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INTRODUCTION

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There has been no historian in the field of international relations in our time whose approach to his subject has been more richly innovative, more imaginative, or more erudite than Paul W. Schroeder. There doubtless have been many specialists who have been more prolific in their publications. Schroeder has published only four books—each of them substantial, two of them seminal, all of them more than enough, to be sure, to give a picture of the qualities that so awe his pupils, his colleagues, and his friends.¹ What is less well known, however, is that these same qualities are also reflected in the fifty essays more than he has published during the course of his career. These essays are now scattered in the various learned journals and thus inaccessible to the lay reader. This makes it all the more necessary that those who have the privilege of knowing him should seek to bring together the most significant of these contributions in one place and between two covers. With this purpose in mind, we have selected fourteen of Paul Schroeder's essays—twelve published, two unpublished—from the past four decades. These essays deal with the great topics and themes of the international history of Europe from the end of eighteenth century down to the present day.

Although Schroeder, like most historians, does not generalize the way political scientists do,² his essays are of great interest to political scientists as well as to historians, not only through his compelling analysis of specific events and eras, but also because he develops certain theoretical themes and emphasizes important processes and patterns that challenge standard propositions in the field. He argues that many students of international politics, be they political scientists or historians, have overlooked important tools of statecraft, placed excessive weight on the material structure of international politics at the expense of prevailing worldviews, and, partly as a consequence, have missed the crucial if unsteady progress of international affairs.

Paul Schroeder's historical essays are scholarly discourse at its finest. But they are more than that—much more. They constitute a ceaseless explosion of ideas—brilliant, original, forcefully and carefully argued. They heighten resistance to the superstitions of the profession, the flood of conventional knowledge—all of it plausibly wrong—that the surrounding sources of

information have spread like a sterile sort of gloss over contemporary historical thought. To believe that until Napoleon the states of Germany were medieval backwaters and that only because of him did they break through to modernity; that the coalitions against Napoleon failed for lack of a common purpose; that the Congress of Vienna was not a transition, but a throwback to the world order of the eighteenth century; that the Holy Alliance was a cloak for the pursuit of Russia's interests instead of an instrument for the preservation of peace; that intermediary states are simply subjects and objects of the international political system with no intrinsic role to play of their own; that the Crimean War was caused by Russia's threat to the independence of Turkey but that its real purpose, once the war got under way, was to free Central Europe from her domination; that Metternich was the architect of the Vienna system, Bismarck the consummate *Realpolitiker*, and Gladstone the champion of enlightened diplomatic moderation; that Prussia secured freedom of action by her triumph over Austria in 1866 and Germany by her victory over France in 1870; that Great Britain wanted a balance of power in nineteenth century Europe and did pursue one; that Turkey, not Austria-Hungary, was the Sick Man of Europe in the pre-1914 years; that the recklessness of *Weltpolitik* forced the Entente Cordial of 1904 and the Triple Entente of 1907 upon the British government; that World War I was really the third Balkan war; that the history of international relations is the history of ceaseless spasms of embittered antagonisms between sovereign states—to believe these and a hundred other pieces of common knowledge causes error and blindness in current discussions about history and international politics. In the struggle against such conventional ideas, Paul Schroeder is the leader of the opposition, and these fourteen articles, all richly informed by his masterly command of the sources and literature on which they are based, constitute a series of resilient and seminal challenges to many of the reigning orthodoxies and standard views of our professions.

On more than one occasion Paul Schroeder has expressed the view that international politics is a system that is dynamic, not static; directional, not linear or circular; and that a critical turning point in international history came during the Napoleonic wars. It seems only fitting, therefore, to begin this collection of essays with one addressed to Schroeder's view of Napoleon. Napoleon's career is the greatest of modern legends. Schroeder gives the legend a good showing in order to demonstrate that it was a legend and that it overreached itself by its own authority. The entire system that Napoleon devised was nothing less than a criminal enterprise. Schroeder's essay, despite its cool tone and sobering scholarship, is an anti-Napoleon tract, one of the most damning ever composed.

It is worth pointing out, though Schroeder does not emphasize it, that Napoleon the man exemplified some nasty, even evil, qualities, including an unshakable self-righteousness, a thoroughgoing hatred of everything not French, and a high degree of bloody-mindedness with relation to anyone who disagreed with him or questioned his aspirations to the mastery of Europe. But it was in international politics that his whole unconscionable ambition

found its fullest and most virulent expression. His system was one of incredible criminality, of a criminality effectively without limits. Here, as the outlines of his actions begin to emerge, through the fog of confusion and irrelevance with which he loved to surround them during his lifetime, we are confronted with a record beside which the wildest murder mystery seems banal. He was, to begin with, a man devoid of principle. To have a principle, Martin Wight once wrote, necessarily involves the exercise of restraint whenever action threatens to contradict that principle.³ Thus, all the great powers in Napoleon's time could point to specific ambitions that they would like to satisfy—Britain to the defense of the seas and her empire, Russia to Constantinople, Austria to holding the ring in Germany and keeping ahead of Prussia, Prussia to supremacy in North Germany and the region northeast of the Rhine. Napoleon could point to everything and to nothing. Nothing could satisfy Napoleon because he had no aims to satisfy and nothing could satisfy the principles he stood for because he did not stand for any.

Thus diplomacy could not solve Napoleon's problems because he had no problems that could be solved. Far from being the forerunner of European unity that a writer has recently found in him,⁴ he was a throwback to the sixteenth century, a *condottiere* who could not understand or even admit as possible the world that his opponents represented. In such a character, no grain of subtlety is discernible. Even down to his last days, Napoleon saw himself as the greatest teacher of humankind and, thanks to a vast hierarchy of obedient yes-men beneath him, his lightest observations became infallible truths before which inconvenient evidence must bow and retire.

