



# For National Security: Gen. Brent Scowcroft



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## ***For National Security: Gen. Brent Scowcroft<sup>1</sup>***

by

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“A friend in Washington is someone who stabs you in the chest.” Brent Scowcroft sometimes tells this joke to break the ice when beginning a speech. The irony, though, is that Scowcroft has a great many friends and admirers. It is this capacity for friendship, together with his other personal qualities, his upbringing, military background, and intellectualism, that have made him so remarkably effective and so very much respected and, it is fair to say, so adored in Washington, around the country, and around the world.

To understand General Scowcroft’s success as a policymaker means returning to his family background—at least in part. Brent Scowcroft (no middle initial) grew up in Ogden, Utah, in an unusually secure and nurturing environment. Two of his great-grandfathers were captains leading “companies” of Latter-day Saints on their journey by foot from Omaha to the Great Salt Lake Basin. One was Job Pingree, a successful merchant, prosperous banker—the co-founder of the Pingree National Bank—large landowner, and one of Ogden’s first residents. The other was Richard Ballantyne, who Brigham Young selected to be one of “Seventy” of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints and was the founder of the Mormon Sunday school system. A third, and Brent’s most famous great-grandfather, was John Scowcroft. John Scowcroft founded Scowcroft & Son’s, a highly successful dry goods wholesaler, which became the largest such company between the Mississippi and the California coast. Its best-known product was “Never Rip Overalls,” which in 1909 Scowcroft & Sons produced at the rate of two-thousand pairs per day. By 1914, the company employed 250 workers alone for fabricating overalls, work pants, and work shirts.

In 1925 Scowcroft was born into a family that was, as we see, established socially and well off materially; indicatively, his parents were married in the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City. By all accounts he had a happy childhood. Brent was a member of the Boy Scouts, skied, played golf, and roamed around the Wasatch foothills with his friends, only blocks from his home. As the youngest of three children and the only son, Scowcroft was, he concedes, “spoiled.” Not once did he remember hearing his parents fight, and he never remembered feeling any tension at home. Later, reflecting on his upbringing, Scowcroft wryly observed that his idyllic childhood gave him a highly distorted view of his fellow humans.<sup>2</sup>

Upon reading *West Point Today* in 1937, at the age of 12, he decided he wanted to go to West Point. Neither did the transformative effects on American society of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor—which he remembers listening to radio broadcasts of with his parents—dissuade him from his dream.

Scowcroft attended a West Point prep program in Lafayette College in Easton, PA, where he overlapped with future senator Frank Church and Henry Kissinger, who were both with the Army Specialized Training Program. In July 1944 he started at the U.S. Military Academy, where he was a member of the last WWII cohort that had a three-year curriculum, because of the wartime need for more Army and Army Air Corps officers. Upon graduating in the top third of his class, he joined the Army Air Corps.

After training at air force bases in San Antonio and Chandler, Arizona—where to survive the desert heat they had to get up at 4:00 a.m. to fly—he became a pilot for a Strategic Air Command fighter escort. It was while on a dog-

fight training exercise in central New Hampshire, in early January 1949 that “Scowcroft miraculously escape[d] death” (as the Manchester *Union Leader* reported). The engine of his F51B Mustang failed at 2000 feet, too low an altitude to use the parachute, so Scowcroft tried to crash-land his aircraft. After tearing loose some telephone cables, hitting a stone bridge, and missing a passenger bus by about a hundred yards, Scowcroft’s plane came to rest on a frozen marsh, just outside Derry, New Hampshire.

Scowcroft had two broken vertebrae as well as other, less serious injuries, but he was nonetheless in some ways fortunate: he could have easily been killed or paralyzed, and his plane, full of fuel, could have caught fire and exploded. Confined to a plaster cast from waist up initially and having to spend two years in military hospitals because of complication, it was a difficult period. Not only was he told that he would not be able to fly again, but barely a month after the crash he learned that his father, James Scowcroft, had died of heart failure.

The two had been close and Brent assumed that his father would help him learn the family business, which he would take up after his time in the Army. But now, lying in hospital beds for months on end and with a career in the family business, absent his father, now much less appealing, Scowcroft realized he wanted to study national security and to contribute to U.S. national security.

