Introduction: Twenty-first-Century Memories

Eric Langenbacher and Yossi Shain

Collective memories have long influenced domestic politics and especially international affairs—a fact most recently exemplified by the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. The events and the memories resulting from them became powerful motivating forces for Americans almost overnight. At home, an infrastructure of commemoration quickly arose—in films like *United 93* (2006); memorials including one unveiled at the Pentagon in September 2008 and the Tribute World Trade Center Visitor Center opened in 2006; and even in political campaign discourse, as at the 2008 Republican National Convention.[1] Yet, as with other collective memories worldwide, there is no consensus as to the overall meaning and lessons of September 11 over time. Instead, the continued vehemence of discussions about 9/11 reveals still-unresolved struggles over the construction, content, and power of the memory. What degree of prominence should this memory have in American political culture? What historical narratives are offered as explanations? Most importantly, what values and policy implications—both domestically and abroad—ought to follow?

Understanding the construction and impact of 9/11 is one of the themes that the authors of this collection address.[2] Yet as important as 9/11 has become in the United States and abroad, it is only one of many collective memories influencing countries and their international interactions today. Indeed, the last three decades have witnessed a vast and global increase in attention devoted to such concerns by world leaders, international institutions, scholars, and practitioners. These actors have engaged in debates and have initiated policies that reveal the profound influence of collective memory. The international policy impact of collective memory, however, has not received the systematic attention in either the academy or the policy arena that it deserves—despite the fact that it is difficult to find a country or region where memory and related concerns such as working through a traumatic past and bringing perpetrators of human rights abuses to justice have not come to the fore. Examples include post-Soviet republics and their fears of renewed Russian oppression, Russia itself and its efforts to regain past glory, much of the Islamic world and its memory of Western subjugation, South

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Africa and its difficult apartheid legacy—along with Algeria, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, South Korea, and many more. Bilateral relations between countries as disparate as Germany and Israel, Turkey and Armenia, Britain and Ireland, and China and Japan all have been greatly influenced by such issues. Clearly, collective memory is empirically important and deserves sustained and in-depth theoretical study.

Although the recent proliferation of studies has advanced concepts and theory, the field of collective memory, though related, is still not in the mainstream of political science—especially in comparison with the concept's prominence in cultural studies, history, and even sociology. Scholars have been slow to recognize the importance of memory in international affairs and have not yet advanced major theoretical works in the area. Increased rigor in theorizing memory's impact, in developing a conceptual framework, and in selecting appropriate methods are all needed. Nevertheless, the present is an opportune moment to bring the concerns of memory into the field of international relations, in the face of elective affinities with the burgeoning constructivist paradigm in the field, which emphasizes the role of ideas and identities. Moreover, constructivist scholars and others have argued that the traditional, simplified view of international actors (states, elites, governments) has to add other networks of influence that may not map perfectly onto the old models—transnational ethnic groups, diasporas, refugees, and other migrants. The contributions to this volume also take up this task of furthering the study of collective memory in international affairs both empirically and theoretically by looking at the interactions of states, diasporas, and transnational ethnic groups, and especially at the impact of collective memory on these actor's identities, values, policy preferences, and behaviors.

Thus, this volume has four main aims. First, it is intended as a serious effort to study the impact of post-9/11 collective memories on international affairs and foreign policies. Second, the book aims for a breadth of empirical coverage by analyzing a variety of cases, including Austria, China, Israel, Japan, Poland, and Switzerland. Along with the United States, the contributions emphasize especially the cases of Germany and the Jewish communities—which is appropriate, given the prominence of collective memories in these cases and the importance of these cases for the broader, conceptual study of memory. Third, the volume intends to make a conceptual and theoretical contribution to the study of collective memory and its impact on international affairs. Like many other scholars, we aim to move beyond a sole focus on Westphalian state actors to look explicitly at the panoply of agents involved in influencing international affairs—international organizations, nonstate actors, and diasporic groups. Fourth and finally, the book seeks to take an interdisciplinary approach. We have included scholars from

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a variety of backgrounds in the humanities and social sciences, believing that only such diversity can generate the most fruitful insights into this important topic of the study of collective memory in international affairs.

