The Ambassadorial Series: Deans of U.S.-Russia Diplomacy

Transcripts of the Interviews

Compiled and edited by the Monterey Initiative in Russian Studies
Middlebury Institute of International Studies
January 24, 2022

This series was made possible by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York and private donations. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the author.

Ambassador Jack F. Matlock

Dates of Service as U.S. Ambassador in Moscow: 1987–1991

PART 1

Hanna Notte
Ambassador Jack Matlock, thank you so much for talking with us today in this sequel to the first Ambassadorial Series. It's a real honor for me to speak with you today, having read your books, and having heard you speak many times in the past on U.S.-Russian relations. After your distinguished career serving the U.S. government, including as ambassador in the Soviet Union and in Czechoslovakia, you actually wrote quite extensively about Soviet-U.S. and then Russian-U.S. relations as well, including in your books *Autopsy of an Empire*, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, and then also your latest book, *Superpower Illusions*, which have given me great inspiration for this conversation today. So, thank you again for doing this.

Ambassador Matlock
Well, thank you, and thank you for reading my books before asking your questions; it makes them much more pertinent.

Hanna Notte
Ambassador Matlock, let us start with history. In your books, you draw attention to three crucial events towards the late 1980s and early 1990s, which you believe have been frequently misconstrued in terms of their causes, their interrelation, and, in fact, who should take credit for them.

And those events are the end of the Cold War, the end of communism as a system of rule in the USSR, and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. And, in fact, nowadays, it seems to me, indeed, that the term 'end of the Cold War' is used interchangeably with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

So, I'd like to ask you: what, in your view, gave rise to this intellectual laziness? Why does it matter? And which misreadings of history have been most consequential for the trajectory of the U.S.-Russia relationship since then?

Ambassador Matlock
You know, that's an excellent question and one that I ask myself at times. But I think that the reason so many people... There are several reasons so many people are confused, I think, and look at the breakup of the Soviet Union as the end of the Cold War. Now, the Cold War ended before that, and as I watched that process, but as I think about the perceptions, almost no one among the specialists predicted that the Soviet Union would break up.

Many doubted that Gorbachev's reforms were real, even as they became more and more clear that they were. And the events moved so rapidly, particularly between 1987 and 1991, that it was very hard, even for specialists, to keep up. And for the general population, all of these steps seem to have come as a surprise. But it seemed to me very clear that the rationale for the Cold War ended by December 1988, specifically when Gorbachev, in effect he gave up the Marxian class struggle theory as a basis of Soviet foreign policy. After that, it was just a matter of cooperating to clean up many of the results of the Cold War.

And then, because the Cold War was over and pressure on the Soviet Union, external pressure, decreased, it gave Gorbachev a chance to try to reform the Soviet system. That got out of hand when too many in the Communist Party began to resist him. And yet he had sufficient control of the party because of tradition, that despite everybody's expectation, he actually acted to take the party out of total control of the country, which he needed to do if it was to reform.

And as this was developing, nationalism in the various republics, including the Russian Federated Soviet Republic, began to increase. And also, the economy, in as much as they were trying to reform an economy which operated on almost the opposite basis of a market economy, that economy was failing to produce and distribute even basic consumer goods. So, they had an economic crisis for the average people, a rise in individual nationalism, and just as, you might say, the controls, the forced controls, were being taken off. So that, I see that the second of these great movements were actually motivated internally. And Gorbachev had, you might say, the maneuver room to try to reform because the Cold War was over, because those pressures were there.

If we had not ended the Cold War, I think we would still have the Soviet Union. It might be a failing state, but I think it would still be there, because as long as the Communist Party and its instruments of repression – the KGB, the military – stayed loyal, they were going to repress any change.

What happened here was, the leader of the Communist Party used his position to take that party out of control. Now that is something nobody expected in the West, and many people doubted, as it was happening, that it was genuine. But by 1991, these processes had reached such a stage that by the end of the year, of course, the Soviet Union itself collapsed.

Well, part of that was the effort by the very people who were supposed to secure the Soviet Union; the head of the KGB, the head of the military, and the prime minister conspired to try to stop the reforms and stop the creation of a voluntary federation. And that so weakened Gorbachev and the Union that it did fall apart in December. And I might say that as far as United States was concerned, we did not want that to happen. We did not consider it a victory.

But, you know, you can understand why people would. It happened fast, it happened unexpectedly, it happened for reasons many thought were impossible. But suddenly it was

clear the Cold War was over, and that the Soviet Union itself had not survived as a unitary state. And then, you know, the media immediately seized upon this as the end of the Cold War. I recall in the late 1990s previewing a documentary that was later shown on CNN and others, which shows the end of the Cold War with the Soviet flag coming down in the Kremlin and the Russian flag being raised. And I told the producer immediately, "That's not when the Cold War ended; it ended earlier." And he said, "Well, but that's not very dramatic." And I said, "Look, are you writing drama, or are you writing history?" Well, it was clear he was writing drama.

But he was also conforming to the usual perception, and it's an understandable perception. But, as you say, it is one that reflects a certain laziness in looking closely at the facts as they transpired.