The good news was that while at Valley Forge Army Hospital recovering from his broken back, Scowcroft met 1st Lt. Marian Horner, a nurse with the Army Air Corps. Marian, “Jackie” to her friends, was vivacious, outgoing, and immensely capable. She was a Roman Catholic from Syracuse, New York, two years older than Brent and, because of her great competence, positive attitude, and strong work ethic, had just been awarded the “Outstanding Nurse” at Valley Forge Army Hospital. Brent and Jackie married in September 1951, in Sumter, South Carolina (where she was stationed) after Scowcroft had finally recovered after some complications and

had spent several months at Mather Air Force base in central California.

It was also while Scowcroft was at Valley Forge Army Hospital that he received a letter from Col. Herman Beukema, the head of the Department of Social Sciences at West Point and the former head of the Army Specialized Training Program, who invited him to return to the U.S. Military Academy to teach. After studying Public Law and Government at Columbia University for eighteen months and earning a Masters Degree, Scowcroft would teach for four years at his alma mater. He was then billeted to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, where he worked as the assistant air attaché, a position in intelligence, for two years and where he became acquainted with ambassador George Kennan. Scowcroft was then assigned to teach at the Air Force Academy’s Department of Political Science, where he served as deputy department head and then department chair.

Scowcroft then went to work in the Pentagon under Maj. Gen. Richard Yudin for several years. He worked with U.S.-Latin American military relations, did Long-Range Planning, directed the Air Force’s component of Vietnamization, and assisted the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In between his various positions he attended the National War College and, with his performances, attracted the attention of his Air Force superiors.

It was no accident, then, that Gen. John Vogt selected Scowcroft as Nixon’s White House military assistant, upon the recommendation of Maj. Gen. James “Don” Hughes, who suggested that Scowcroft replace him as military assistant. Generals Hughes and Vogt figured that once Scowcroft took over as the President’s military assistant, he had the intelligence, academic training, administrative savvy, and personality to attract Kissinger’s attention. They knew that Lt. Gen. Alexander Haig, deputy to National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, wished to return to the Army, and they wanted an Air Force officer to serve as Kissinger’s right-hand man, since the deputy national security advisor was the



first to brief the president each morning and was in constant contact with the President by virtue of Nixon's role as commander in chief.

Were Scowcroft to become Kissinger's new deputy, he would be well placed to learn of developments vital to Air Force interests, such as diplomatic breakthroughs or early versions of the federal budget. Hughes and Vogt figured, too, that they would then be kept apprised of Kissinger's plans. Like other top Pentagon officers, they distrusted and feared Kissinger because of his unpredictable foreign policy and apparent influence over President Nixon. They particularly disliked having the National Security Advisor tell them how many and what kind of missiles or bombers or fighters they could have.

As a stellar military assistant to the president—informed, competent, judicious, caring, solicitous—Scowcroft's Air Force superiors were proven right: Kissinger selected Scowcroft to replace Haig. Meanwhile, as military assistant, Scowcroft became close to President Nixon. Nixon and Scowcroft cooperated closely in the handling of families of POWs and MIAs, and the president came to respect Scowcroft and to use him as sounding board. And once Nixon appointed Kissinger as Secretary of State in Sept. 1973, Scowcroft became *de facto* national security advisor. He continued on in that position under President Gerald Ford, until Ford appointed Scowcroft as national security advisor in November 1975.

As *de facto* national security advisor and then national security advisor proper, Scowcroft was closely involved in decisions on strategic weapons, SALT, military arms sales, U.S.-Iran ties, the U.S. resupply of Israel during the Yom Kippur War, the 1974-1975 Angolan crisis, and the handling of the intelligence scandals of the mid-1970s, among other issues. He was particularly involved with the evaluation of South Vietnam in April 1975, which he essentially administered along with the assistance of his aide, Col. Robert McFarlane. They monitored how many Americans and Vietnamese forces were taken out each day, using figures from the Saigon

Embassy and Department of Defense, so as to calculate how many persons remained to be evacuated. They coordinated actions with the State Department and the Pacific Command. Mostly, though, they simply tried to impose order and ensure a modicum of cohesion on what Scowcroft called a "confusing, crazy" mess. But to Scowcroft's and the administration's credit, the military was able to evacuate 130,000 Vietnamese in April 1975, ten times the number planned for by the State Department. In the final fourteen hours alone of April 29th and 30th, Marine helicopters succeeded in lifting out almost 8,000 U.S. military personnel, Saigon Embassy officials, South Vietnamese, and their dependents. The Vietnamese had their own name for the operation, "The Running."