Eric Langenbacher begins with a review of the burgeoning global interest in collective memory and the more specific academic literature on the topic. In chapter 1 he argues that similar to the study of political culture more generally, there have been numerous shortcomings in the concepts and theories underlying the study of memory. He then identifies the most serious of these challenges and offers some partial solutions. These include the necessity of conceiving collective memory as a shared attitude and thus both a constitutive element of individuals' belief systems and of a more general political culture and collective identity. Moreover, given the influence over values and hence outcomes that control over memory can confer, there is also a need to foreground dynamics of competition and cultural hegemony. He argues further that the field of international relations with a (growing) number of exceptions has neglected the concerns of memory, but, with the rise of the constructivist paradigm, the field is ready to integrate the concerns of memory. He ends with a brief case study, highlighting the pronounced role of Holocaust iconography in the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and the ongoing salience of this memory in Israeli foreign policy, for example, during the wars against Hezbollah in 2006 and against Hamas in 2009, and during the controversy about former Knesset speaker Avraham Burg's book *The Holocaust Is Over: We Must Rise from Its Ashes* in 2007 and 2008.

In chapter 2 Bettina Warburg begins a more in-depth examination of the paradigmatic German case. Using numerous interviews with high-level policymakers and cultural leaders, she focuses especially on the continued evolution of memory of the Holocaust. First, she chronicles the rise of Holocaust memory in the postwar Federal Republic, devoting particular attention to the all-important period of the early and mid-1980s when the big battles over interpreting the Nazi period and the relationship of the Holocaust to German national identity took place. She then brings this narrative into the present in numerous ways. For example, she examines the high-profile Jewish Museum in Berlin in conjunction with the ongoing discussions that have been taking place in the country for several decades about immigration, multiculturalism, and a postnational German collective identity. She argues that Holocaust memory is a constant in many of these policy and cultural debates, but that its impact has shifted over the years. Now it is being used to enable and empower a more capacious sense of "Germanness" rather than remaining a "negative" lesson or mere admonition.

The bulk of Warburg's chapter is devoted to how the evolution of Holocaust memory has changed Germany's self-conception of its role abroad.

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Perhaps as a consequence of the weakening of memory of the Holocaust and other processes commonly referred to as "normalization" (on display during soccer's 2006 World Cup and 2008 European Cup), Germany is much more frequently and forcefully intervening abroad in places like the Balkans and Afghanistan. But such interventions are almost always characterized by humanitarian motivations—the desire not to let another genocide happen. In this regard, the ongoing battle over what the correct lesson from the Nazi past should be—never again war or never again Auschwitz—clearly has been resolved in favor of the latter.

Eric Langenbacher continues with the German case in chapter 3, but he widens the focus by analyzing the influence of collective memory on German–Polish relations. One of the most important developments in the Berlin republic's memory regime has been the return of the memory of German suffering based on events from the end and aftermath of World War II. Discourses about the bombing of German cities, the mass rape of German women by members of the Red Army, and, above all, the ethnic cleansing and expulsion of 12 to 14 million Germans from then East Germany and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe have gained massive visibility, especially since 2002. Although the impact of 9/11 is not a proximate cause of these developments, the way that the terrorist attacks may have started to marginalize memory or the Holocaust—or at the least have supplanted the Holocaust from its position of absolute memory dominance—is surely relevant.

The reaction in Poland—whence came the majority of the expelled Germans—has been rather negative. Many Poles fear a relativization of their World War II suffering (as well as of the Holocaust) and an inappropriate rewriting of history in which Germans cease to be the perpetrators, but rather become the victims. This collides with the traditional and entrenched Polish collective memory of victimization. Relations between the two countries have soured markedly in the post-2002 period, strains that were particularly evident in the Kaczynski period (2005–7) but continue into the present. There are few other bilateral relationships today that are so burdened by collective memory.