Napoleon's one great contribution was negative. His rapaciousness, his inordinate and unscrupulous ambition, managed to convince the statesmen of Europe that things could not go on as they had; that the kind of politics they had practiced during the eighteenth century had made possible Napoleon's rise and that to protect the international order on which they had depended from being overwhelmed there could be no peace with him. He had to be replaced, but so too did the system that had allowed him to come into existence.

How they did so and what motives and causes prompted their action is a theme to which Schroeder turns in his essay on the Vienna settlement. Anyone who has ever seen the Schönbrunn Palace on outskirts of Vienna may recall the Prince de Ligne's apt remark: "*Le Congrès danse, et ne marche pas.*"⁵ Schroeder has no sympathy with such a view. To be sure, an extraordinary amount of money was spent on balls, dances, symphonies, and the like, but the gravity of the tasks by which the men of 1815 were faced was daunting in the extreme. Now that Napoleon's imperium had been broken, how much it would if France be allowed to keep? If new frontiers between states were to be delineated, how was this to be carried out? In an area of the world as devastated as Central Europe, what did legitimacy mean and what did it require? This was the dilemma that the statesmen of 1815 had to confront. They meant to fashion a new international system to replace the one that had been in vogue since the eighteenth century.

That the international system of the eighteenth century was a witches' brew, nothing more than a thoroughly regrettable expedient, tiding the powers over dangerous moments in European affairs, is a point Schroeder never ceases to emphasize. Efforts toward resolution of major political differences between the powers were practically abandoned. Belief in the inevitability of war—itsself the greatest disservice to peace—had grown unchecked. In Europe many situations had arisen that required only the slightest disturbance to draw the powers into a major war. The complete uncertainty as to the adversary's intentions and the premium that rested on the element of surprise in the eighteenth century easily led statesmen to take, under the pressure of fear or misunderstanding, actions the effects of which were irreparable.⁶

Belief in the efficiency of war as an instrument of policy was underlined by its results. During the eighteenth century, two empires, the French and the Ottoman, fell into a decline and indeed, by the end of it, seemed on the verge of collapse; another, Sweden, lay decimated and a third, Polish Lithuania, had the life squeezed out of it altogether. Two others—Prussia and Russia—came into their own and an ancient fourth, the Habsburg monarchy, acquired something of a fresh start. It was war—and only war—by which changes of this scope were carried through. Even the bloodless partitions of Poland were direct by-products of the Russo-Prussian struggle.⁷

It is this fact and others like it that lead Schroeder to encourage a different attitude toward the Congress of Vienna, and to do so he adopts three lines of approach. First, he denies that the Vienna settlement rested on a balance of power in any meaningful sense. For a balance of power to exist, A. J. P. Taylor once observed, "no one state must be strong enough to eat up the rest, and any tendency toward domination by one is thwarted by a combination of checks and balances of the others."⁸ Schroeder compares the respective strengths of the powers of Europe at the end of the Napoleonic wars and finds that two of them, Russia and Great Britain, which he calls the flanking powers, were decisively stronger than the other three, France, Austria, and Prussia—so much so that they dominated the Continent and could press upon it their will if they wished. The system of Vienna was not, then, one of balances, but one that rested on the shared hegemony of these two flanking powers.⁹

Second, throughout his account of the Congress of Vienna, Schroeder stresses the deep emphasis placed on equilibrium and legitimacy, and he denies that these concepts had anything in common with the balance of power as it is generally understood. The men of the Congress of Vienna left a substantial body of memoranda and writings backed up by numerous records of private opinions of intimates like Gentz, confidant of Metternich and secretary of the Congress, who reflected the terminology of his generation in calling the postwar system the "federation of Europe." Alternative terms used by him were the "general union" and the "European league." The group of principled powers he referred to was as "the great alliance," "the union of the great powers," or the "union of sovereigns."¹⁰ Schroeder concedes that phrases like "balance du pouvoir" or "Gleichgewicht der

Kräfte" were part of the vocabulary of the Vienna statesmen, but he argues that balance of power was only part of their overall system and not its main component and perhaps not even an important one.

Third, Schroeder asks why, given the apparent disparity between the balance of power and the settlement that was actually devised, so many scholars have persisted in using the former to describe the events of 1814–15. That the Congress of Vienna represented a great achievement has been recognized at least since 1925 with the publication of the great works of Heinrich von Srbik and C. K. Webster.¹¹ Yet, what these writers, and later ones—of whom Henry Kissinger is the most conspicuous but by no means the only example¹²—have failed to appreciate is how truly revolutionary the Vienna system was. Instead, they speak of a restoration, a return to stability, a reestablishment of a balance of power, even an age of reaction and repression of revolution and change.

Schroeder will have none of it. Eighteen fifteen represented a revolution, if ever one is entitled to speak of a revolution; it inaugurated systemic change so far-reaching, so revolutionary, so fundamental in norms, rules, expectations, and collective assumptions that it laid the foundations of the world that has followed ever since. Standard interpretations of the Vienna system fail to comprehend the nature of these changes, and indeed much of nineteenth century European politics, because they continue to view that system through the lenses of traditional conceptions of balance of power.¹³

Schroeder analyzes this new conception of balance and equilibrium in his essay on "The Nineteenth Century System: Balance of Power or Political Equilibrium?" In contrast to eighteenth century Europe, in which power—calculated in terms of territory, population, and revenues, and leveraged by alliances—was used to balance and restrain power, Schroeder argues that it was a fundamentally different system that emerged after the Congress of Vienna. What made it different, and what explains the far greater stability of the nineteenth century, was primarily a "transformation of political thinking," in which political leaders had come to conceive of balance and equilibrium in new ways. Schroeder argues that this was a "predominantly moral, legal, and social-communal model of balance in which equilibrium required first and foremost the maintenance of the political and social order as a whole and the unity of all powers in defense of the legally established order." It was a "balance of satisfactions, a balance of rights and obligations and a balance of performance and payoffs, rather than a balance of power."¹⁴

Thus the men at Vienna cast out onto the surface of international life a host of new, and for the most part, historic methods and functions. They demonstrated, first of all, that political equilibrium is possible in international affairs without a balance of power, and that traditional balance of power politics often works against international stability. Second, they showed that international systems, though chaotic, can be restrained and moderated through the cooperative efforts of the great powers. Third, the Vienna statesmen left behind a host of other accomplishments that identified them, as George Kennan once observed, as gardeners not mechanics:¹⁵ the creation

of (1) international intermediary bodies—especially a defensively-oriented European center; (2) restraining alliances, understandings, and ententes; (3) a whole series of treaties that settled territorial disputes from 1787 to 1815. The historic task of the Vienna statesmen was to sever the international system from its roots and launch it on a path of movement. This was the task that was accomplished in 1815.