Notwithstanding the grim outcome of the Vietnam War, two close observers of the Ford presidency say that it was Scowcroft's handling of the evacuation of Saigon that led him to appoint him to succeed Kissinger in Ford's Halloween Massacre of November 2, shaking up his cabinet and top advisors.

Just two weeks later, Scowcroft excelled in his role as the manager, in effect, of the *Mayaguez* crisis. The *Mayaguez* crisis was the "first real test" of President Ford's leadership ability, according to Robert Hartmann, Ford's top political advisor. Could President Ford, with his job approval standing at 39% (thanks to the Nixon pardon) be decisive? Could the U.S. government save the ship's crew (in contrast to the *USS Pueblo*, which was held for a year and whose crew was used as a propaganda instrument for North Korea)? Could Ford operate under the newly imposed War Powers Act and still act presidentially? Scowcroft excelled once again, and after three and half days, the *Mayaguez* crisis came to successful conclusion. He was poised and calm under fire, something that could be attributed to his military training, self-possession and quiet self-confidence, and vision as a strategist—as someone who kept his eye on the big picture and long-term stakes.

This calm under fire was only one of Scowcroft's distinguishing characteristics. Whether as an air attaché, post-graduate student at the Joint Forces Staff College and the National War College, or teacher at West Point and the Air Force Academy, almost all Scowcroft's superior officers regarded him as an unusual officer. He was "exceptionally hard working" and bright," and "showed "a maturity of thought and grasp of academic problems uncommon in officers of his grade and service." He performed his duties with "outstanding understanding, intelligence, skill, and judgment," and also possessed an "iron will." Scowcroft's superior officers at West Point, in the Pentagon, and elsewhere consistently remarked on his inquisitive intelligence, his obvious brilliance, and his uncommon ability to grow in stature as the responsibilities he was given increased. Revealingly, none of those evaluating Scowcroft's military record, officers who were among the most senior in the Air Force once Scowcroft was promoted to colonel, could determine a ceiling on his ability to take additional responsibility; Scowcroft's growth potential was considered "unlimited."

In March 1971, Scowcroft received the "Award of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge" for his "important and loyal service in a position of responsibility in support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff." In December 1971, the Air Force awarded him the Legion of Merit: "Lt. Col. Brent Scowcroft distinguished himself by exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to the United States." His "exemplary ability, diligence, and devotion to duty were instrumental factors in the resolution of many complex problems of major importance to the Air Force." Scowcroft also received the Air Force's Distinguished Service Medal in recognition of Scowcroft's "penetrating analyses and consistently sound judgment and advice on matters developed for consideration of the Joint Chiefs of Staff dealing with the most significant aspects of our military posture and national strategic policy."

Scowcroft's success as a military officer—he was a "five percenter," one of the "water walkers"—as a policymaker, and as a

presidential adviser was the product of several interacting factors. He was—and is—dedicated to public service, whether on behalf of the U.S. Air Force, the Department of Defense, the White House, or the United States itself, and a very hard worker. Robert Gates, a close friend of Scowcroft, spoke of his friend's seriousness. Gates observed that Brent enjoys talking about national security even when off duty, during his free time. At the same time, he was creative, resourceful, and even entrepreneurial in his dealings with the military bureaucracy and other in the government in the pursuit of his objectives and those of his superior officers or the U.S. president.

During the Bush administration, he would get up at 4:45 a.m. and then often go to bed after midnight. What most do not appreciate, though, is that in the late '80s and early '90s Scowcroft often had to go home during the day to take care of his ill wife. He then also had to take care of her the first thing in the morning and then on the weekends. So President Bush never seemed to mind if Scowcroft nodded off in the middle of a meeting. (It was this capacity to catnap and then wake up as though nothing had happened, that induced President George H. W. Bush to create the "Scowcroft Award" for those who were able to nod off and then wake up without missing a beat.)

When his superiors decided on a course of action, Scowcroft could thus be counted on carrying it out. And with his cheerful and straightforward demeanor, his quiet leadership, and the force of his own example, he was able to disarm or deflect almost all potential personal clashes or bureaucratic conflicts. Scowcroft had the ability to divorce his ego from his professional performance, a trait that distinguished Scowcroft from most other high-ranking officers and policy experts. He accepted the decisions being handed down, irrespective of whatever position he had taken previously, and did not question, complain, or challenge the decisions being made. Neither did he attempt to maneuver around them by going over the heads of his bosses or leaking his opposition to the

press. Nor did he passively resist his superiors' directives by delaying their implementation or ignoring them, both of which are tactics frequently used by disgruntled subordinates to avoid having to take actions that happen to run contrary to their own preferences.

