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Introduction by Fredrik Logevall, Cornell University

My copy of Julian Zelizer's book *Arsenal of Democracy* arrived in the mail at about the same time late in 2009 that Barack Obama gave his address at West Point expanding U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan. Obama had inherited the war, and his choices ranged from bad to worse. But the one he selected, a middle-course option that would send 30,000 additional troops and called for removing them in eighteen months, was difficult to comprehend if the geopolitical stakes in Afghanistan were really as high he claimed they were. It was hard for me to see how an increase of that size, even if accompanied by a boost in NATO troops, could really do the job in the vast and forbidding Afghan terrain. By announcing a deadline, moreover, the president signaled to anti-American forces in Afghanistan (and Pakistan) that they could count on a U.S. withdrawal in 2011 and hence could bide their time until then.

However shaky the strategic logic, in domestic political terms Obama's decision made brilliant sense. Like Lyndon Johnson on Vietnam in 1964-65, he had boxed himself in with his repeated affirmations, starting in the 2008 campaign, of the Afghanistan struggle's vital importance. Should he appear to adopt a new line, hawks stood ready to remind him of his stark words. By deepening the U.S. military role the president could cover his right flank while pursuing domestic objectives such as health care reform, a new immigration policy, and job creation. He could also fend off Republican accusations that he was neglecting the "war on terror" during the elections to come in 2010 and 2012. Simultaneously, by stressing clear limits to the escalation and promising an early disengagement, Obama improved his chances of keeping alienated progressives on board.

Is this too cynical a line of analysis? Perhaps. But as *Arsenal of Democracy* shows, Obama would hardly be the first president in recent U.S. history to act substantially on the basis of such calculations. Zelizer's core argument, that the relationship between domestic politics and U.S. national security policy after 1945 has often been an intimate one, will not be all that controversial to most members of this list, structural realists perhaps excepted. And certainly, over the years there have been valuable studies that explore this foreign-domestic nexus—though far fewer than one would expect.¹ No one, however, has examined the issue in as much detail and utilizing as much archival material as Zelizer does here. His book is a narrative history, organized in nineteen chapters. The bulk of the narrative concerns the six decades following World War II, but he also includes an extensive background section covering the era that came before.

Zelizer opens the first chapter with four questions about national security and U.S. politics that, he writes, "have kept recurring since World War II" and that set the context for what will follow: Does Congress or the president drive national security policy? Do Democrats

¹ On the relative inattention by U.S. foreign relations historians to this subject, see Fredrik Logevall, "Politics and Foreign Relations," *Journal of American History* 89 (March 2009); Thomas Alan Schwartz, "'Henry, . . . Winning an Election Is Terribly Important': Partisan Politics in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 33 (April 2009): 173-190.

or Republicans hold the national security advantage? How big do we want our government to be? Should the United States go it alone?

Reviewers David Farber and Melvin Small find these questions a bit misleading in terms of Zelizer's actual emphases in the rest of the volume, but they're not unduly bothered by the disconnect. They praise the author for his deep research and ambitious scope, as does the third reviewer, Timothy Lynch. "Major contribution," "seminal text," "richly detailed," and "superb on a number of levels" are some of the characterizations they use. All three note that there is no other book like *Arsenal of Democracy*, and all plainly believe it will be an authoritative work for a long time to come.

Nor are there major interpretive bones of contention between Zelizer and the reviewers. Farber and Small say that the book is in some respects quite narrow in its parameters, notwithstanding its length and mass of detail. In Small's words, "[Zelizer] rarely leaves the Oval Office or, especially, Congress to explore the political influences on his congressional and Executive Branch actors. Thus, he does not pay attention to external economic influences, ethnic groups, media influences, and military-industrial-complex lobbyists that have so much to do with the way his main actors develop their positions." Farber and Small quickly acknowledge, however, that the choice was deliberate on Zelizer's part, and a reasonable one. The book is "old-fashioned" political history, Farber writes, but his rebuke—if that's not too strong a word—is a gentle one, and it invites a graciously-worded rejoinder from Zelizer.

To Small's assertion that foreign policy has been inconsequential in the vast majority of post-1945 elections, Zelizer offers a spirited and to my mind persuasive riposte: namely, that what matters most is what candidates *think* the importance of foreign policy in a given election will be or could be, rather than what ex post facto analysis shows it to have been. Moreover, Zelizer adds, although it is true that American voters tend to give their primary attention to domestic matters, foreign policy questions have in most years been significant enough to merit the attention of practicing politicians. The professionals in politics have always realized that when domestic issues are in the forefront, national-security questions can still shift a few votes in swing districts in critical states. This can mean the difference between victory and defeat for a national ticket, or can decide control of Congress.