Schroeder extends his argument about the revolutionary changes of 1815 and the inauguration of a new international order to Russian behavior throughout the nineteenth century. In his essay on “Containment Nineteenth Century Style: The Case of Russia,” Schroeder contrasts the ruthless and domineering behavior of Russia since the time of Peter the Great with the “conservative, legalistic, antirevolutionary” policy that aimed for peace and great power cooperation after the Congress of Vienna. This was a time when many Europeans feared that Russia would use its enormous gains in territory and influence from the eighteenth century to make a bid for a broader position of hegemony. Schroeder concedes that Russia was expansionist in Asia, but argues that it knew when to stop so as to avoid wars with other European powers over non-European conflicts, and that in any case expansionist behavior outside of Europe did not threaten the stability of the European system.

Scholars who acknowledge Russian restraint in the first half of the nineteenth century generally attribute it to the effective functioning of a balance of power system and Russia’s fear that its pursuit of expansionist policies would trigger a hostile balancing coalition. Schroeder dissents from this view. He argues that Russian leaders were restrained primarily by the new international order and sense of European community that they themselves had helped to construct. They believed in the new treaty system, in the principle of monarchical solidarity, and in the desirability and feasibility of collective great power management of European politics, and they sought the prestige, national and individual, that would come from Russia’s playing a central role in that system. The other leading statesmen of Europe responded to their fears of Russian power and ambition not by seeking to form a *cordon sanitaire* around it, but by attempting to influence Russia by bringing her into their system of alliances. They believed that each country’s vital interests could be preserved while at the same time subjecting the parochial perspectives of each to the broadening understanding of the interests of others.

Schroeder ends this chapter with the generalization that “any government is restrained better and more safely by friends and allies than by opponents or enemies.” This is a key theme in Schroeder’s worldview, and one he develops more fully in his essay on “Allies, 1815–1945: Weapons of Power and Tools of Management.” This essay has been particularly influential among political scientists because it departs from the conventional interpretation of alliances in terms of an implicit “capability aggregation model,” in which states join together, usually for specific and short-run purposes, in order to deploy greater resources than either could do alone.

Schroeder does not deny that this occurs, but he shows that alliances can serve other, less obvious, functions. They can be instruments by which one

ally can influence or control another or a way in which all of the members can restrain and guide each other. Countries give up some autonomy by entering into an alliance, and in parallel gain some ability to shape what their partners will do. There is no contradiction between fearing another state and seeking to develop close ties with it; indeed, the latter policy is often the best way to influence a potentially threatening state and ensure that frictions do not escalate to overt conflict. The use of alliances as a tool of influence and control has often been associated with Bismarck, but Schroeder provides a more general conceptualization and applies it to a wide range of historical cases.

As Schroeder emphasizes in many of his essays, diplomacy often works through grouping, bringing states together in a way that makes it difficult for any of them to undertake unilateral adventures. Inclusion can be a potent instrument in part because states fear being excluded. We can of course interpret this in pure power terms and argue that in international politics as in social life, isolation is almost always dangerous, not splendid. But there is more to it than this. While unusual domestic imperatives may drive a state to cut itself off from the outside world as much as possible (e.g., Tokugawa Japan), most states seek broad acceptance. One reason South Africa finally rejected Apartheid was the steady toll exacted on leaders and the white elite by prolonged exclusion from most forms of international contact. Even North Korea today, with its ideological commitment to self-sufficiency, strongly desires acceptance as a normal state.

The desire for inclusion and acceptance stems in part from straightforward security concerns; being part of the society of nations is a sign that others are likely to respect the state’s independence, an implicit form of nonaggression pact. But being included also has intrinsic value. It is taken by all as an indication that despite whatever important differences in policy and interest exist, there are important commonalities as well, that the state is not inferior to the others, and that it is a member in good standing of a highly valued club. Schroeder is not equating political leaders with teenagers in their desire for approval, but he sees that most national leaders seek genuine recognition by their opposite numbers and that citizens and elites identify with their states and find validation in others’ acceptance of them.

Groupings of states do not operate in a vacuum, of course, but require at least a modicum of common interest and purpose. But the converse is true as well; interests and purposes do not form by themselves, but are shaped by the groupings that exist and are possible. On some occasions, of course, states may be so inner-directed and committed to values antithetical to others that only containment and war will work. The sort of containment that was effective against—or rather with—Russia in the nineteenth century could not work with Nazi Germany. Indeed, as Schroeder argues with respect to World War I, by 1914 states had developed worldviews that saw others as conspiring enemies and framed their own interests in so narrowly nationalistic a fashion that armed conflict had become inevitable. But this was not a product of international anarchy and domestic instability, but came instead from the way the states treated each other. National goals can be

more or less moderate, more or less compatible with the goals of others, and more or less informed by an understanding that the states form a system and that national actions have important if difficult-to-discern implications for the health and stability of the system.¹⁶ States cannot fully determine others' goals, but they can influence them.