Now, why has this been a problem? Well, by looking at the end of the Cold War as a complete victory for the West, some drew the totally unfounded conclusion that, well, this proves that the system we have in the West is the future of the world; it's suitable for everybody. Then Francis Fukuyama's famous book, The End of History – you know, it reminded me very much of just a variant of Marxism-Leninism. Actually, you know, Marx had predicted that there would be a proletarian revolution which would extinguish and eliminate the bourgeoisie and create socialism, sort of a utopia for everybody.
And this was really the fundamental of Stalinism – Leninism and Stalinism. It was really the basis of what we call the Brezhnev Doctrine.

When the Soviet Union, for example, declared the policy of it was their duty to support and expand what they called socialism everywhere, because that was the future. I recall once when Foreign Minister Gromyko came to Washington, and President Reagan asked him directly, he said, "Do you still believe in a one world socialist state?" And Gromyko said, "Well, of course." He said, "But if I believe in that, it's like believing that tomorrow the sun will rise in the east and set in the west. It's not something we have to help." But others said differently.

When Reagan, in his first visit with Gorbachev, complained about some of the military interventions in Africa and Latin America, Gorbachev ventured, "We're simply doing our international duty. And, you know, "Get used to it." This is the future. Well, he changed his mind on that, thank goodness. But my point is that by saying that, well, 'democracy' – and I have to put that in quotes because we never defined it precisely – is the future, and it is our duty to spread it.

Now, what's the problem with that? Well, first of all, there's no evidence that the same form of government is going to suit everybody in the world with such different histories, customs, social structures. In fact, the evidence, the pragmatic evidence, is to the contrary. But second, even if that's the case, there is no way an outsider can create for people a government of the people, by the people, for the people. Only a people can do that for themselves.

And if you really want to spread a given form of government, how do you do it? You show how it works at home. And I'll tell you, it's not working very well at home today, maybe precisely because we have presumed that we can – by using force, by using sanctions – that we can change other people's political systems. I don't think that's possible, though I know that the people who believe this believe it, and it is... But I think it creates more problems than it solves.

So, I think that by misunderstanding how the Cold War ended, and by treating, in particular, Russia as a defeated country, in effect, without any national interests, that we have helped create and exacerbate the problems we have today.

Hanna Notte
This was fascinating, Ambassador. So many important elements and moments here. I do want to come back to some of those later in the conversation, particularly the Brezhnev Doctrine and the notion of democracy promotion.

For the moment, I want to stick a little bit with the end of the Cold War and the early 1990s and ask you about the implications of the collapse of the Soviet Union for the Soviet people. I read *Autopsy of an Empire*, and you start that book with a fascinating anecdote. You recount the 25th of December 1991 – you mentioned it just now – the day that Gorbachev announced live on TV that essentially the Soviet Union was gone.

And you then used the example of Gorbachev's assistant, a young Soviet diplomat from Georgia, to point to the cognitive dissonance that millions of people must have experienced at the time. You write, "He no longer knew who he was. He was Georgian, and he was Soviet, and there had been no contradiction. What now?"

So, I want to ask you, considering the many implications of the USSR's collapse, on the level of identity, economic organization, governance, which ones were the most significant that Western observers, Western officials really needed to make an effort to understand at the time? And perhaps, which implications remain least understood even today?

Ambassador Matlock
Yes, well, there were so many factors operating then, and frankly, I don't think there's a way you can usefully quantify to say, well... Certainly, the economic collapse was extremely important everywhere. The rise of nationalist feeling, based upon one's native language primarily, was certainly quite perceptible in all, including in Russia.

But I would say that for different individuals, different things were more important. And extreme nationalists would sometimes simply use economic difficulties for their own ends. Others, for them the economic difficulties would be paramount. And so, different people had different priorities, had different push. I think Gorbachev thought, and actually many other people thought, that during the 70 years of Soviet rule, they had created, you might say, a new Soviet person, one sort of based more on ideology than on ethnicity. And it turned out that

was not the case. The ideology sort of crumbled under them. People had already... Most stopped believing in it, even while it was the official thing.

But, you know, this leaves people with a very difficult thing to face, and that is, "Who are we? Who are we? Are we Russians, or are we something broader and different?" Well, we're facing this in the United States today, so we should be able to understand. I mean, we too, some of our groups for a long time had been, at least implicitly, white supremacists. Now that's no longer working in the United States, and it is a traumatic experience for many of us defining, what is an American? Is a white American somehow superior or more authentic than a Black or Brown [American]?

And so, I think that we need to understand that there were many different pressures pushing. Probably the most prominent of these, in not only the national republics, but in the Russian republic itself, was a feeling of ethnic exclusivity. And we can see that since the breakup of the Soviet Union, in many of the republics, the dominant nationality has suppressed its minorities. In other words, it's unwilling to give its minorities the sort of equal rights that they have. I mean, Georgia was attacking South Ossetia even while the Soviet Union still existed, for example. And of course, we had the Armenian-Azerbaijani fighting even before the Soviet Union collapsed. And these things all got worse after it did.