Whether the intimate relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy in U.S. history has been a good thing or a bad thing—that is, whether overall it has been beneficial to the nation's record on the world stage—is an interesting question on which two of our panelists appear to differ. Timothy Lynch begins and ends his essay with "a pitch for more politics rather than less in the making of U.S. national security strategy." Lynch finds support in Zelizer's book for the proposition that "exposing that strategy to the light of democratic inquiry," even to partisan infighting, has often improved it. Melvin Small is not so sure. Citing Americans' tendency to endorse the muscular rhetoric of the most nationalistic and xenophobic politicians, he laments: "We have never been able to figure out how to operate a complicated or nuanced foreign policy in a nation where most of the voters are uninformed about international affairs and too impatient or distracted or confused to make an effort to learn about them."

Participants:

Julian E. Zelizer is Professor of History and Public Affairs at Princeton University. In addition to *Arsenal of Democracy*, he recently published three books: *Jimmy Carter* (Times Books); *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989*, co-author with Meg Jacobs (Bedford Books); and *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, editor (Princeton University Press). Zelizer, who has published over 200 op-eds, is a Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation where he is working on three books. These include a history of the Great Society (Penguin Press), a book of essays about American political history (Princeton University Press), and an edited volume (with Kimberly Phillips-Fein) about business and politics since World War II (Oxford University Press).

David Farber received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and is at Temple University. He is the author of *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); *Sloan Rules: Alfred P. Sloan and the Triumph of General Motors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994); and *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Fredrik Logevall is the John S. Knight Professor of International Studies and Director of the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies at Cornell University. He received his PhD in 1993 from Yale University and previously taught at UC Santa Barbara where he co-founded the Center for Cold War Studies. He is the author of *Choosing War: The Lost Change for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (1999), *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (2001), and co-editor with Mark Lawrence of *The First Vietnam War: Colonial and Cold War Crisis* (2007). His current research project is a history of the struggle for Indochina after 1940.

Timothy J. Lynch is Senior Lecturer in US Foreign Policy at the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London. He is the author of *Turf War: The Clinton Administration and Northern Ireland* (Ashgate, 2004) and, with Robert Singh, *After Bush: The Case for Continuity in American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 2008). He is the Editor-in-Chief of the new *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Military and Diplomatic History* and author of the Cambridge Essential History of post-Cold War US Foreign Policy (both forthcoming). A Fulbright scholar, he holds a PhD in political science from Boston College. In 2011, he will join the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Melvin Small earned his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan after receiving his BA from Dartmouth College. Over the past two decades he has concentrated his research and writing on the postwar era, with an emphasis on the Vietnam War, the antiwar movement, and presidents Johnson and Nixon. An historian of U.S. diplomacy, his special interest has always been in the relationships among public opinion, domestic politics and foreign policy, a subject reflected in his recent monographs as well as several theoretical articles.

Review by David Farber, Temple University

The Boys are Back in Town: The Power of Politics in National Security Policy

In *Arsenal of Democracy*, Julian Zelizer has written a richly detailed, narrative political history that makes a strong argument about the role politics have played in American national security policymaking. Zelizer brings his considerable talents as a historian to this project. His ability to make historical points accurately and cogently in a few deft sentences reminds me of Alan Brinkley. And in his ability to pull off a work of such sweep and scope he brings to mind David Kennedy and James Patterson. Zelizer has deftly threaded the needle with this book, writing a history of a major topic that a sophisticated but non-expert audience can read profitably even as scholars will find much to admire, ponder, and debate.

Zelizer begins his tale with “Four Questions.” They are all excellent questions but aimed, in my judgment, more at the proverbial reading public than at his fellow academic historians. In fact, I found the “Four Questions” a bit misleading as a guide to the argument(s) Zelizer makes in the text. As I understood the book, his main argument is straightforward but significant: national security policy is made by presidents and congressmen who always – or nearly always – analyze the decisions before them by looking at those choices and decisions through the lens of politics, and those politics are often partisan in nature. While not a surprising argument, it is one that no other historian has made in so extended an analysis of national security policy in the age of American superpower. While no scholar of American national security policy will be surprised to discover that partisan politics have almost always played a massive role in politicians’ thinking and actions, Zelizer makes the case in exhaustive detail and allows us to better understand the motives of key political figures. Most fundamentally, he makes sure that his readers understand that rational analysis of American national security interests is often overshadowed by politicians’ attempts to understand how their approaches to national security problems will help or hurt their political positions. He does not blame politicians for this practice but, implicitly at least, he is warning both us and them about its implications. Blame it on my training at the University of Chicago, but I heard echoes of Plato, reminding us that experts tend only to be expert in their own field. And Plato, of course, is warning of the danger of democratic policy-making.