On occasion, some of his colleagues thought he had an "irritating edge" (as Gen. Colin Powell put it), but everyone knew he walked the talk. As President Bush once said, Scowcroft "didn't want anything." Indeed, Scowcroft once told me that there is never a reason to be selfish. When pressed, he conceded that an exception might be when getting sick; but even so, this attitude is indicative of Scowcroft's remarkable ethos.

Scowcroft's behavior thereby caused his colleagues to see him as at once the quintessential team player and an independent-minded officer of impeccable integrity. People recognized he was acting on behalf of the Air Force, the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, or the President of the United States—whichever the case may have been—and they trusted him. They knew he was not trying to enhance his own reputation or to feather his own nest. He succeeded at appealing to his colleagues' better angels.

Then there is Scowcroft's good humor. He enjoyed playing practical jokes; he is affable and friendly; and he was supportive and solicitous of his subordinates. He laughs a lot; he is a genial man. Although Scowcroft and Dick Cheney fell out in 2001 and have remained estranged, when they were both in the Ford administration, Sgt. Bill Gulley, Scowcroft's successor as the White House military assistant, called Scowcroft and Cheney the White House's two most-loved men. And Richard Haass, who headed the Middle East desk on the NSC staff under Bush 41 and in 2016 was the president of the Council of Foreign Relations, has said that the Bush administration was the most collegial of any of the four administrations in which he served. Working there "was actually fun," he said. "It sounds bizarre, but it was by far the most

enjoyable experience a lot of us had had before or since in government. There was a lot of camaraderie and kidding around...it was very relaxed."

In addition, Scowcroft was an intellectual. He was curious about the Cold War and international communism, and Russian and Soviet history—which is why being an intelligence officer in Yugoslavia, then under Marshal Josip Tito, attracted him—and he pursued his doctorate at Columbia University in 1966 (although the dissertation was not completed until 1967). He wrote a paper on "Deterrence and Strategic Superiority" for the National War College, which he published in the foreign policy journal *Orbis* (Summer 1969). He worked closely and said he learned a lot from General Yudin, who the writer Fred Kaplan describes as the "intellectual master" of the new generation of Air Force staff officers who were studying nuclear warfare in the 1960s. And over the course of his career he wrote about one hundred op-eds (many with co-authors, to be sure), many commission reports, and several chapters for edited books, and co-authored *A World Transformed* with George Bush and *America and the World* with Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Whether acting as deputy national security advisor, national security advisor, head of the President Reagan's Commission on Strategic Forces, one of three members of the Tower Commission investigating Iran-contra, national security advisor under President George Bush, policy adviser, or writer, Scowcroft tried to think five-to-ten years down the road, beyond the short-term hiccups and temporary crises. In this sense we can think of him a strategist, albeit with a small "s." Scowcroft may not be a Clausewitz or a Sun Tzu, but he thinks long term and looks at all the pieces in play, thanks to his deep knowledge of world history and close study of international relations. "This is where I believe in the importance of history," Scowcroft says. The study of history taught him about "how countries behave" and helped him to remain objective about people, events, institutions, and

forces—their origins, their likely interactions, and the possible future results.

The upshot of Scowcroft's many abilities, and a principal key to his remarkable effectiveness, is his multivocality. He has the rare ability to speak to and thereby span separate audiences—a quality more frequently found among presidents and leading politicians than military officers and national security experts. One of his voices is that of a diplomat, international-relations expert, and foreign-policy practitioner, whether expressed in small groups, in public speeches, or in his writing. He is thereby able to speak to journalists, academics, and interested members of the public about national security and U.S. interests more generally, which he has done more recently with the situation in Iran nuclear agreement and Russian aggression in Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

Another voice he has is that of a military leader. As a former Pentagon staff officer and retired Air Force general, he learned how government worked, figured out how to secure others' "buy-ins" so as to be able to fashion, coordinate, and carry out White House and U.S. government policy, and understands the ways of the complex government bureaucracy. Absent access to the levers of power and without the ability to execute policy skillfully, a would-be strategist is merely an armchair theorist. A military analyst cannot be a strategist if his plans are not accepted by decision leaders and then implemented by the armed forces, just as a political consultant is no electoral strategist if she cannot control where her candidate gives her campaign speeches and how she spends her funds.

