefully defines his subject. In the introduction, he stresses that he does not present a full account of transatlantic relations in those years; he seeks to show the ways in which Nixon implemented his celebrated 'Doctrine' with regard to Europe (2-4). Thus, Nichter focuses on pivotal issues, pointing to the President's effort to effect a transformation of U.S. policies towards its closest allies. This means that Nichter's analysis inevitably focuses on the U.S. end of the relationship, also taking into account the internal variables of American foreign policy, including the tendency toward isolationism that Nixon and Kissinger sought to resist. The policies of the European powers or the EEC and NATO processes are not the focus of the book.

The first chapter discusses Nixon's effort to adjust the security relationship with Europe. In early 1969, NATO was approaching its twentieth anniversary, and had managed to overcome the serious crisis of French withdrawal from the military command. Nixon sought to revitalize the alliance. First, he was instrumental in the setting up of NATO's 'Third Dimension', namely, the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society (CCMS) or NATO's environmental program. However, the author arguably overstates the impact of the CCMS in "holding together" the alliance (19). He then discusses the U.S.-French defense cooperation of the early years of the Nixon administration, arguing that this played a major role in reestablishing bilateral relations following a period of significant strain. Last but not least, he explains the administration's efforts to defeat the Mansfield Amendments which called for a sharp reduction of US forces in Europe, and thus threatened to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Europe on the most sensitive of all transatlantic Cold War topics - the Europeans' confidence in the American determination to defend Western Europe.

The following two chapters deal with the unilateral decision of the U.S. in 1971 to end the Bretton Woods system, and its after-effects. The author shows that the system had already posed important problems for the U.S., which was now seeing its European and Japanese partners (but also trade rivals) grow more quickly than itself, at a time when the dollar's convertibility to gold effectively meant that the U.S. subsidized its allies' defense effort. In the end, West German growth and a huge British demand to convert dollars to gold in the summer of 1971 forced Nixon into making the decision, although, tellingly, no foreign policy official was present in the actual meetings. This unilateral decision had serious repercussions in Europe, and threatened to destabilize transatlantic relations. By the end of 1971, Kissinger tended to take over the deliberations with the Europeans, trying to protect relations with them, and pushing the more aggressive (and prone to unilateralism) Secretary of the Treasury, John Connally, to the sidelines. This is an excellent analysis of American policy-making, showing the intensity of the dilemmas at a time when a whole economic cycle was ending and new balances had to be sought; during such a transitory period, these balances would not only be economic, but also political and even psychological.

The next chapters deal with the ill-fated Year of Europe. Nichter disputes the European allegation that the initiative was undertaken unilaterally by Washington, but acknowledges that the Americans "seemed to have little understanding of European integration" (113). He also concedes that Nixon's style of decision-making - mostly the tendency to surprise others by his announcements - was perhaps more appropriate when dealing with adversaries rather than with allies (124). Instead of celebrating transatlantic bonds, 1973 and early 1974 became a period of intra-allied tensions, intensified by successive crises such as the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East and the first oil shock. Nixon and Kissinger, also pressed by the growing difficulties in the Watergate front, came close to believing that the EEC was striving to develop its distinct identity on an anti-American basis, and questioned the wisdom of American support to the European integration project. It took great effort to reach a new psychological balance, with the issuing of the Atlantic declaration in mid-1974. The last two chapters deal with a primarily European problem - Britain's renegotiation of its entry terms in the EEC. Washington fervently supported the continuing British membership of the EEC, which would allow the country to remain "committed to an active international role" (197). Thus, Washington effectively returned to a line of support for the European project. Still, this issue, more European than American in substance, could be discussed in a single, rather than in two chapters.

Nichter offers a convincing picture of the Nixon administration's efforts to place the transatlantic

relationship on a new basis, consistent with the less maximalist policies that the President wanted to pursue globally. He argues that Nixon's efforts were in the end successful. This is a convincing argument, although there are aspects which might deserve more analysis. Had the author engaged more extensively with existing European historiography, a more balanced and better informed argument would have emerged: the book focuses mostly on the formulation of U.S. policies, but the European end of the equation is not equally covered. Moreover, a more extensive treatment of the CSCE negotiations and the changing U.S. and European roles in that process might have enriched the argument. The author could also place more emphasis on a constant European complaint of these years, namely the apparent reluctance of the White House to understand the difference between consultation with the allies and mere notification of them – something which tended to reinforce a sense of constant Nixonian unilateralism in dealing with Europe.