This book, then, is a history of American politics and not of American power. It is not a book about interests and policy networks, but a story of politicians loosely anchored to broad ideological precepts and identified by political party interests angling for advantage in the electoral arena or on the Hill or in the Oval Office. In some ways it is a deliberately narrow book despite its length and mass of detail. For example, most of the business of American international power is off-stage. How the United States government manages to secure American international economic interests is discussed almost not at all. How the United States government works to gather intelligence and so safeguard the United States from threat is little discussed. How national interest is conceptualized by foreign policy and national security networks and how those networks are integrated into policy-making

circles is unexplored in this account. The narrative is largely sealed off from international pressures, trends, events, and developments. The transnational influences of non-government organizations, labor flows, or corporate policies are mostly dismissed or ignored. Overall, the everyday business of managing American national security is de-centered so as to focus on major moments of perceived crisis or high-level, public decision-making. These absences do not mar the analytic work of the book, though they are a reminder of how old-fashioned the book is. Here I want to emphasize that an historical account that foregrounds the role that democratically elected politicians play in debating major foreign policy questions and then in deciding how to answer those questions—even if “old-fashioned”—is critically important to public life and, more parochially, to our historiography.

On the book’s own terms I do detect some analytic slippage. A major theme is that as politicians work through foreign policy riddles, they constantly consider partisan advantage. Zelizer demonstrates this partisan advantage-seeking with acuity, and in the material I know best I found his claims convincing. But, as Zelizer also points out, as political parties wrestle with their own internal ideological divisions the partisan aspect of national security policymaking can break down along loose ideological grounds. Zelizer makes the case, for example, that for an extended period of time during the Cold War partisans were aligned as either liberal internationalists or conservative internationalists. This alignment produced, he convincingly argues, a kind of bidding war as to who was tougher on the enemy, which is not quite the same thing as a purely partisan battle.

Similarly, I was struck by a remark by President Johnson that Zelizer quotes. The president, worried about the 1964 election, said that Americans would “forgive you for everything except being weak.” Zelizer notes that Senator Russell, to whom the remark was directed, agreed with Johnson’s claim. Fear of appearing weak is a supra-partisan, supra-ideological concern, and I agree with Zelizer (and President Johnson), that the United States government’s role as international superpower adopted in the 1940s has had a profound impact on American society. It has likewise created a limit on the partisan policy-making divide that Zelizer foregrounds in his lengthy account. So while partisanship does not stop at the water’s edge, for most of the last 70 years faith in the necessity of superpower status on national security grounds has become, almost always, a bipartisan certainty in the United States driven by demotic desire. Zelizer’s rich account does little to explain that demotic desire or the constraints the demos has normatively placed on American political discourse and policy-making. That lack of what could be called a social and cultural historical accounting does not count against what Zelizer has accomplished in this very big and significant book of political history. But it is a reminder of how old-fashioned the book is conceptually. For too long, American historians have disregarded conventional political history. Zelizer, in this book and in his other published work, has reinvigorated the field. I think that is wonderful, but I also hope that in restoring traditional political history to a place of prominence we do not reject the kinds of explanations and investigations social and cultural historians brought to the study of politics. Perhaps we can have a bi-partisan solution.

In volume one of *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville warned that democratic states would prove ‘decidedly inferior’ to non-democratic regimes when it came to making foreign policy.¹ Right in so many ways, the Frenchman was wrong on this score. In the wars that were fought in the century and half after he wrote, democracies were to be the decisive victors. Autocratic, aristocratic, authoritarian regimes of both the left and right all lost power as the United States and its democratic experiment prospered. Something about democracy actually makes foreign policy more robust. Its absence does not, contra-Tocqueville, enhance the efficacy of decision-making or the legitimacy of the decisions made. The metric is imprecise but if one considers where the U.S. was at its birth – a provincial trading outpost with a novel constitution – and what it grew into – the greatest economic and military power in world history – the conclusion that its foreign policy had something to do with this transformation is not unreasonable.

Julian Zelizer implicitly engages with this argument. He has succeeded in writing the seminal text on how democracy affects the making of US national security policy. Explicitly, he weighs the impact of domestic politics on the construction, conception and pursuit of national security for the last 100 years. The book is superb on a number of levels. In what follows I will summarize what I see as Zelizer’s key argument and interrogate his application of it to post-cold war national security issues and to the Iraq war in particular. At the outset let me state that the author has succeeded in crafting a work of enormous erudition that opens up far more avenues of inquiry and debate than it closes down.