Conventional scholars understand this, and point to the role of superior force and hostile alliances in curbing the ambitions of the great disturbers of the international system, of enforcing moderation from the outside. This of course is part of the picture, but Schroeder realizes that it misses the more important part. States can go a significant way toward inducing moderation by recognizing others' vital interests. "Recognizing" has two meanings, both of which apply here. One is recognizing in the sense of understanding, of seeing interests of others that may not be easy to discern. The state must seek to understand what it is that others need to maintain their roles in the international system. Perhaps the cardinal sin in international politics—and Schroeder sees this as a moral as well as a political failing—is to be blind to others' contributions and needs. The failure of Great Britain to understand the position, value, and fragility of Austria-Hungary and the implications this had for the entire international system, for example, was a root cause of World War I.¹⁷

Acting on an appreciation of others' needs can lead to granting it what is required for it to be willing to continue to work with others and abstain from the unilateral use of force, to abide by international agreements and understandings. Sometimes, of course, states will not settle for anything less than the domination if not the destruction of their neighbors. Hitler again provides the obvious example. But it also is an unusual case. More frequently, states are willing or can be brought around to being willing to live with arrangements that are at least minimally satisfactory to others.¹⁸

For Schroeder, normal diplomatic arrangements, agreements, and institutions, important as they are, are shaped by deeper impulses. In a well-functioning international system, such as that which characterized most of the nineteenth century, political elites develop a set of values and perspectives that support grouping, moderation, and respect for others. They learn from experience—almost always bitter experience—that the alternative of unregulated competition for power and short-run interest leads to bloody wars that tear the system and the member states apart.¹⁹ This is not learning in the sense of getting a better idea of what instruments can reach a standard goal, but rather what sociologists and political scientists refer to as socialization, the learning (or relearning) of basic attitudes and values, of appropriate ways of constructing a broader system. Central to the evolution of international politics and behavior in specific circumstances are the ways in which leaders have been socialized to view the world and their own interests in it, and how they think others can be best influenced and accommodated.

Socialization by necessity is a process that is both individual and collective. Individual leaders and states are socialized, but not in isolation from each other. They are moved by events that they share, and each state helps socialize the others. The best example, and the one with greatest consequences for

European history, was the resocialization that grew out of the Napoleonic wars. The leaders were able to form a coalition, bring down Napoleon, and, even more impressively, drastically alter the way international politics had been conducted because they shared the experience of a generation of incredibly destructive warfare. The leaders then came to realize that whatever they did, it would be insanity to return to the old ways of conducting international business. They not only learned new mechanisms of cooperation, but they came to understand that routinely seeking security at the expense of others would end in mutual destruction. They came to appreciate that moving alone in a highly interactive system was likely to harm others and bring down their wrath, and that they could best flourish by working together.

Power was not absent, of course, but it was joined by a new sense of responsibility, and a conception of living in a world in which no state could afford to entirely neglect broader interests. It was not, or not only, that states moderated their demands in the anticipation that others would oppose them, but that they saw themselves as part of a larger system, and that their conceptions of self-interest and how to further it changed.

This conception of international order is epitomized, in Schroeder's view, by the Vienna system. The tragedy of that system, for Schroeder, was that political leaders of the mid-nineteenth century missed a great opportunity to consolidate the new international order and instead found themselves locked into the disastrous road to the Crimean War. In the crisis leading up to the war, and throughout its three-year course, there was one power that worked persistently to avoid being dragged into the war and to bring that war to an end as swiftly as possible. The power in question was Austria, and the statesman who guided the Austrian ship of state during this terrible time was Buol, the foreign minister. For years Buol was viewed as a dark figure. Metternich, for instance, called his policy "idiotic," and even so detached a historian as M. S. Anderson, writing in 1966, labeled him the "architect of disaster."²⁰ In a series of remarkable essays, one of which is reproduced here, Schroeder found a wholly different character. He argues that while Buol took many paths that proved dead ends, he believed in them for the purest of motives. And when Schroeder, as a historian, tries to chart the course of the decisions he took, his sympathies are often with him, if not always, with them.

Many of these decisions ran into vigorous opposition from his opponents at home. Of these, Bruck, an economist, minister of commerce under Prince Schwarzenberg, and Buol's predecessor, was by far the most formidable. From his position in Constantinople, Bruck bickered fiercely with Buol over the course of Austrian policy. Bruck was a diplomat of severely limited vision and ability, and he pined for a policy based on tradition, on alliance with Russia, a new Holy Alliance. But it is clear from Schroeder's essay that it was Buol, not Bruck, who was the traditionalist and who tried to apply Metternich's principles to the crisis at hand. Like Metternich, Buol wanted to check Russia without humiliating her. Like Metternich, he knew that the issue was not whether Russia should be contained, but how; like Metternich,

he saw the specter of revolution on the horizon if the Eastern question broke away from diplomatic control. Both Metternich and Buol knew that their policy would not be tolerated by their opponents at home unless it made Austria and hence Europe more secure; therefore, they sometimes seemed to the diplomatic community at Vienna to be shifty and not above cheating their allies. Their ultimate object, a general settlement of the Eastern question through Concert diplomacy, did not alter.

Schroeder's concern, as he says at the outset, is more to draw attention to the defects of Bruck's policy than to point out the advantages of Buol's.²¹ Yet his preference for Buol's policy is clear, and it is not hard to see why. That Buol did not want a violent solution to the Eastern question; that he wished to end the conflict as rapidly as possible; that he shrank from grandiose slogans; that he blenched from picturing the war as a crusade; that he wished to keep open the channels of communications to all sides; that he was incredulous at schemes that would pull Russia down from the ranks of the great powers; that he skillfully used his diplomatic prowess carefully and with an eye toward bringing its full force to bear at critical moments; that he wanted to end the war with a minimum of prejudice to the future stability of the Continent—is clear. The main answer to the Eastern crisis that Buol envisaged was simple and straight out of Metternich's book: a five-power Concert including Russia. Turkey would be preserved and peace saved, not by building Turkey up or by pulling Russia down, but by compelling Russia to deal with Turkey only in concert through the four other great powers.