In sum, this was an era of huge transitions in international affairs, which could not but have a major impact on transatlantic relations. Arguably, it was also natural that misunderstandings or hiccups would occur on both sides of the Atlantic. During such a tense and dense historical time, when trends of globalization were dramatically intensifying, the necessary adjustments could only be made through a measure of tension. Having enjoyed an uninterrupted period of economic ascent, and in the midst of organizing a political expression of their supranational union, the members of the EEC often felt ignored by their major ally who was engaging in dangerously close contacts with the Soviet adversary. On their side of the relationship, Nixon and Kissinger often felt let down by the Europeans (for example in the Yom Kippur War), while they also complained that the Europeans wanted to take distances from the Americans, whom they expected to remain fully committed to Europe's defense. Perhaps the best commentary on Nixon's foreign policy is that it was "at once revolutionary in its methods and conservative in its aims."¹⁷¹ This is fully evident in U.S.-European relations as well, although the revolutionary methods tended to make the Europeans anxious. In other words, the stakes of those years were high: the two sides of the Atlantic needed to find a new point of balance, incorporating their own evolution and change as well as the new institutional peculiarities of European integration.

Eventually, however, they did. It is possible that the existence of a common adversary – the Soviet Union – also played a role in this process, and this is why the Cold War was so important even during this stage of détente. But it was not only that. The main reason evidently lay in the fact that the U.S. and the European allies were like-minded states, in a generally similar stage of development, and had common values and interests to defend in the new era. The style of Nixon and Kissinger created problems of communication, but Nichter correctly argues that they were successful in pushing things to a conclusion. Perhaps the greatest commentary on their policies is the respect that the Europeans showed for them – but mostly after they had been safely out of office.

Review by Geir Lundestad, Norwegian Nobel Institute (1990-2014)

Most books have some strong sides and some weak sides. This is certainly also the case with Luke Nichter's *Richard Nixon and Europe*. The strongest side is quite clearly the archival sources the author has consulted. This is no surprise since Nichter has a strong background in editing and publishing sources.¹⁸¹ Nichter has looked at the archives of the European Commission and of NATO in

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Belgium, the presidential archives at the *Archives nationales* in Paris and the relevant archives at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, at archives of the Auswärtiges Amt in Berlin, the European Union files in Florence, the National Archives in London, and a wide range of American private, presidential and National Archives materials. He has also consulted all the obvious published government documents, memoirs, periodicals, and books. Nichter puts long extracts from these sources into his text (59-63, 76-82). This gives us the impression of coming close particularly to President Richard Nixon, Secretary of the Treasury John Connally, and Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board Arthur Burns. Nichter is better on economics than on politics and focuses more on the United States than on the leading European powers, with the partial exception of the United Kingdom.

The weakest part of the book is the lack of a clear central thesis. The reader is never entirely certain what the main argument of the book is. The starting point is apparently that Nichter wants to do for Nixon what Thomas Schwartz did for Lyndon Johnson in his *Lyndon Johnson and Europe*. Schwartz was able to show that right in the middle of the Vietnam War, Johnson pursued a rather nuanced and successful policy towards the main European allies, including President Charles de Gaulle's France.^[9]

Nichter's book follows a circuitous route, but it is not clear where it actually ends up. The author starts off by stating that on January 20, 1969, Richard Nixon's first day as president, "U.S.-European relations were at the lowest point that they had been at any time since the end of World War II," a considerable overstatement if one thinks of Suez Crisis in 1956 and de Gaulle taking France out of NATO's military integration (1). This view also represents an indirect rejection of the success of President Johnson, and thereby also of the work of Nichter's mentor Tom Schwartz. Then Nichter spells out the bold new initiatives which Nixon undertook to relieve the crisis: he strengthened ties with the NATO partners, particularly with de Gaulle's France; Nixon acted with boldness to alleviate the financial situation of the United States and thereby brought about the "birth of the modern age of globalization," another major overstatement; through the Year of Europe Nixon encouraged the European Community (EC) "to become more outward looking at a time of inward development and expansion" (4); Nixon believed "the EC was stronger with Britain as a member due to Britain's longer engagement with the world than other Europeans" and through his and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger's efforts "Britain remained tethered to both the EC and the United States, but especially Europe" (5).

Yet, at the end of the book it is evident that Nichter thinks that Nixon pretty much failed in his efforts. He writes that the foreign policy Nixon and Kissinger pursued was based on "attributes that were contrary to Atlanticism: they shifted the focus of American attention and creativity from West to East, they prioritized bilateral diplomacy, they subordinated transatlantic relations to opportunities with adversaries such as China and the Soviet Union, and they sought to preserve American dominance as the world transitioned to a more diffuse place" (218). Transatlantic relations diminished in importance compared to other regions of the world: "the decline of Europe as an American foreign policy priority had more to do with the Nixon reorientation of American foreign policy to the East than the decline of the United States as a result of Vietnam" (219), as if the two points stand in opposition to each other.