Full credit should be given for a work that is so ambitious in scope. Though the sub-title suggests a post-1945 focus, Zelizer actually offers a narrative which begins in the 19th century. His substantive case studies are no less than the defining issues of American national security from World War II to Iraq. He considers how the national security state was built and then tests that construction, and the politics that both animated and bedeviled it, against the historical record – in Korea and Vietnam, during détente and the Iran hostage crisis, under Reagan and after the end of the cold war.

The book is inspired by the tension between the necessary secrecy inherent in national security policy and the demand for openness in its framing and implementation. The biggest problem for the arsenal is the democracy it must protect; the greatest issue for the democracy is the arsenal it must maintain. “The arsenal and the democracy posed threats to each other,” observes Zelizer (2). This co-dependency and mutual mistrust, he argues, find expression in the politicking of both political parties. Democrats, who in large part invented the arsenal, have been alternatively keen on its use (from World War II to the Balkans) and skeptical of its effects (in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan). Republicans, whilst often hawkish on national security, are cool on the size of the state necessary for its

¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Mansfield and Winthrop, eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 219.

realization. Neither party enjoys a monopoly on success in national security debates. That debate is recurrently fierce because neither side is preeminent.

Indeed, Zelizer's argument about "the right" rejects the "truism" that conservative politicians consistently do better in political battles over national security than their liberal peers. "In contrast to the traditional picture of conservative domination of national security, national security politics has in fact been quite dynamic and fluid." (3) In some crucial respects, Democrats had an easier time balancing the demands for an effective and expansive policy abroad with a similar policy at home because both required concerted action by the federal government. Republicans, however, could elide the 'hawkish foreign policy = big government at home' dilemma only for as long as Democrats controlled Congress and White House (holding the latter for 32 of the 48 years from 1933 to 1981). Once the GOP re-established its hold on the presidency (staffing it for 20 of the 28 years from 1981 to 2009) and 'enjoyed' control of Congress (with only 4 congresses in those years in which the GOP did not control at least one chamber), resolving this ideological contradiction became impossible. The attempt to do so, within such a fierce and increasingly polarized political context, lead directly to the Iraq war.

To an extent, nearly all books written about recent national security and foreign policy will be judged by where they stand on Iraq. The war is still too recent for an established history to present itself. There are many good books, not a few bad, but none is definitive. How does Zelizer deal with it? In short, he uses the debacle of the initial occupation of that nation (from 2003 to 2006) as his case study of how politics has exposed the Republican national security dilemma. I agree with much of the analysis here. The author's argument is that the GOP failed to build a coherent national security agenda commensurate with their national supremacy after 1981. Unlike the Democrats, whose political hegemony in the 1930s and 40s helped cement the national security state, Republicans in the 1980s and 90s could not turn their conservative "revolution" into a lasting political majority, allowing a "skilled Democratic centrist" (385) to win the presidency in 1992.

The father's failure was the son's inheritance. George W. Bush mistook the post-9/11 consensus for a renewal of the Reagan legacy his father had squandered. In reality, his presidency was compromised by its contested beginning (Bush was handed victory by the Supreme Court) and the 'razor thin' majority the GOP had on Capitol Hill (221-212 and 50-50). The September 11 attacks, afforded a chapter by Zelizer, presented Bush not with a mandate but with a reconstitution of the problem that had plagued Republican presidents since the 1950s: how to marry a hawkish strategy aboard with a squeamishness for the governmental power that made it possible.

Bush's solution was his greatest failure. "Iraq demonstrated, that it was impossible to separate regime change, which conservatives had generally supported, from nation building, which they rejected." (501) Bush invaded Iraq decisively but without the necessary moral resolution and attendant logistical capacity to occupy it competently. In so doing, argues Zelizer intriguingly, Iraq was not a violation of the Reagan Revolution but its fulfillment (502). Despite his superficial success, Reagan was complicit in the creation of a national security strategy that prized short, sharp police actions (in Grenada and Libya, for

example) but that avoided long-term occupations (like Vietnam); Reagan's Lebanese intervention, we should recall, was hurriedly withdrawn when it was attacked in October 1983 (324). Bush came unstuck in Iraq not for repudiating Reagan (as several prominent conservatives have alleged) but for attempting to mimic the 40th president.

This is a remarkably refreshing and timely critique of Bush's failure in Iraq. Most studies indict the incompetence of post-war planning.² Too many assume Bush was stupid, wicked or under the control of neocons.³ Few tie the Iraq tragedy to the dilemmas imposed by American domestic politics. It was neither institutional gridlock, nor polarization, that compromised the occupation of Iraq but a deeply rooted ideological tension within American conservatism that Bush, like his GOP forebears, could not resolve.