Continuing the empirical focus on Europe, but highlighting the increasing importance of nonstate actors, in chapter 4 Avi Beker looks at the evolution of Holocaust consciousness and other Holocaust-related issues in an increasingly transnationalized Europe, paying particular attention to collective memories in Switzerland and Austria. First, he develops the context, pointing out how memory of the Holocaust increasingly is institutionalized at a European level—historically as an accepted part of the European legacy, formally

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in school curricula, conferences (e.g., in Stockholm in 2000), and commemorations, and culturally in a transnational conception of human rights that governs not only the perceptions and interaction of European states but also their foreign policies.

Beker devotes most of his chapter to the cases of Austria and Switzerland—two countries that had evaded the Nazi past for most of the postwar period by willingly adopting (with the encouragement of many Western governments) myths of being "Hitler's first victim," and "stubbornly neutral." In Austria it was only with the Waldheim Affair in the late 1980s that what has been deemed the benign *Sound of Music* myth was shattered and Austrians were confronted and soon confronted themselves with the extent of their collaboration and support for the Nazi project. In Switzerland the smoldering issues of unclaimed Holocaust-era insurance policies and bank accounts became international scandals in the 1990s. The Swiss finally recognized that their World War II–era neutrality was not only false but also aided the continuation of the Nazi war and genocide machine—and that the silence over unclaimed assets in the postwar period continued their guilty complicity. The opening of memory in both cases was due largely to the role of international and transnational actors such as the World Jewish Congress, the U.S. government (especially in the person of former undersecretary of state Stuart Eizenstat), other European actors, and the European Union itself. Beker's contribution not only shows the importance of collective memory in international relations but also provides a detailed case study of the impact that nonstate international actors can have.

Also looking at the interrelationships among, and policy influences from, state, international, and nonstate actors, in chapter 5 Ori Soltes focuses on the question of who speaks on behalf of "Jewish political interests." He examines collective memory and representation specifically in the American Jewish community, focusing on the multiplicity of voices and priorities within it. He discusses the traditions of dissent and debate that prevent the Jewish community from coming together to create one singular narrative, collective memory, and uniform voice that speaks on behalf of all Jews (in the United States or worldwide). Like the polyphony of rabbinic discourse itself, he claims that *pilpul*—the engaged debate of the rabbis—continues in present day conversations over social policy, memory valuations, and foreign policy concerns essential to the Jewish community. The term *pilpul* is an important one that aptly describes the evolution of collective memory and the complexity of understanding political representation in the Jewish community.

Soltes discusses numerous examples and disagreements about memory, identity, and policy preferences within the extremely multifarious Jewish

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community worldwide. Contested leadership is a constant in all of these cases—from Elie Wiesel's influence on the evolution of Holocaust memory and its place within the Jewish and Western canon, to the "interweaving of memory and security" in Israel today, to the often fraught relationship between the Diaspora (especially the United States) and Israel. Particularly thought-provoking are Soltes's observations about the evolution of leadership within the American Jewish community—including the long-term decline of B'nai B'rith and the rise and fall of various actors like U.S. senator Joseph Lieberman. In the end, Soltes concludes that no one speaks for the Jews, but instead a multitude of voices vie for influence within and beyond Jewish communities—a process that mirrors more general domestic and interstate memory dynamics.

Moving away from the important European and Jewish cases and toward this volume's other theme regarding memory of 9/11, in chapter 6 Omer Bartov contends that by looking to the past we are more capable of analyzing current conditions and are better prepared for future events. However, he critiques the West's (Europe and the United States) acceptance of distorted memories of the past to influence current policies. He denounces the tactic of presenting current conflicts "through the prism of the previous century's wars, genocides, and criminal regimes" in an effort to garner support for certain policy responses. He begins by explaining that as many "end-of-an-era" books state, it is correct to establish distinct time periods based on events outside of typical chronological boundaries like centuries.