The final sentence of the book is the following: "Europe remained an important partner, but the shift to a Pacific strategy forever changed the relationship among the Atlantic allies" (219). 1969 had allegedly been the lowest point in transatlantic relations. Now we read that at the end of Nixon's

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abbreviated term “the year 1974 was the most turbulent in Nixon-era transatlantic relations. U.S.-European ties were at the lowest point since World War II after the failure of the Year of Europe” (158). The Anglo-American relationship was “threadbare” (158); the Franco-German *moteur* that had driven European integration “was stalled” (158); we even read that “Over time, Nixon’s preferred style of diplomacy seemed increasingly incompatible with transatlantic relations, “which were based on traditional diplomacy, consultation, and a greater degree of transparency” (124). The governments of the United States, Britain, France, and Germany all fell in the first half of 1974. So, the achievements of Nixon and Kissinger towards Europe were meager indeed.

“However, by mid-1975, the situation was significantly improved” (158). Somewhat paradoxically and surprisingly, President Gerald Ford seems to be the real, but highly unanticipated hero in this book on Richard Nixon. The process of European integration was relaunched by German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and French President Giscard d’Estaing, the Anglo-American relationship was considerably strengthened when Ford and Prime Minister Harold Wilson replaced Nixon and Edward Heath. Nichter concludes that, in fact, “The year 1975 marked the beginning of a time of more harmonious bilateral political relations between the United States and France, Germany, and the United Kingdom” (158). This is all rather confusing. Gone are the structural factors that had so harmed transatlantic relations under Nixon. Now the emphasis is on personalities, and much of the credit for the improved climate has to go to Gerald Ford, the “relative unknown in the White House” (158). Ford, Schmidt, Giscard, and Wilson, and from 1976 Prime Minister James Callaghan, enjoyed each other’s company and remained friends even after they had all left office. Gone was not only Nixon himself, but also John Connally who had done so much to mess up transatlantic relations with his strident approach.

As already suggested, there are many questionable statements in Nichter’s book. He argues that “the Year of Europe was the most ambitious plan to improve Atlantic unity since the Marshall Plan” (157). One could think instead of the founding of NATO. His analysis of why the Year of Europe failed is more accurate (156-157). Britain under Heath was eager to be accepted by its new EC partners, West Germany under Chancellor Willy Brandt was focused on its *Ostpolitik*, and France under President Georges Pompidou had its own agenda. The United States was increasingly influenced by the scandal that helped doom the Year of Europe - Watergate. The European responses to Nixon’s economic measures of August 1971 “were the origins of the European Monetary System, from which a common currency was created” (70). This is simply stated; no effort is made to bear this out. It is strange that in such a short book two full chapters, ranging from pages 158-215, are devoted to the British election of 1974 and the country’s referendum on the EC in 1975, with relative little emphasis on the American role in these events.

Nichter touches upon Nixon’s feeling of American decline, but does not give it the attention it deserves. Nixon returned to this topic time and again.¹⁹¹ Thus, he referred to the earlier American domination and the Soviet challenge and then stated that instead of there being just two superpowers, “When we think in economic terms and economic potentialities, there are five great power centers in the world today,” The United States, the Soviet Union, Western Europe, China, and Japan. And, again, “I think of what happened to Greece and Rome; what is left - only the pillars.” The 1970s was clearly the decade when the references to the decline of the United States were strongest and most numerous.

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With a relatively weakened United States, Washington had simply come to doubt its own emphasis on Europe's integration. In Kissinger's words "A confederal Europe would enable the United States to maintain influence at many centers of decision rather than be forced to stake everything on affecting the views of a single, supranational body." The paradox was that when Britain finally had in Edward Heath a Prime Minister who wanted to bring Britain into the EC, Washington had lost much of its interest. It did not really encourage the EC institutions. Again, as Kissinger stated, "If the price for this is that we cannot talk with our traditional European friends, then over time this could create a massive change in our relations. "J. Robert Schaetzel, U.S. ambassador to the EC in the years from 1966 to 1972 was a true believer in the European integration process and saw Washington's response at close hand. In his memoirs, not mentioned by Nichter, Schaetzel complained that in the Nixon years "in its isolation in Brussels the United States Mission to the European Communities might as well have been located on the upper reaches of the Orinoco."¹¹¹

Author's Response by Luke A. Nichter, Texas A&M University-Central Texas

I would like to thank Nigel Bowles, Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, and Geir Lundestad for reading my work, providing stimulating feedback, and challenging me to think about transatlantic relations during the Nixon years in different ways. Also, I would like to thank the editors of H-Diplo, and especially Thomas Maddux, for commissioning such an esteemed group of reviewers for this roundtable. To Thomas Schwartz I can offer no thanks here that has not been expressed in the book already, but my appreciation is due, once again, for contributing the introduction to this roundtable.