I have little objection to any of this. Let me query, however, how the author's assessment of Iraq as a crisis of conservative ideology might alter his wider thesis. If democratic politics complicates the making and implementation of national security strategy are we to indict an increasingly polarized process? Or, if my reading of Zelizer's reading of Iraq is correct, is it not intraparty ideological tensions that corrupt national security? Are the politics and process of national security synonymous with the ideologies within each party that vie for control of it? Do we blame process or philosophy? Process can be reformed and streamlined. Deep-rooted philosophical positions cannot.

Colin Dueck's recent book covers similar terrain but posits a different explanatory variable to that advanced by Zelizer.⁴ For Dueck, it is not domestic politics that make foreign policy but 'the possibilities of presidential leadership.'⁵ For Zelizer, successive presidents are victims to democratic processes and ideologies they cannot control; they are undone by structure. For Dueck, presidents are the makers and movers of their own political environments. Their foreign policies reflect less the dominant partisan divisions of Washington and more their peculiar personal stamp. I would welcome Professor Zelizer's response to this thesis, especially since both authors have so much to say about the history of Republican national security thinking. Indeed, Dueck ascribes to George W. Bush the exceptional status that Zelizer rejects. According to Dueck, Bush ruined a successful conservative foreign policy tradition, for Zelizer Bush failed because he sought in vain to advance it.

Let me conclude by again restating what a remarkable job of historical synthesis this work embodies. I have hurriedly added large sections of it to my class in the politics of US foreign

² See Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American military adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

³ See Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁴ Colin Dueck, *Hard Line: The Republican Party and US foreign policy since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁵ Dueck, *Hard Line*, 6.

policy and am sure many other teachers will do likewise. I will close where I began with a pitch for more politics rather than less in the making of U.S. national security strategy. As the author himself illustrates on several important occasions, exposing that strategy to the light of democratic inquiry has often improved it. Partisan pressure can force reluctant administrations to confront problems and threats. Political polarization, which university professors have convinced a generation of students is a bad thing, might actually be the natural function of democratic politics. It implies a clarity of choices. American national security strategy has managed to roll with a number of punches, from the Cuban Missile Crisis to 9/11. Ultimately, 'politics' expose the response to such events to scrutiny and debate. Thesis—antithesis—synthesis.

Review by Melvin Small, Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus, Wayne State University

Julian Zelizer's *Arsenal of Democracy* is a major contribution to our understanding of the interaction between Congress and the president on foreign-policy issues since the end of World War II. There is no other study quite like it in our literature. A specialist in the antics of the denizens of Capitol Hill, Zelizer brings to his study a felicitous writing style, a sophisticated understanding of how legislators operate, and deep research in presidential archives as well as those of long forgotten congressmen such as Homer Capehart and H. Alexander Smith.

Like the youngest celebrant at a Passover Seder, Zelizer asks four questions—who drives national security policy, which party holds the national-security advantage, how big should our government be, and how multilateral should our policy be—to which he refers, mostly obliquely, throughout his hefty volume. Much of the time, he eschews his own ideological predilections to present a valuable detailed narrative of major foreign-policy issues seen in the light of his four questions. And in the end, he does not conclusively answer the questions he posed at the onset, in good measure because they cannot be answered conclusively given the vagaries and complexities of the foreign-policy debates as Republicans and Democrats shifted positions as they won and lost the presidency and Congress.

Although the subtitle of the book refers to “The Politics of National Security,” Zelizer, for the most part, interprets politics somewhat narrowly. He rarely leaves the Oval Office or, especially, Congress to explore the political influences on his congressional and Executive Branch actors. Thus, he does not pay much attention to external economic influences, ethnic groups, media influences, and the military-industrial-complex lobbyists that have so much to do with the way his main actors develop their positions. One thinks of the current political situation in which Zelizer would probably focus on the Tea Party and its influence on the Republicans but ignore the Koch brothers. Or compare Zelizer's approach with that of Andrew Bacevich who in *Washington Rules* (2010) concentrates on the military-industrial complex that he asserts is preeminent in affecting the foreign-policy choices of Congress and presidents alike.

But that is not the book Zelizer set out to write. He does demonstrate clearly that after 1948 or so, the party that was not in control of the White House, especially when the Republicans, who were in that position, saw little if any benefit in working with the president on Capitol Hill. The contemporary party of “No” when it comes to cooperation on recession-fighting legislation, goes way back in its rhetorical and actual opposition to often sane, multilateral, diplomatic approaches to the nation's unprecedented foreign-policy problems. Zelizer helps to explain how Americans generally came to trust the Republicans more than the Democrats on national-security issues, as the GOP red- and race-baited, called for more military spending, and assailed the armchair generals in the Oval Office. He may, however, make too much of his post Vandenberg turning point in the early fifties, since bipartisanship has rarely been a characteristic of U.S. foreign policy.