In the end, Buol's efforts failed, and Austria emerged from the Crimean War worse off than anyone else—worse off, even than Russia, who had met defeat on the battlefield and humiliation at the peace table. Indeed, Russia, though defeated, reformed herself vigorously and within 20 years was stronger than ever. As for the French and especially for British, victory in the war was superficial, for they too would soon reap a bitter harvest from the Concert's destruction. The transmogrification of Russia from a conservative power into a revisionist one and the withdrawal of Russian support for the Concert system opened the door to the unification of Italy and Germany that was to prove inimical, indeed catastrophic, to the interests of Britain. None of Britain's political leaders understood then or until many years later the full import to their country of a united, powerful, militarized, conservative Prussia-Germany. In that lack of understanding surely, as Norman Rich has pointed out, are to be found some of the roots of the fatal Anglo-German antagonism of the twentieth century.²²

In another essay, not published in this book, Schroeder begins by recounting a story of the American humorist, Robert Benchley, who faced an examination at Harvard that included the question: "Discuss the Canadian-American fisheries treaty from the standpoint of the Canadians or the Americans." Benchley retorted that he could not bring himself to discuss it from either the standpoint of the Canadians or the Americans and would instead discuss it from the standpoint of the fish.²³ Schroeder may well have used this same lead to open his piece on "The Lost Intermediaries."

Schroeder begins his essay with a general formulation. All intermediary bodies have, he points out, some function in helping states mitigate conflicts: "Where they exist," he writes, "Great Power competition stands a good chance of being limited to primacy. Where they do not, Great Power rivalry tends powerfully toward struggles for mastery."²⁴ Here he is at pains to stress that, of all such regions, the four South Germany states constituted one of the richest, most fertile zones of Europe for flexibility, moderation, and restraint in the ordering and management of international relations, and that their disappearance into Germany in 1871 had consequences "almost as important as the so-called unification of Germany itself."²⁵

The core of Schroeder's essay deals with the consequences of the Franco-Prussian War, in particular the disappearance of the four states of South Germany—Bavaria, Württemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt, and Baden—and with the implications of this for the European international system. His central contention is that by absorbing the states of South Germany in 1871, Bismarck displayed a certain unusual ineptness and actually made Germany's position with respect to the other great powers—France, Austria, and, most of all, Russia—immeasurably, not to say irremediably, worse than it had been before.

Schroeder recognizes that there are objections to this view, two of them particularly forceful, but he disposes of them in characteristic exemplary fashion. One is that the states of South Germany had been conquered as much as the states that Prussia had absorbed in 1866, and that all were tied to her by treaties of alliance. The second objection is that the Treaty of Prague, which ended the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, was ephemeral and transitional, a stopgap settlement that no one really cared about and whose arrangements were so obviously provisional and tenuous that the union of Germany in some form or another was inevitable.

The first objection, he notes, errs in the facts. Though these four southern states were in Prussia's orbit prior to 1870, they clearly acted independently of her in significant ways, developing as they did domestic, military, and even foreign policy that were independent of Bismarck and even downright worrying to him. Consider Bavaria: the victory, in the elections of May and November 1869, of the anti-Patriot Party; the overthrow, in February 1870, of the prime minister, Hohenlohe; and the notorious unreliability of King Ludwig II.

The second objection dissolves as well, for it underestimates what Schroeder sees to be the real strength of the peace of 1866. That the peace did not provide a lasting basis for Germans' national existence is clear enough; that it could not have done so is much more debatable. As Lothar Gall has argued, the settlement had in it the three elements that are essential for any settlement of the German question. It was, first of all, an international settlement accepted by all the major actors—by Austria, by France, and even by Russia. It could function, therefore, as an intermediary body that ordered Central European affairs and at the same time hamstrung great power interference. In addition, its organization balanced great powers' need

for independence with smaller states' requirement for security and stability. Finally, its transitory nature was paradoxically a source of its strength.²⁶ All attempts to undermine the settlement of 1866 ran into the sand—Napoleon III's schemes to block Prussia at the Main through a maze of intricate alliances; Bismarck's schemes to bring the south German states into the North German Confederation; Austria's schemes to throw her net over the same states by sham pretense of liberal reform; and Baden's scheme to get into the confederation voluntarily.

Schroeder does not, it should be noted, deny the role of the settlement of 1866 in advancing the great changes that came over Europe in the years that followed. After 1866, he notes, the powers outside Germany lost interest in the south German states. Austria, Russia, and Italy had, he argues, some interest in keeping the star of Prussian power from rising in the German political sky, but for each, for different reasons, this interest was more apparent than real. By 1870, most Austrians had forgotten about south German independence; they were dismayed by the seeming instability of the anti-Prussian cause; the woeful disunity among its various components, the confusing, kaleidoscopic quality of the changes in the political and military fortunes of the various groups. In any case, Austria, in a pinch, had always opted for a deal with Prussia over south German heads; Russian ambitions were fixated on the Black Sea, Italian ones on Rome. For each, indifference was preferable to intervention.

One power, however, could not afford such indifference: France. For her, the fate of South Germany, with whom she was connected by reasons of history and geography, was a life-and-death matter. After 1866, France saw the Prussian threat clearly and attempted to do what she could—acquiring Luxemburg and Belgium, forging a maze of alliances, and so on—to block Prussia. These attempts represented a clear effort to confront the Prussian danger, but as Schroeder points out, with respect to the south German states, they represented no change at all. Indeed, they made an already bad situation much worse. Especially was this the case after 1867 when the French determined that a crossing of the Main by Prussia would constitute a *casus belli*. This could only make a Franco-Prussian War more likely and with it, the possibility that the states who had the most to fear from such a war—Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden, and Hesse-Darmstadt—would disappear.