Shortly after the publication of Thomas Schwartz's *Lyndon Johnson and Europe* (1),¹¹² I was in that place as a graduate student that we have all been in: I was searching anxiously for a long-term research topic. Nothing was holding my attention, yet I knew that, in the marriage-without-love that was to become my dissertation, I needed to work on something that would motivate me to trudge again and again to the library in the Ohio winter snow. I hoped to do something multi-archival, on the archival frontier, from an international perspective. I was lucky to have received a lot of good advice from dissertation committee members Douglas Forsyth and Gary Hess, but it was not until I read *Johnson and Europe* that the final tumbler of the lock fell into place in my mind. It is still hard for me to believe, a decade later, that we are talking about the result – *Richard Nixon and Europe*.

The reviewers were generous in their praise and gentle with their criticism. There are a few times when we are saying – or at least intending – different things. Some statements in the book could have been framed in better ways. But I welcome the discussion to which my work contributes – regardless of whether we agree on the greatest crisis in postwar transatlantic relations, why President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger took certain actions or said certain things based on what I heard on the Nixon tapes, or whether my work rejects *Johnson and Europe*. (I do not think that it does, only that Nixon and Kissinger did not inherit a transatlantic relationship as sound as it seemed.) There is room for debate and disagreement. My primary goal has been to move the ball down the field and advance the historiography.

I agree that the book is circuitous, in part because Nixon's transatlantic policy was. Due to the

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sudden starts and stops in policy momentum, changing priorities, and the shifting impact of domestic policy, a simple thesis cannot capture the required nuance. The time and space that Nixon and Kissinger had for U.S.-European policy was directly related to how much time and space was being consumed by other crises and priorities. Like Johnson, Nixon had to deal with the Vietnam War, but during the Nixon era numerous other issues also significantly impacted transatlantic relations: détente with the Soviet Union, rapprochement with China, the protracted collapse of Bretton Woods, the expansion of the European Community, the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the energy crisis, and Watergate. Some were self-inflicted wounds, to be sure.

I once had a chance to discuss Nixon-era transatlantic relations with Henry Kissinger. It is not a subject that Kissinger has written much about. Whereas Johnson fared better than perhaps we expected, Nixon and Kissinger fell short in the area of the world they were arguably most knowledgeable and best prepared. “That was a great disappointment,” Kissinger summarized about the Year of Europe in particular.^[3] And that is the same feeling I get, and the one I pass on to readers of this book: some successes, some failures, but primarily missed opportunities.

Notes

[1] Thomas A. Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[2] Douglas Brinkley and Luke A. Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes 1971-1972* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015), and Douglas Brinkley and Luke A. Nichter, *The Nixon Tapes 1973* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).

[3] Although Lundestad coined this expression and used it frequently, beginning with his work in the 1980s, a representative publication would be Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945: from “Empire by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[4] This is the argument in Geir Lundestad, *Empire by integration: the United States and European integration, 1945-1997* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998),

[5] See, among others, Niall Ferguson, “Introduction: Crisis, What Crisis? The 1970s and the Shock of the Global”, in Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, ErezManela, and Daniel J. Sargent, eds., *The Shock of the Global: the 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 1-21.

[6] See among many others, Niklas H. Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special*

Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969-74 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Andrew Scott, *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Anglo-American Relationship* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Aurélie Élika Gfeller, *Building a European Identity: France, the United States, and the Oil Shock, 1973-1974* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Stuart Ball and Anthony Seldon, eds., *The Heath Government, 1970-74: a Reappraisal* (London: Routledge, 1996); Matthias Schultz and Thomas A. Schwartz, eds., *The Strained Alliance: US-European Relations from Nixon to Carter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Fredrik Logevall, and Andrew Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente: How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2009); Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny and Christian Nuenlist, eds., *Origins of the European Security System: the Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965-75* (London: Routledge, 2008); Niall Ferguson, et al., eds., *Shock of the Global*; Antonio Varsori and Guia Migani (eds.), *Europe in the International Arena during the 1970s: Entering a Different World* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011).

[7] Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston, "Introduction: the Adventurous Journey of Nixon in the World," in Logevall and Preston, eds., *Nixon in the World*, 7.

[8] Douglas Brinkley and Luke A. Nichter, eds., *The Nixon Tapes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014); Douglas Brinkley and Luke A. Nichter, eds., *The Nixon Tapes: 1973* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015).

[9] Thomas Alan Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe. In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[10] The American decline is dealt with in Robert S. Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Geir Lundestad, "Empire" by Integration. *The United States and European Integration, 1945-1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). The quotations are from Lundestad, *The United States and European Integration*, 99-107.

[11] Robert Schaetzel, *The Unhinged Alliance: America and the European Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 50-52.

[12] Thomas Alan Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[13] The meeting took place on June 23, 2008, from 11:40 a.m. to 12:35 p.m., at Kissinger Associates in New York, NY.