Yet unlike the historian Eric Hobsbawm, Bartov believes that the undercurrents that cause or result from such massive events, not just these events alone, should be considered the bookends of an era. Instead of World War I itself, he points to the events in southeastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, the unification of Italy and Germany, and the race toward colonial empire building as the truly important historical events that began the twentieth century. Likewise, it was not the fall of the Soviet Union (which only served as an intermediate phase), but the 9/11 attacks that marked the end of the century because they caused momentous changes in every facet of foreign policy and significantly altered the relationship between the West and the world. Too often the considerable differences between present and past periods are not recognized, or at least they are not properly considered when conducting foreign policy and establishing initiatives. In fact, despite strong disagreement between views on contemporary issues and future predictions, all those who study these matters utilize terms, images, and symbols from the past to explain the current age. Policymakers invoke these tools from precedent to "legitimize their current dispositions and future plans."

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Bartov also uses 9/11 to explain the possibility of catastrophic downfalls when the present is filtered through the terms of the past. After the fall of the Soviet Union, all the United States' twentieth-century enemies and threats were vanquished. This resulted in a false sense of security and a drastic underestimation of the fundamentalist enemy, whose outwardly stated goals often included the destruction of their Western adversary. Perhaps, if more time was spent studying historical changes in ideology and the causes of the cardinal events that perverted Western perceptions, the United States could have been better prepared for a terrorist attack. Nevertheless, in the wake of 9/11, the West has still not learned to concentrate on curbing the ideological undercurrents that breed catastrophic events. Instead of trying to understand the enemy, terms such as totalitarianism, used to characterize past rivals, are applied to the detriment of effective policy. It is essential to understand that the same images that awaken memories of righteousness in the West offer credence to opposing ideologies in other parts of the world. The West must clearly and objectively analyze the world as it stands today in order to create effective strategy, rather than watch the rearview mirror as it crashes into the wall.

Although the events of 9/11 have thus far been observed by Americans in a very emotional manner, Michael Kazin shows in chapter 7 that a valid history of the attacks must also integrate the quickly forgotten December 12, 2000, U.S. Supreme Court decision that gave the presidency to George W. Bush. Although Kazin views the elimination of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as a certainty for any administration, he considers the invasion of Iraq to be a direct result of the Court's "12/12" judgment, which allowed the Bush worldview to take power. This ill-advised abuse of power was allowed to occur because as the collective memory of Americans remained fixated on the personal and individual nature of the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration was formulating a strategy to enact its agenda by exploiting the political capital amassed in the aftermath of 9/11.

Bush's "historical argument"—which, at least at first, was left unquestioned and reaffirmed by most Americans—considered 9/11 a turning point in world history. It marked the end of an era and the beginning of a new world war. Kazin goes so far as to say that Bush considered any other interpretation of the attacks as either "deeply mistaken or downright immoral. " Although the world saw a moment in history, the Bush administration invoked a "nothing would ever be the same" philosophy: a self-fulfilling proclamation when announced by the world's superpower. Yet domestically, with the exception of more security forces in specific places, very little actually changed. Nevertheless, both the attacks themselves and the individualistic emotions they encouraged are still prominent in the minds of most Americans, shaping their view of the historical events.

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To support his argument about collective memory, Kazin refers to his research of articles included in the 9/11 archive. He concludes that terms like "patriotism," "Bush," "bin Laden," "democracy," and "freedom" are used sparingly, while "family," "friends," and "God" are used more dramatically. Though this may have been expected if the archive submissions were written immediately following the attacks, the fact that many of the articles were written over a year later is indicative of the forces that encouraged Americans to put their experiences down on paper. A politically motivated event and its immediate and ongoing reciprocity were overshadowed by personal emotion.

Furthermore, the power created on 12/12 was shaping the historical filter through which 9/11 would always be remembered, while the nation's people were largely unwilling to criticize decisions being made. Kazin concludes that social historians are partially responsible for flaws in the historical account of 9/11 because they place too much emphasis on the stories of ordinary people as opposed to governing elites. Specifically, he notes that the interaction between policymakers and those being led must be stressed. He finds that this is true because extraordinary events such as 9/11 or 12/12 need to be presented as opportunities for the "public" in modern societies to unite, shed apathy, and enact social movements capable of altering and limiting the agendas of those in power.