Schroeder's argument has some important implications for the origins of the Franco-Prussian War. If the picture he paints is accurate, traditional views of its outbreak—what Bismarck was after in trying to promote a crisis of relations with France in the Hohenzollern candidacy—lose much of their force.²⁷ The real question becomes: What danger was so great for him in 1870 as to make him adopt a scheme that was so uncharacteristic of him, one that could easily backfire, blow up in his face, and quite possibly cost him his job? Schroeder's essay suggests a possible answer: not a desire to provoke war with France, but the need to counteract the multiplex simultaneity of the debacles described at the end of his essay: the founding in Baden of a particularist and anti-Prussian *Volkspartei*; the unleashing in Württemberg of

a campaign by Bismarck's opponents to tear up the military budget, and, worst of all, the overthrow, just alluded to, of the Hohenlohe ministry and its replacement in Munich by a ministry of the pro-Austrian Patriot Party. From the force of the evidence Schroeder presents, one might well conclude that Bismarck was in no hurry to annex the states of south Germany and that he was driven into action only because events in Bavaria and elsewhere had upset the status quo. A considerable piece of historical revision, to say the least.

In 1887 Bismarck sent this malicious comment to William Ewart Gladstone, the British prime minister. "Tell him that while he is busy chopping down trees, I am busy planting them"²⁸—a remark that reveals as much about Bismarck's caustic tongue as it does about Gladstone's gardening habits. They were wildly different men—Bismarck and Gladstone. Their dislike for each other was intense, and yet there was, as Schroeder points out, more between the two of them than meets the eye.

The standard view of Gladstone runs something like this. He was, or became, the People's William. He knew perfectly well that the people were wholeheartedly on his side. He promoted moderation and caution in political judgment. The essence of Gladstone's foreign policy was his belief in the public law of Europe. The rulers of Central Europe, especially Austria-Hungary, having proved untrue to public law, were powers with whom Great Britain should have nothing to do. Their policy toiled after events, accumulating errors, without discovering in them a solution for Europe's troubles. Gladstone's vision was entirely different. He wanted to combine progress and Christianity. He advocated economy and peace, but managed to take a step that led inevitably to modern British imperialism. With John Bright, he believed that moral law is intended not only for individual life, but for the life and practice of states in their dealings with each other. He personified, in short, righteousness, a moral fervor, that swelled as he took up, reluctantly, international questions. He wanted to ignore the Continent and to discharge the British mission in the rest of the world. The British, calling upon those qualities of mind and spirit that had made their country the center of the highest form of civilization the modern world had ever known, would teach everyone else to follow their example.²⁹

The champion of moderation and enlightenment is, Schroeder notes, a long way from the Gladstone of history—a man essentially no different from the general run of human agents who find themselves in places of authority, subject to the same limitations, affected by the same restrictions of vision, tainted by the same original sin and, one may add, by the same inner conflicts between flesh and spirit, between self-love and charity. It is easy to make fun of Gladstone. Schroeder resists the temptation. He lets Gladstone make fun of himself. Gladstone, Schroeder shows, was a man of daring improvisation. He made lightning decisions and then presented them as the result of some long-term policy. He could really judge a situation as it existed at the moment without worrying about the Concert of Europe or what he said the day before. He lived with an intensity that would have exhausted any lesser man. His intense personal vision led him to ignore others or to push

them out of the way. Whatever he did, in Africa, in the Balkans, or in Egypt, was in Britain's strategic interest, and it is difficult to resist the feeling that Gladstone was on God's side because God had so arranged things to be on Gladstone's.

These observations will suffice to give some idea of the many points of this essay—richly informed by Schroeder's familiarity with British international history, interesting, carefully argued, and deserving of a detailed critical comment that could not be given within this space. But one or two of them speak to the heart of the essay's central concern.

Schroeder rejects, to begin with, the suggestion that Bismarck tricked Gladstone into intervening in Egypt in the hope of ruining Anglo-French relations. He recognizes the multitudinous aspects of Gladstone's policy, and shows how changes to it resulted in a policy torn asunder by moral, legal, and practical shortcomings. He disagrees with those who believe that Gladstone's moral principles overrode his practical limitations. He rejects, on balance, the view that Gladstone's policy represented an alternative to Bismarck's *Realpolitik*. He favors an explanation that sees them as sides of the same coin. Finally, he rejects an orientation that gives primacy to motives in the analysis of international politics. Results, he believes, often count more than motives in international affairs.

Despite his pious pretenses, Gladstone was, in Schroeder's view, devoid of moral earnestness. His policy is best characterized as one that presaged that of Sir Edward Grey, as "realist" a foreign minister who ever held office. Like Grey, he speculated on friendship with France; like Grey, he wanted to detach Italy from the Triple Alliance and destroy the Three Emperors' League; like every British minister, except conservatives like Disraeli, he despised Austria; like Grey, he was willing to make concessions to Germany outside Europe as long as she remained restrained within it.

Schroeder's discussion is not without contemporary relevance. It gains in significance by virtue of the pervasive bewilderment that prevails today in academic, journalistic, and governmental circles on the question addressed to the respective roles of moral absolutes and national interest in foreign policy. It shows, among other things, how readily a genuine subjective idealism can be turned to the service of *Realpolitik* and imperialist expansion; how easily double standards and an ethics of success triumph over principle; and how easily victories lure the victor into unmanageable tangles and ironic unintended consequences. Such tangles and consequences played a significant role in the drift of the system toward war in 1914. This was the tragic result, in Schroeder's view, of a breakdown in political equilibrium in Europe, an end to the observance of the values of prudence, of proportionality, and of international law, and the return of the competitive zero-sum politics of an earlier era.

The instability of early twentieth century Europe was pronounced and deeply rooted. Never since 1871—in fact, never since the breakup of the Concert of Europe in 1854—was Europe, and particularly Central Europe, fully stable. The framework prevailing in Eastern and Central Europe in

the period in the early years of the century was so deeply impregnated with hostile and uncompromising assumptions that it was becoming difficult to keep control of a number of potentially explosive situations.