From the days of Jefferson and Hamilton, electoral politics have always washed far out from the water's edge with powerful riptides of invective.

This is a fundamental problem in our democratic system. What good does it do for congressional leaders in one party to support a president's foreign (and, of course, domestic) policy if its success redounds to the benefit of the president and his or her party? How will their party survive in the upcoming election cycle, be it the presidential or congressional by-election? We know now that Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon all calculated their Vietnam policies in terms of the impact on their reelection campaigns. The politically potent if mindless slogan, "Who Lost China?" of the early fifties had to weigh on their decision making in the sixties and early seventies, especially for the two Democrats. When the documents and memoirs become available, I am certain that future historians will discover that Obama's choice for a possible withdrawal date from Afghanistan in 2011 was selected, in part, to provide another "decent interval" between American troops leaving the country, the election of 2012, and the potential collapse of Kabul.

To make matters worse, Americans tend to be easily frightened about foreign menaces and too quick to adopt the muscular slogans of the most xenophobic and nationalistic politicians. Tocqueville worried about this problem affecting American foreign policy once Washington entered the international arena as an active player. We have never been able to figure out how to operate a complicated or nuanced foreign policy in a nation where most of the voters are uninformed about international affairs and too impatient or distracted or confused to make an effort to learn about them. One solution was to ignore democracy as much as possible as was the case with Nixon and Kissinger, or more recently, as when Vice President Dick Cheney replied "So?" after being informed about a poll that opposed his policy. Or you can "scare the hell" out of the voters as was the case with Truman in 1947 and his doctrine.

Zelizer is sadly correct in demonstrating time and again how politicians have played with national security for their own partisan gains. What he does not dwell upon is how few post- 1945 elections have turned on foreign policy. It may have been important in 1952, because of the perceived failures of Containment, but Ike would have won without that albatross for the Democrats, in 1956 because of the dual crises of the Middle East and Hungary, and in 1980 because of the Iran hostage issue, but those may be the outliers. Even in 1968, voters who strongly opposed the Vietnam War had no choice between two candidates who promised to end the war with dispatch. To be sure, Americans may have felt more secure in 1972 or 2004 with an allegedly strong national-security president, but that was only one among many factors that gave the victories to Nixon and George W. Bush.

It is interesting to note that in presidential elections from 1992 to 2008, the candidate with the most combat experience lost. Clinton beat WWII heroes George H.W. Bush and Bob Dole in 1992 and 1996 respectively, George W. Bush eked out victories over Vietnam War veteran Al Gore and Vietnam War hero John Kerry in 2000 and 2004 respectively, and Barack Obama thumped Vietnam War POW John McCain in 2008.

And we know from surveys in individual congressional districts, despite the arguments on the hustings about who best can protect the nation, voters tend to vote their pocketbooks or because of positions on gun control, abortion, price supports, mosques, and the like. So we have reached the paradox where the parties select national-security positions with an eye to the upcoming elections but they have rarely mattered in those elections. Thus, politics *should* stop at the water's edge since there does not seem to be much of a payoff on election day.

Most interesting of all is Zelizer's (and all historians') inability to determine when partisan opposition is genuine or principled and when it is opportunistic. For example, was Senator Henry Jackson a true believer when he launched his attack on détente with his Jackson-Vanik amendment in 1974 or was he looking to the Democratic primary campaign in 1976? Most observers would argue both motivations but stress the latter. After all, Nixon privately claimed that he was quietly and successfully negotiating with Moscow an increase in the number of Jews permitted to leave the Soviet Union, a number that he warned would drop because of the very public Jackson-Vanik demands. On the other hand, opponents of détente did not need to be partisan to contend that it had not been a good deal overall and no doubt, many politicians feared that the asymmetric growth of the Russian military under the détente regime would be disadvantageous to U.S. national security.

Finally, some might quibble with several of Zelizer's factoids such as implying that the United States won the War of 1812 by defeating the British on American soil (9) (tell that to the Canadians who annually celebrate their victories over the American invaders), or that the newspaper response to the Quarantine Speech was "uniformly negative" (42). In addition, Nixon never told the voters in 1968 that he had a "secret plan" to end the war (218) and Watergate was not an issue in the 1972 election (249). But in such a detailed chronicle that covers so many years Zelizer's slips are few and far between. His book will be a valuable source for all of us, as well as a reminder that when examining the American system, foreign-policy analysts who ignore domestic politics do so at their own peril.