George Kennan is considered a great international strategist because of his 1946 "Long Telegram," and his 1947 *Foreign Affairs* article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," which largely provided the conceptual underpinnings for U.S.-Soviet Cold War policy. By contrast, the decades Kennan spent writing at Princeton's Center for Advanced Study and on his Pennsylvania farm, when presidents and policymakers all but ignored

Kennan's analyses and prescriptions, do not add to his resume as a strategist—as interesting as they may be to intellectual historians. Similarly, Kissinger is famous, if controversial, for his (and President Nixon's) strategic vision in regard to détente and SALT, the opening to China, and the US disengagement from Vietnam, as well as for the private advice he has given George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, and other US presidents—and not the quality and volume of his analyses of US foreign policy that he has published in his many books and other writings.

Yet another voice is that of Scowcroft as an intelligence officer, where he was trained in intelligence operations, was an important consumer of intelligence, and, as national security advisor, was an important supervisor of intelligence work and commissioner of covert operations. Not only did he play a central role in reforming covert actions after the intelligence scandals of the mid-1970s, but also, in 2001, headed an external review board for reforming the intelligence community.

In addition, there is Scowcroft's voice as an expert on weapons and nuclear deterrence, as seen with his writings, his leadership of the Scowcroft Commission on Strategic forces, and his central roles in concluding the START and START II arms agreements. It was no small fact that he opposed the so-called "Gang of Four"—Kissinger, George Shultz, Sam Nunn and William Perry—and their designs for a world of "zero nukes" as being naïve and simple-minded (since it is relatively easy for a national government to produce nuclear weapons). The United States and its key NATO allies therefore needed to maintain a modicum of nuclear forces to maintain strategic deterrence.

Finally, with his family business background, his experience as an international business consultant in the late 1970s and throughout most of the '80s and after 1994 with the Scowcroft Group, his membership on corporate boards, and his appreciation for the economic aspects of U.S. national security, Scowcroft has had a highly credible voice with

respect to international commerce and American business.

For all of Scowcroft's outstanding accomplishments and stellar career, there are two important points that need to be addressed. One is the end of the Cold War, where the Bush administration did not offer a vision for an alternative future and where Scowcroft conceded that he had only known the Cold War over the course of his career. As one foreign journalist wondered, "future historians will find it hard to understand why the United States, with the world at its feet, did not seize the opportunity it had itself created to install a new world order." Although the Bush administration proposed a "new world order" in the fall of 1990, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the administration did not sustain its attention to the ideas and policies of a "new world order," those based on universal rights, democratic government, the United Nations, and the actions of other international institutions. So nothing followed the Cold War.

This criticism of Scowcroft, President Bush, and Secretary of State James Baker—that they did not prepare the United States for the world ahead—is partly true. Scowcroft admitted that the Bush administration "didn't have any great ideas about how the world was going to go. We were sort of batting around all the ideas: What was the world going to be like? Would we be able to cooperate with the Soviet Union? What was going to happen in China? Was China falling apart? There was a really wide-ranging discussion about what the future might look like....It's all fuzzy other than the New World Order, which I wish I had never thought of." Arguably, there was a failure of imagination at a moment of American global supremacy, at a time when it could have done the most good.<sup>4</sup>

Yet any judgment of the Bush administration's failure to describe an overarching vision of U.S. grand strategy should be tempered with an appreciation of just how fast everything was changing. It is easy to forget just how vast the political, economic, and ideological

gulfs were that separated the United States and Soviet Union—or at least how vast they were perceived by those on both sides—and to forget the mutual fear and suspicion of both superpowers. Conversely, it is all too easy to overlook just how quickly the situation changed.

Scowcroft acknowledged the overwhelming pace of events. The Bush White House did all it could simply to keep on top of things, Scowcroft said; "there was a lot to digest." He conceded that the administration "didn't have a comprehensive strategy for a world that were moving to at a rapid rate." Events were happening "too soon," too fast. And he, President Bush, and Secretary of State Baker did not have the time to "find our feet, we were just trying to keep up with things." So it may be highly unrealistic to expect the Bush administration and the Washington policy community to assimilate all that was happening in such a relatively short period—much less for the White House to formulate, agree upon, and mobilize behind a new grand strategy. Scowcroft himself described the administration as being in "limbo" until reelection.