The British entente with Russia in 1907 completed the formation of the Triple Entente of Britain, France, and Russia, which stood opposed to the Triple Alliance or, more accurately, the Dual Alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary, since Italy had, by a series of agreements with France, long since parted company with her Central European allies. Competition between the states of Europe, once confined to the areas overseas, now centered on the European fault lines—the Rhine and the Balkans.

For one vital actor a deep-seated pessimism and an extreme militarization not only of her thought but also of her life had become the hallmark of the prewar age, and that was Austria-Hungary. By 1914, exhausted and weakened, she had all but washed her hands of the Concert system; become unshakably unconvinced that the Concert was broken and bankrupt; and determined that only by taking up arms could she maintain her status and interests as a great power against potentially fatal threats. Why Austria-Hungary decided to push over the established system from which she had once benefitted and from the fall of which she alone could not gain is the topic Schroeder addresses in "World War I as Galloping Gertie."

There was one power that added immeasurably to the problems Austria faced and turned her from a stabilizing member of the system into a destabilizing and vengeful one, and that was Britain. Almost every aspect of Britain's policy from 1890 to 1914, if not intentionally anti-Austrian, had consequences that made it so. The alliances of Britain with France in 1904 and with Russia in 1907, though concerned with areas outside Europe, vitally affected Austria in the most negative of ways, for they impelled Britain's partners into actions that were, to say the least, inimical to Habsburg interests. Who, Schroeder asks, was threatened by France's success in consolidating her alliance with Russia after Germany's defeat at the conference at Algeciras in 1906? Did this not have the effect of reviving Russian interests in the Balkans and Russia's policy directed against Austria-Hungary? Similarly, who was jolted by France's attempts to lure Italy out of the Triple Alliance? Was not the result of this the unchaining of *Italia irredenta* on the same Balkans, adding immeasurably to the perennial Austrian-Italian differences over an area where Austria had life-and-death interests? It was Austria, not Germany, Schroeder shows, who was, or became, the real target of Entente diplomacy; Austria, not Germany, who was in danger of becoming, in the years before 1914, hopelessly encircled by the powers hostile to her. All the disturbing elements in the relations between Austria and the Entente Powers proceeded, he notes, almost overwhelmingly from the Entente side.

One might object, as a responsible critic has, that the central problem from which Schroeder has averted his eyes was the nationalities question; that the monarchy was disintegrating because the peoples within it were detaching themselves from its control; and that this made impossible any

solution by Britain or anyone else to preserve the status quo.³⁰ But this misses the point and misunderstands his argument on several fronts. No other power was called upon to save the Habsburg Monarchy, any more than anyone was called upon to save Imperial Russia in its far worse crises of 1905–06. That was not necessary. The Habsburg Monarchy was capable of indefinitely soldiering on or muddling through in 1914, as she had done recurrently throughout her long life in many worse crises.

What a sane international policy called for, and what everyone including the Central Powers did in 1905–06, was not to take advantage of an indispensable great power's internal troubles to bring her down, and not to support or encourage external attacks or subversion against her. The nationalist outbursts in the Balkans had continued more or less regularly since 1821 (or better, 1804) and had never caused a great war (though they had come close on some occasions) precisely because they were in the end not allowed to destroy the indispensable foundation of nineteenth century European peace, which was the fragile restraining alliance and balance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. The plain fact is that Britain (especially) and France, which had often tried to break up this restraining alliance throughout the nineteenth century for their own selfish purposes (in 1825–27, the 1830s, 1848–49, Crimean War, Polish Crisis of 1863, Eastern Crisis of 1875–78, Bulgarian Crisis 1884–87, etc.), now quite deliberately took advantage of the alienation of Russia and Austria to advance their own security and imperialist purposes. Particularly after 1907, they simply refused to restrain Russia and even encouraged her in supporting and defending Serbian and Rumanian nationalist aspirations against the Monarchy. Thus Schroeder charges Britain not with treachery but instead with long-range stupidity and irresponsibility in failing to see and prepare for the systemic consequences of what she was doing.

Schroeder develops many of these themes regarding the outbreak of World War I in another essay, written more than three decades later and focused around the analytic theme of contingency and counterfactual analysis in history. In "Embedded Counterfactuals and World War I as an Unavoidable War," Schroeder argues that counterfactuals are inherent in historical analysis and potentially quite useful, but he questions conventional approaches to counterfactual analysis and argues that the most useful counterfactuals to investigate are those that were actually perceived and debated by the historical actors themselves.

Schroeder illustrates his methodological orientation to counterfactual analysis through an inquiry on the outbreak of World War I. While he accepts the argument that in the absence of the German–Austro-Hungarian initiative (after the assassination) that aimed at a local war and accepted the risk of a general war, World War I would not have happened, at least at that time, Schroeder criticizes a number of propositions commonly associated with that view.³¹ He argues, contrary to the conventional wisdom, that the security challenges facing Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914 were not primarily of their own making and that they were responding to a system

that was being controlled by others; that German and Austro-Hungarian policies and actions (as opposed to their rhetoric) were in fact more moderate than those of the other great powers; that the leaders of the Central Powers had few viable alternatives in 1914; and that the war was basically inevitable.

This failure of the great powers to restrain each other is a significant step back from the new international order of the Concert period where statesmen believed that a defeated France and a potentially threatening Russia were each best influenced by bringing them into the system of restraining alliances of the Concert. However, this return to earlier ways of behavior does not lead Schroeder to conclude that history is essentially circular or repetitive. In contrast to such a nondirectional conception of history, and in contrast to the view of realist international theory that anarchic international structures generate patterns of competitive politics that vary relatively little over time, Schroeder argues that the history of international relations demonstrates a clear sense of progress, of unidirectional, upward movement. From this he derives a "certain amount of rational hope and emancipatory power in facing the future of international politics,"³² exuding an optimism that would have daunted even Macaulay.

The recognition of the European states system in 1648, the replacement of a crisis-prone and destabilizing system of dynastic legitimacy with a system of balance of power in the eighteenth century, and, most significantly of all, the transformation of political thinking and the emergence of a new collective mentality of rules and procedures toward the end of the Napoleonic wars—all these significantly stabilized international politics and reduced the frequency of war.