Author's Response by Julian E. Zelizer, Princeton University

It is an honor to have such thoughtful analyses written about my book by three scholars whose work I greatly admire. I found all of their comments to be extremely fair and they help me to think more clearly about the methodological and analytical underpinnings of my work.

When I set out to write *Arsenal of Democracy* I was inspired by something rather simple. After the tragedy of 9/11, it only took a few short months before the parties stopped holding hands and started engaging in vigorous partisan battles over how to protect the nation.

As this occurred, many Americans logically started to ask if this kind of partisanship over national security was the worst that the nation had ever seen. Many asked whether politics used to stop at the water's edge. As I read to learn more, I quickly discovered that outside a few exceptional works, such as Melvin Small's wonderful book about politics and foreign policy, the literature on this subject was extraordinarily thin.

There were many reasons for this historiographical gap. The most important had to do with the separation of diplomatic and political history that took place after the 1960s. As Ohio State University's Robert McMahon once noted in a special issue of the *Journal of Policy History*, political historians and diplomatic historians found themselves marginalized professionally as a result of the cultural and social history revolution.¹

Rather than joining forces, they went their separate ways. Each of these subfields developed on their own trajectory. Political historians, seeking to revitalize their field, focused disproportionately on domestic issues like welfare or civil rights. This was also true among historical political scientists who created the field of American Political Development. At the same time, diplomatic historians moved away from domestic politics. They became increasingly interested in the inner workings and ideas of executive branch officials who worked in the National Security Council and State Department. In recent years, diplomatic historians broadened their perspective but not by looking inward to the campaign trail. Instead, they placed U.S. foreign policy in a global context or they examined how notions of gender and race influenced national decisions.

I found that the most developed literature on this subject focused on the growth of the "military-industrial complex." Scholars in several disciplines had looked at how World War II and the Cold War produced an iron triangle of defense contractors, congressional committee chairs, and Pentagon officials who coordinated to push for a bigger defense budget and who refused to allow for substantive reforms in the ways that the federal government spent defense appropriations. Outdated weapon systems received funds, according to this work, because the complex defended the status quo. Some scholars took

¹ Robert McMahon, "Diplomatic History and Policy History: Finding Common Ground," *Journal of Policy History*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (2005): 93-109.

the argument even further by claiming that the military-industrial complex actually controlled everything that Washington did. The difference between the parties and successive presidents, this scholarship said, was like the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. A shadowy world of contractors made sure that everyone who came to Washington learned to play by their rules.

There was also an interesting literature on how America's economic and ideological interests shaped U.S. policymakers' decisions to use force abroad. A large contingent of historians who were influenced by William Appleman Williams wrote about how economic interests determined what areas would be of concern to policymakers. Others looked at national cultural ideals, such as imperialism or American Exceptionalism, and explained why a once isolationist country ended up in the business of state-building.

All of this work is important and provides useful arguments about American politics. The problem is that the analysis is so broad and generalized that it often doesn't explain the specific political battles that took place in Washington over time. This work is good at explaining the parameters of policymaking (although there are many specific cases that challenge each of these claims) but less helpful when dealing with the many important choices that are made, as well as the bitter and meaningful struggles that occur, within any consensus.

These works also tended to miss the fact that certain essential dynamics in our democratic political system, such as the election cycle and partisan strategy, deeply impacted the ways in which elected officials thought about problems. For instance, as I argue in the book, partisan politics was a driving force in elevating Asia to a central place in Cold War strategy during the 1950s, culminating with the war in Vietnam. Without understanding how the Republican Right used anti-communist policy in Asia as a major campaign theme to attack Democratic national security policies after World War II, and without understanding the political fears that Democrats developed after the 1952 elections, we can't fully grasp how America ended up so deep in Vietnam.

The more research that I conducted in the archives the more convinced I became that partisan interests, partisan ideologies and inter-branch institutional competition between Congress and the White House, even in the era of the "Imperial Presidency," were extremely central to the story. To provide a history that takes these factors seriously, the book moves in two directions. On the one hand, as David Farber correctly states, I wanted to show how political concerns were very important when politicians decided how to deal with national security threats from World War II through the War on Terrorism. For me, the most eye-opening chapter centered on the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. As I worked in the archives, I realized that the story of the crisis really began in August rather than October 1962. Senate Republicans were ramping up their attacks on Democrats and the administration for being weak against Cuba. Planning to make this a central issue in the midterm elections, they had charged that the Soviets were conducting some sort of buildup on the island. The bookmarks for the chapter became these partisan attacks and the midterm elections, rather than the conventional story that starts with President Kennedy's first viewing of the CIA photographs of the missile sites in mid-October and the ultimate

resolution through backchannels at the end of the month. Kennedy had to navigate through turbulent political waters as he tried to resolve this confrontation.