By way of comparison, given just how much the Cold War defined the United States and the politics of the twentieth century, eight years elapsed between the end of the Revolutionary War and the ratification of the Constitution (1781-1789). Nearly five years passed between the end of the Second World War and the emergence of a U.S. policy consensus on the nature of the Soviet threat and the need to contain global communism, as articulated in NSC 68 in April 1950. So the last two years or so of the one-term Bush presidency was almost surly too brief a period to reassess how the United States was to reorient itself in a transformed world. "Maybe you can say we ran out of time or we ran out of gas," Arnold Kanter told me.

But neither did the Clinton administration articulate or promulgate a new vision for American national security; nor did George W. Bush administration in its first eight months.



What also merits attention is Scowcroft's outspoken position on the invasion of Iraq after the events of September 11, 2001, where President George W. Bush and his top advisers refused to listen to Scowcroft's many warnings about going to war against Iraq. Not only did Scowcroft express his views in the *Wall Street Journal* in mid-August 2002, but he had previously written to a similar effect in the *Washington Post* in late 2001 and had said much the same, several times, on national television. But it was the op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, whose front page is virtually a bulletin board for the Republican Party, that created the great controversy. Scowcroft wrote, where the op-ed was an adaptation of remarks he had given Bob Schieffer on "Meet the Press" of Sunday, August 4:

any campaign against Iraq, whatever the strategy, cost and risks, is certain to divert us for some indefinite period from our war on terrorism. Worse, there is a virtual consensus in the world against an attack on Iraq at this time. So long as that sentiment persists, it would require the US to pursue a virtual go-it-alone strategy against Iraq, making any military operations correspondingly more difficult and expensive. The most serious cost, however, would be to the war on terrorism. Ignoring that clear sentiment would result in a serious degradation in international cooperation with us against terrorism. And make no mistake, we simply cannot win that war without enthusiastic international cooperation, especially on intelligence.<sup>5</sup>

Possibly the most dire consequences, Scowcroft reckoned, "would be the effect in the region for if the US was seen to be turning its back on the bitter Israeli–Palestinian conflict in order to go after Iraq, "there would be an explosion of outrage against us," he added. "We would be seen as ignoring a key interest of the Muslim world in order to satisfy what is seen to be a narrow American interest. Even without Israeli involvement, the results could well destabilize Arab regimes in the region, ironically

facilitating one of Saddam's strategic objectives." And we know the rest.

The irony is not only was Scowcroft the chief initiator of the first Gulf War—persuading Bush and others in the White House that they needed to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait (a "war of necessity" in Richard Haass's phrasing) to restore the status quo ante bellum—but the first Bush administration, like that of George W. Bush, had also not well planned the endgame. The difference, though, is that Scowcroft and the senior Bush administration erred on the side of caution, rather than overreach.

As a result of his outspoken dissent in the *Wall Street Journal*, Scowcroft became a *persona non-grata*: ignored by and estranged from his former friends and colleagues and vilified by Republicans and neoconservatives in public speeches and in the media. Scowcroft nonetheless stayed in touch with the Bush White House and, following Bush's reelection in 2004, worked with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, among others, to try to put U.S. foreign policy back on track. And in early 2007, Scowcroft demonstrated once again his laudable ability to detach his ego from past experiences by giving his support to the troop surge in Iraq. As Elliot Abrams said to me, George W. Bush's foreign policy advisers and Republicans more generally did not appreciate the fact that Scowcroft's loyalty to the United States exceeded his loyalty to the Republican Party.

Once Scowcroft left public office in 1993, he and his friends and former staff established the Forum for International Policy, a think-tank that morphed into the Scowcroft Group, which has become possibly the most prestigious and most influential of the many Washington-area international business consultants. Although he has spent most of his time consulting, but has also run interference on occasion (as after the April 2001 Hainin Island incident), served on presidential commissions (such as the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, from 2010 to 2012),

given speeches and interviews, and continued to weigh in on foreign policy. He has also been on many corporate boards and has played invaluable roles with the Atlantic Council and Aspen Strategy Group. In fact, he has served as an *eminence grise* to President Obama, as Jeffrey Goldberg points out in his recent *Atlantic* article.<sup>6</sup>

Scowcroft's career acquired another dimension as he aged: he started receiving prestigious awards. He says that he is proudest of receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom (in July 1991) and the insignia of an Honorary Knight of the British Empire (K.B.E.) from Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace in 1993. But these are only two of many. Other awards include the Eisenhower Institute's "Eisenhower Leadership Prize" from Gettysburg College (1992); the Hudson Institute's James H. Doolittle Award (1994); the Les Aspin Democracy Award from the Les Aspin Center for Government at Marquette University (2003); the Association of the U.S. Army's George Catlett Marshall Medal (also in 2003); and the Andrew Wellington Cordier Award from Columbia (2005) for superior and distinguished public service.