In chapter 8 Jeffrey Herf challenges his academic peers to rise up and challenge their governments, because these institutions continue selectively to invoke historical examples in order to justify failed and failing policies, while simultaneously refusing to admit error. He believes that although it is inevitable that current events will be viewed in relation to what happened before, historians can at least offer a more accurate picture of the past. Left unchecked, the inaccurate images cultivated by ideologically driven media outlets, think tanks, and even historians establish a false foundation from which ineffective and sometimes dangerous policy emerges. He focuses specifically on decisions made by the United States and Germany in the recent past. Interestingly, as each country "cherry-picked" from Europe's totalitarianism history—that is, selectively and opportunistically used historical examples—it was able to justify vastly different policy initiatives. In Germany's case, Gerhard Schröder promoted a policy of appeasement, despite its failure to deter Nazi Germany leading up to World War II. More remarkably, while attempting to justify this position, Germany's leader sometimes would recount the lessons learned from the country's Nazi history—a fact showing that Schröder had learned significantly different lessons from World War II than the rest of the world. Furthermore, based on this perverted version of history, Schröder declared that he would refuse to consider war with Iraq

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even if it was true that Saddam Hussein was creating weapons of mass destruction, a statement that particularly displeased the United States.

For its part, America's preoccupation with the more-familiar and better-understood enemies of the past, such as communism, fascism, and Nazism, led to a lack of proper security preparations before 9/11. The experience of the terrorist attacks, along with more "correct" lessons learned from dealings with the Third Reich than contemporary German leaders were able to derive, led to a culture supportive of preemptive action. Nevertheless, in focusing on a fight against an enemy said to bear a likeness to these former opponents, the Bush administration failed to consider the fact that religious terrorists who seek martyrdom would not likely be deterred by preemptive force. But with this policy initiative well under way, the administration still often evoked selective words from Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt to further legitimize its cause. Yet while exploiting memories of these leaders' effective connection with Americans, Bush did not learn an important lesson that had made them successful originally—the creation of bipartisan, "national unity" governments. Finally, a point that Bush neglected to study while he was encouraging the fearful emotions that result from comparisons with World War II was that, much like Nazi Germany, Iraq would not simply crumble under the military might of the United States. If the military, intelligence, and secret police elements of the Ba'athist regime—along with the hundreds of thousands of casualties suffered during battles with Iran and during the 1990–91 Gulf War—had been considered in relation to Nazi Germany, perhaps the United States would have been more prepared for the endless fighting that has endured long after the initial invasion. For Herf, it is this sort of policy failure that needs to be stopped through a "new era of candor" created from the bottom up in Western nations, starting with academia.

The next two contributions focus on a very different yet important region and cultural context. In chapter 9 Thomas Berger argues that over the past twenty years, the East Asian region has been roiled by repeated bouts of international acrimony over historical issues. These controversies have mainly focused on Japan and the legacy of Japan's imperial expansion in the late nineteenth to mid–twentieth centuries. They have also spilled over to affect relations between other powers in the region. The United States, for instance, has been pilloried for its colonial policies in the Philippines, its Cold War policies in Korea, and for the ruthlessness with which it waged war in the Pacific against Japan, as symbolized by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1994, Chinese–Korean relations were briefly disrupted by differing interpretations of the status of the ancient Kingdom of Koguryo—and the list could easily be extended.

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Berger asks what accounts for this remarkable reemergence of the past to haunt the present in Asia. Certainly, several different factors play a role, including the types of variable stressed in realist and neoliberal international relations, that is, a nascent geostrategic rivalry between China and Japan and a rise in trade and other socioeconomic frictions resulting from increased regional interdependence. Beyond these sorts of structural variables, however, there are ideational–cultural dynamics at play that are causing tensions over history to emerge in exacerbated form. On a global level, there is the emergence of a still-inchoate but nonetheless powerful international discourse pertaining to historical justice issues that legitimize claims for the rectification of past wrongs and issuing challenges to the way other countries represent history in a way that would have been difficult to do in an earlier era.