On the other hand, I wanted to explore reveal/explore? how national security has influenced domestic politics. For instance, there were many midterm and presidential elections where national security was explicitly part of the mix, such as 1952 and 1964 and 1976. National security influenced domestic politics in other ways, such as when Vietnam ultimately strained the governing coalition upon which Johnson had depended for his Great Society programs and when President Clinton's response to the Oklahoma City Bombing undercut the political standing of Republicans after the 1994 midterm elections.

While politicians often speak about national security, it is true, as Professor Small notes, that polls have traditionally shown that these issues rank lower than domestic problems like the economy or race relations. There has been a disconnect between how much politicians worry about their performance on national security and what the polls say.

But I found that pointing to these polls confuses more than it clarifies. Most important, voters often form their opinions about how parties are doing in terms of leadership and performance after being exposed constantly to news coverage of politician's handling national security crises. Even if voters say that they are primarily concerned about the economy, their understanding of political performance is certainly influenced, consciously and subconsciously, by their opinions on how well think officials deal with national security.

More important, politicians focus so much on national security because they don't want it to become a number one issue. They understand that when national security becomes more important than bread-and-butter concerns, it can be devastating and decisive politically. Presidents can survive an unpopular domestic policy, but a war that spirals out of control can bring down a party.

The stakes of avoiding political mistakes on national security questions are thus higher than with domestic issues—even if polls register that domestic concerns are more common. This is why Lyndon Johnson constantly remembered what happened in the 1952 election when Republicans used anti-communism as a cudgel to take over the White House and Congress. Although there were many elections after 1952 when more voters were thinking about domestic issues, as Senate Majority Leader and as U.S. President, Johnson always feared that if the politics of national security were not handled properly his party would be blown out of the water just like in 1952.

I don't have any quibbles with the criticisms and suggestions that the reviewers raised. They are all extremely fair points.

The only comment I would like to mention is Professor Farber's ruminations on "old fashioned history." For the purpose of fruitful intellectual discussions, I do wish we could abandon this term altogether. Usually, "old-fashioned" refers to a style of history that is inferior to another (though to be fair Farber very clearly says this is not his point).

When political history started to rebound in the 1990s, many people were invested in making this distinction. Practitioners of political history identified themselves as studying politics, broadly defined, in ways that avoided old-fashioned political history. They wrote about their subject from a defensive position, and criticized some of the founders of the field (like Richard Hofstadter) by making this distinction.

Although making this distinction did provide many fruitful results, such as pushing younger historians to think of a broader array of causal forces in politics and broadening the number of actors who were included in narratives, it relegated certain key elements of our democratic system--including party leaders, elected officials, and even elections--to the sidelines. Presidents and legislators will always be central players in political history. The distaste with "old fashioned" political history also moved historians further away from the impact individual political leaders could have at key moments. Even younger scholars who studied government elites (and this approach very much influenced my own early work) preferred to tap into scholarship on political science that explored institutional development.

But now that political history has safely reemerged, it is imperative that we move beyond this kind of zero-sum approach to political history. Political historians will have to write about everything--from the politicians who inhabit the White House and Capitol Hill, to institutions such as the media, to the social movements that created pressure from below. We do need to interpret political history but touching on different causal elements rather than privileging one over the other. Political history will require all approaches, not all at the same time and not all in the same books. While it is imperative that we don't treat political elites as embodying the nation, we don't want to miss the insular world in which elected officials sometimes operate.

There are issues that political historians dealt with before the 1960s which we must bring back into our scholarly analysis. For example, one issue that became extremely important to my narrative in *Arsenal of Democracy* is one that should be obvious to any historian: elections matter. Ironically, too much recent work on political history, whether focusing on social movements or institutions, has downplayed this basic element of our political system. Washington time runs according to the political clock that is imposed by our constant election cycle. Every two years a large number of politicians are forced to come up for reelection. Presidents and legislators never forget this and rarely do they find the space to govern on domestic or foreign policy problems outside of the electoral timetable. Even if a certain politician is not up for reelection, the coalition on which they depend usually is.

In conclusion, I hope that *Arsenal of Democracy* can serve as the opening to a conversation rather than the end of a debate. Although this is a work of synthesis and covers a considerable amount of ground, my ambition was to launch a debate over a vital relationship that has too often been ignored in scholarship about America's political history.

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