Scowcroft has also receive the William Oliver Baker Award for service on behalf of the US intelligence community (2005); the Andrew J. Goodpaster Award for his exemplary service to the nation (2008); and the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (2009). In 2013, Scowcroft was elected into the National Defense University's National Hall of Fame, received the Gerald R. Ford Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Public Service, and was awarded the Ewald-von-Kleist Award for dedicated commitment to conflict management at the 2013 Munich Security Conference. In May 2016, the Department of Defense gave him the DOD Distinguished Public Service Award, its highest civilian honor.

Many retired generals and admirals, politicians, policy experts and academics, and diplomats receive awards as they age, of course, but what distinguishes Scowcroft is the very number of prizes he has received, the prestige of

those prizes, and the diversity of the bestowing organizations and of their separate reasons for recognizing Scowcroft. The prizes speak to the almost universal respect others have for him and to the wish of many prominent politicians, policymakers, and institutions to recognize the quality and scale of Scowcroft's achievements and contributions.

This public service took other forms, too. When former President George H. W. Bush established the Bush Presidential Library and the Texas A&M regents created the Bush School of Government and Public Service, they wanted to establish an affiliated research institute. The Scowcroft Institute opened on November 10, 2007, with Scowcroft himself endowing it with funds for scholarships, administrative support, grant programs, a major annual conference, and a chaired faculty position. As importantly, he found other donors to help fund the Bush School.

Previously, in 2000, Scowcroft established a scholarship for West Point cadets, the Government Internships Endowment, which allowed the U.S. Military Academy to underwrite a cultural and professional immersion program whereby each summer, 30-50 cadets would be placed in the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the White House, and other departments and agencies of the U.S. government. General Daniel Christman, a former Superintendent at West Point, said Scowcroft "felt so strongly about the necessity of young officers to have this identification with other religions, cultures, languages."

In 2006, Scowcroft funded the Arnold Kanter Chair at the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, and created a paid internship program at the Aspen Strategy Group for the purpose of selecting four outstanding college graduates interested in working on national security issues. And in 2009, he established and endowed the "Brent Scowcroft Professorship in National Security Studies" at the Eisenhower Center for Space and Defense Studies in the Department of Political Science at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

From the perspective of Scowcroft's 91 years and with his productivity and energy beginning to wane, what can we say about his worldview and underlying philosophy? As I see it, he has a vision of a world shaped by open markets, a world that needs—indeed, depends upon—U.S. leadership, and world that has benefitted from and has much more to gain from international cooperation. Underneath Scowcroft's understanding of human society and international relations is, it seems, an old-fashioned, Burkean conservatism: a personal philosophy that recognizes human dignity, protects private property, and is skeptical about ambitious plans for human progress. At the same time, Scowcroft assumes that political leaders are capable of reasoned negotiation and intelligent cooperation—consistent with Scowcroft's emphasis on rigorous discussion of issues in the White House, his insistence on an intellectually honest and rigorous NSC process, his many op-eds, articles, and commission reports, and his conversations with and advice to policymakers.

Scowcroft has been able to masterfully straddle the usually separate spheres of the affairs of state and democratic politics. Scowcroft has been an invaluable participant in many top-secret deliberations on respect nuclear weapons, conventional arms, intelligence issues, American commercial interests, and international politics and diplomacy. And even here, because of Scowcroft's reserve and modesty, it is unlikely we shall know the full extent of his contributions. At the same time, Scowcroft has been remarkably effective as a policy adviser working within the constraints of American democracy—i.e., a United States ultimately ruled by its citizens acting through their elected representatives, including the U.S. president, and informed by a free press. This is a world that values consultation, open debate, due process, and consensus building. But it is also a world dominated by short-term considerations—especially of the next round of elections.

In a highly competitive world where everyone “wants to toot his horn,” Scowcroft, his late friend Bill Gulley says, is “the last guy” to do

that. “To understand Brent Scowcroft, you have to understand his humanity,” says Daniel Poneman, a former NSC colleague, a former partner in The Scowcroft Group, and a personal friend. “Not just his intellect. Not even just his judgment. But his humanity. It's a genuine humanity that respects other individuals as individuals. He knows who exactly who he is and he is very comfortable with who he is. He feels fortunate to have had things happen to him that he never could have dreamed of as a kid growing up in Utah, as one of his friends and colleagues said. And he's never forgotten that kid from Ogden.”