At the domestic level, Berger explains, there have emerged ''memory regimes'' in the different East Asian countries that are deeply rooted in domestic political discourse, and which are sharply at odds with each other in how they envision the past. The combination of these domestic political factors, together with the new global discourse on historical justice, has had an explosive effect on the East Asian region, and has stoked a firestorm of mutual recrimination and antagonism over the past that shows few signs of abating. As a result, territorial and trade disputes that under ordinary circumstances should be manageable are becoming more volatile, while efforts to create institutional frameworks that could contain these tensions flounder. Finally, Berger reflects on the practical policy lessons that might be drawn from this analysis and on the possible applicability of this model to other regions of the world.

In chapter 10 Gerrit Gong focuses more on the Chinese case. On the morning of September 11, 2001, he and the People's Republic of China's ambassador to the United States watched on television together in horror as the World Trade Center was struck by two fuel-laden jetliners, burned, and completely collapsed. In the hours that followed, Chinese–U.S. relations were reoriented (as with Russian–U.S. relations) from strategic confrontation to antiterrorism cooperation. Gong argues that these foreign policy changes enabled a return to more fundamental or existential issues for East Asia, all rooted in history. His chapter analyzes structural issues of remembering and forgetting in East Asia, including how they contribute to the interface of memory and foreign policy at the personal, national, and international levels, in four major areas.

Gong concludes by noting that there was a time when elites made foreign policy on the basis of perceived national interests, but that time is largely gone. Mass publics, in democratic (and unfree) systems, now demand that

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their countries' respective foreign policies pursue (and achieve) justice and international prestige based on perceptions of historical and contemporary memory. This is especially true in East Asia, where memories are the longest and where foreign policy reflects new international configurations in the post–9/11 era.

Finally, Yossi Shain concludes the volume first by reviewing the common themes that emerge and then by sharing his own thoughts on the three main foci. He argues that international politics is governed not only by force but also by assigning legitimacy to actors' choices. Obviously there are rules of engagement in war, enshrined in domestic legislation and in international conventions. In addition to existing rules and regulations, the usage of power, retaliation, preemptive strike, intervention, occupation, assassinations, administrative detentions, and tribunals are all measured along another dimension—the spectrum of memory that each player is bringing to the table. These large pools of memories vary in intensity and recall both national catastrophes and triumphs. Shain notes that the pools of memories never dry up as the present continually evolves into the past and instructs the future. Some of these memories are internationally recognized and continually marked as signposts, others are contested. For example, Armenians carry the memory of the Armenian genocide into any dealings with Turkey and even Azerbaijan; yet in international forums and in dealings with other nations, Armenians constantly have to fight for its salience.

The bank of memories held by peoples, religious groups, states, aspiring nations, and even individuals are always at the heart of the configuration of international affairs and largely inform international behavior as they dictate policies. Particular memories of one group can be adopted by or imposed on others, or reconfigured to their own needs. Because memories are mobilizing, myth-making tools, how memories are nurtured and preserved is of vital importance in generating and understanding policy. The same memories that inform groups' identities and their actions may come back to haunt them, or even be used against them, if they deviate from or are accused of compromising their own moral code that sanctifies the memory. Memories can assign to an actor a historical position of villain, victim, or liberator, allowing for the framing of international issues and negotiations.

NOTES

1. See the Pentagon Memorial website (www.whs.mil/memorial/) and the Tribute WTC [World Trade Center] Visitor Center website (www.tributewtc.org/index.php). President George W. Bush endorsed Senator John McCain in a video address by stating, "My fellow citizens, we live in a dangerous world. And we need a president who understands the lessons of September 11, 2001: that to protect America, we must stay on the

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offense, stop attacks before they happen, and not wait to be hit again. The man we need is John McCain."; see www.nbc11news.com/home/headlines/27808349.html. McCain did win 46 percent of the popular vote in 2008, and there is clear evidence that his credentials on national security were a major basis of his support.

2. Most of the chapters that follow are based on a series of discussions and symposia held in 2005 at Georgetown University, supported by the Program for Jewish Civilization, the BMW Center for German and European Studies, the Walsh School of Foreign Service, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Washington Office. In particular, we thank Jeffrey J. Anderson and Dieter Dettke.

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