The nineteenth century transformation was conceived in the 1780s when the British economy was the first to achieve self-sustaining growth, and the French Revolution began the process of clearing away the *ancien régime*, but it could gather strength only when peace came and the immense new resources in finance, management, and science could be put to constructive use. That, in turn, could not have been accomplished without the diplomatic revolution that Schroeder describes, one that transformed international politics in a manner it had never been transformed before or since.³³ It was just as essential as the birth of a new concept of domestic politics that grew out of the French Revolution,³⁴ and in Schroeder's opinion surpassed the French Revolution in significance and long-range importance. With Harold Nicolson, he argues that the post-Napoleonic revolution endured beyond the Vienna system and the mid-century crisis marked by the revolutions of 1848 and the Crimean War.³⁵ This long-term progress in international politics led, in the nineteenth century, to the rise of the trading state, the emergence of growing numbers of international organizations and, more recently, to international integration, heralding an accelerating, irreversible evolution (or revolution) that possibly constitutes the deepest and most fundamental transformation ever.

Schroeder's conception of modern diplomatic history differs from the traditional "event history," as the French *Annalistes* so contemptuously

characterized political and diplomatic history of the Rankean tradition, because he subsumes individual events within a *histoire de longue durée* and adopts a systemic perspective.³⁶ But Schroeder's history also differs from the systemic perspective advanced by the historian Paul Kennedy in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1988) or by political scientists like Kenneth Waltz in his structural realist *Theory of International Politics* (1979). While those systemic perspectives focus primarily on material structures and posit, implicitly or explicitly, that similar structures tend to recur in international politics and generate similar behaviors and outcomes at different points, Schroeder emphasizes ideational structures that change over time, so that similar material structures generate different behaviors and outcomes at different points.

Schroeder rejects any assumption of "an essentially unchanging cyclical struggle for power or the shifting play of the balance of power," and focuses instead on the "fundamental changes in the rules, norms, expectations, and collective assumptions."³⁷ He shares with M. S. Anderson a great respect for the increasingly complex network of classical diplomacy which, with all its faults, was one of Europe's greatest gifts to the world.³⁸ But he sees the different stages in the evolution of international politics not so much as reflections of changing cultural assumptions of the eras of faith, the Enlightenment, of industrialization, and so on, as Anderson does, but as an autonomous process with its own internal dynamics of progress. European statesmen ultimately learned from their defeats, setbacks, and disastrous experiences in the Napoleonic wars and set out to create a system that, in turn, shaped and limited the culture of international political interaction.³⁹

Schroeder further refines his theory of historical development in his essay on "The Cold War and Its Ending in 'Long-Duration' International History." He argues that European international politics has progressed through certain identifiable stages of historical development, and that the Cold War can be interpreted as a continuation of that pattern. More specifically, Schroeder argues that the periods 1643–1715 and 1811–20 each mark definitive transformations in European politics which broke with the past in ways that were evident to contemporaries as well as to later historians. Each transformation marked the emergence of a new order, a new set of assumptions and collective mentalities of political leaders, and a growing consensus of a conception of peace that facilitated a relatively stable operation of the new system. Each system went through a stage of crisis, partial breakdown, and partial transformation which led in turn to the next stage of renewed stabilization but then gradual deterioration. The last phase of development involved the final breakdown of the old order and the earliest stage of the emergence of a new one. Schroeder argues that the Cold War and its end fit this pattern and constitute the final breakdown of the old order and a breakthrough to new system, comparable to the new orders of 1643–1715 and 1811–20. Each new order, he argues, is superior to the previous one, at least in terms of the degree of normative consensus and the prospects for peace.

The fact that we can discern meaningful progress suggests that the absence of world government and the persistence of structural anarchy do

not doom the world to perpetual warfare or preclude a trend toward a more humane international politics, one built on learning and benign socialization. Despite occasional regression to older patterns of behavior, political leaders are not trapped in a merciless game whose rules they cannot influence, but instead, collectively, and for the most powerful of them individually, they can build a better world. Countries and leaders often have a significant range of choice, and, contrary to many students of international politics, Schroeder thinks that states can behave morally or immorally and that scholars have the right and the duty to judge their choices and to make moral judgments.

Schroeder develops this theme in "International History: Why Historians Do It Differently than Political Scientists." He argues that one of the prime responsibilities of a historian is to render justice to states and their leaders. Few are villains; fewer still are heroes. But some not only do a better job than others of advancing their own interests, but even more importantly do a better job of building a well-regulated system, of carrying out their responsibilities, of developing, living by, and enforcing the principles that permit as many states as possible to thrive. Although in some cases indignation and condemnation on the part of the historian reflect mere hindsight and fleeting contemporary values, when appropriately developed, these sentiments can set the record straight and pay due honor—and dishonor—to people for their vision, values, and choices. Furthermore, these evaluations can educate and guide citizens and future leaders, thereby enhancing, if only modestly, the prospects for progress.

It is in this context that Schroeder judges current American foreign policy so severely in "The Mirage of Empire Versus the Promise of Hegemony." The policies of George W. Bush are not merely an adaptation to the dangers and opportunities posed by the current international environment, but reflect a choice to revert to an older way of trying to rule rather than to manage the international system. Contrary to the argument of some analysts, including one of us, who see the overthrow of Saddam and the broader policy that this behavior represents as typical of a dominant state,⁴⁰ Schroeder stresses the large role of choice involved in the decisions to pursue an empire rather than a more consultative and benign hegemony. This can be condemned not only as likely to bring grief to many countries, including the United States, but more deeply as a step backward that calls for a moral as well as pragmatic criticism. As the entire corpus of his work demonstrates, detailed understanding of historical events, far from being antithetical to analysis of contemporary problems and judgments about the wisdom of current policies, can provide an informed basis for them.