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<sup>1</sup> This paper and the book from which it is derived would not be possible were it not for Brent Scowcroft giving generously of his time to agree to dozens of interviews over five-plus-year period, about one per month (January 2009 through May 2014). I am also grateful to the others who were willing to talk to me about the General or the events of which they were part. I am also very thankful for the assistance of the archivists, photo librarians, and technicians at the Bush Presidential Library. I would also like to thank Prof. Michael Desch, who vouched for me in late 2006 when General Scowcroft asked him about me, learning of my interest in writing his biography. I am especially appreciative of Dr. Andrew Natsios, Executive Professor and Director, Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at the George H. W. Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University, for inviting me to talk about Scowcroft at a symposium held in his honor on April 28, 2016, and for encouraging me to write up and polish my remarks.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations and evidence are drawn from my biography of Brent Scowcroft (Bartholomew Sparrow, *The Strategist: Brent Scowcroft and the Call of National Security*. New York: PublicAffairs Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Brent Scowcroft, "The Iran deal: An epochal moment that Congress shouldn't squander," *The Washington Post*, August 21, 2015; General Scowcroft, Frank Miller, and Stephen Hadley, "NATO-based nuclear weapons are an advantage in a dangerous world," *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Also see Bartholomew H. Sparrow, "Realism's Practitioner: Brent Scowcroft and American Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 34 No. 1 (January 2010), 141-175.

<sup>5</sup> Brent Scowcroft, "Don't Attack Saddam," *Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2002, A-12.

<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine: The U.S. president talks through his hardest decisions about America's role in the world," *The Atlantic* (April 2016), 70-90.



**Bartholomew Sparrow, PhD:**

Bartholomew Sparrow is Professor of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. Sparrow is the author of *The Strategist: Brent Scowcroft and the Call of National Security*; *The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire*; *Uncertain Guardians: The News Media as a Political Institution*; and *From the Outside In: World War II and the American State*. He is the co-editor of two other books and author and co-author of many articles and book chapters. Sparrow has received fellowships from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Fulbright Program, the Shorenstein Center on the Media, Politics and Public Policy, and the Harry S. Truman Library Institute. He has been awarded the Franklin L. Burdette Pi Sigma Alpha and Leonard D. White awards from the American Political Science Association. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago and an A.B. from Dartmouth College.

## **The Bush School of Government and Public Service**

*Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Dean and Executive Professor*

Founded in 1997, the Bush School of Government and Public Service has become one of the leading public and international affairs graduate schools in the nation. One of ten schools and colleges at Texas A&M University, a tier-one research university, the School offers master's level education for students aspiring to careers in public service.

The School is ranked in the top 12 percent of graduate public affairs schools in the nation, according to rankings published in U.S. News & World Report. The School now ranks thirty-third among both public and private public affairs graduate programs and twenty-first among public universities.

The School's philosophy is based on the belief of its founder, George H.W. Bush, that public service is a noble calling—a belief that continues to shape all aspects of the curriculum, research, and student experience. In addition to the Master of Public Service and Administration degree and the Master of International Affairs degree, the School has an expanding online and extended education program that includes Certificates in Advanced International Affairs, Homeland Security, and Nonprofit Management.

Located in College Station, Texas, the School's programs are housed in the Robert H. and Judy Ley Allen Building, which is part of the George Bush Presidential Library Center on the West Campus of Texas A&M. This location affords students access to the archival holdings of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, invitation to numerous events hosted by the George Bush Foundation at the Annenberg Presidential Conference Center, and inclusion in the many activities of the Texas A&M community.

## **The Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs**

*Andrew S. Natsios, Director and Executive Professor*

The Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) is a research institute housed in the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. The Institute is named in honor of Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.), whose long and distinguished career in public service included serving as National Security Advisor for Presidents Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush. The Institute's core mission is to foster and disseminate policy-oriented research on international affairs by supporting faculty and student research, hosting international speakers and major scholarly conferences, and providing grants to outside researchers to use the holdings of the Bush Library.

*"We live in an era of tremendous global change. Policy makers will confront unfamiliar challenges, new opportunities, and difficult choices in the years ahead. I look forward to the Scowcroft Institute supporting policy-relevant research that will contribute to our understanding of these changes, illuminating their implications for our national interest, and fostering lively exchanges about how the United States can help shape a world that best serves our interests and reflects our values."*

— Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (Ret.)