So, there were so many forces going on at the same time that Gorbachev was having to deal with a totally different international situation. After all, he began to encourage reforms in Eastern Europe, and when these reforms led to a downfall of all the Communist governments, he accepted and even welcomed that. Now, that was something that, again, nobody had predicted in the past, though it was actually in the Soviet interest to do so, because nothing weakens a country more than trying to control people that don't want you to control them. That's something we don't understand today, in so many issues. I would say Ukraine is better off without Crimea, because most of the people in Crimea prefer to be in Russia, and yet...

Pardon me for jumping ahead so much, but the problem here is – the one I'm pointing to – is the idea that so many have, that well, we define our identity on the basis of ethnicity rather than a broader concept. And this is something that, quite frankly, I think most other countries are going through. But it was forced upon the people of the former Soviet Union very rapidly and in ways that some were hurt more than others.

And any time of rapid social change, this is going to be the case. There are going to be losers, there are going to be winners. And if they fight too much among them, everybody turns out to be a loser.

So, what was most important? I suppose it was really the combination of the rise of, I would say, ethnic nationalism, along with the deterioration in economic conditions for average people.

Hanna Notte
Thank you for that, Ambassador. I do want to come to a slightly different topic, which is that of arms control and nuclear weapons.

Ambassador Matlock
Yes.

Hanna Notte
Ronald Reagan dreamt of a world free of nuclear weapons, and as you note in your book, he was also deeply affected by the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. Yet, at the same time, he launched the Strategic Defense Initiative, or SDI, in 1983. I would like to ask you two questions on this, if I may.

The first is really, why did Reagan do it? Why did he launch the SDI, and did no one in his administration realize, anticipate, perhaps even warn against the deep concerns that this effort might evoke on the Soviet side, regarding the deterrent value of their strategic offensive arsenal?

And the second question: if we fast forward a little bit, we then did have some progress on arms controls into the early 1990s with the START Treaties, with the Lisbon Protocol, with the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. Why was that momentum lost with the Clinton administration?

Ambassador Matlock
Well, the first question is that the reason President Reagan became enamored of the Strategic Defense Initiative was his total hatred of nuclear weapons, and his total rejection of the theory that our policy was based on mutual assured destruction. He would say, "How can you tell me that the only way I can defend the American people is by killing millions of innocent people elsewhere? I cannot accept that."

And when he was told that there is a possibility of a defense that could defend against ballistic missiles that might be developed, then this, he thought, would make it possible to reduce and even eliminate nuclear weapons, because you had a defense against them. Otherwise, even if countries agreed to reduce them, who knows whether some, as he would say, some future Hitler doesn't arise and decide they're going to build them anyway? And if you don't have defenses, what can you do?

And as he said, we banned chemical weapons after World War I, but we kept our gas masks. So, in his mind, there was nothing inconsistent, and he really couldn't understand why others would think that this was an offensive strategy.

Now, what I think – actually, some Soviet scientists actually tended to dismiss it as not a threat, so that was not a universal view in the Soviet Union. Others said, "Look, it's impossible to have a completely effective defense." And that is actually true, because these defense

systems are very vulnerable; they depend upon satellite communications, and you take those satellite communications out, they don't work. As Sakharov said at one point, "The problem with strategic defenses is that it's easier to take things out of orbit than it is to put them there."

And so, the irony is that although Reagan's belief was sincere, and he felt this very deeply, technically it would not have worked to be a threat. So now, on the Soviet side, as I said, some actually advised, "Don't worry about it, it's not going to work in that way." Others said, "No, we have to do it, because if it does work, look, it will mean that our missiles will be useless, and they could attack us." Well, they could attack us and then defend themselves from... Well, that too was a...

Others said, "Look, this is just a cover for an offensive thing. What they want to do is put nuclear weapons in space," which was never a part of this program, and of course, it was prohibited by international agreements. But I think many in the Soviet Union, particularly in the Politburo, they were not very technically competent, and I was told later by senior Russian officials, "Well, our people really did think this was an offensive strategy." Reagan was convinced it wasn't. And so, we had this case.

Now, for some of Reagan's advisors, I mean like Bud McFarlane, our national security advisor for a while, for him it was a scam, because up until then, the Soviets had always insisted that any reductions be proportionate. But they had developed an ICBM, an intercontinental ballistic missile, which number one, was mobile, which means you can move it from one place to the other; number two, had ten warheads that were very accurate and could easily take out our land-based ICBMs, which were single warhead. So, it became part of the basis of our policy to try to get a great reduction or possible elimination of these ICBMs.

At one point Reagan actually proposed that we both eliminate all ICBMs so that we wouldn't have weapons, and then if we had defenses, that would be against other people. Gorbachev never accepted that, never even took it seriously. But the point is that we were worried about the theoretical possibility that their ICBMs, which we could not target in advance because they were mobile, that were sufficient to take out our land-based deterrent because they were all in silos, had a single warhead.

So then, the first plan was, okay, so we'll build a mobile ICBM. The one we planned had only three warheads, not ten, because the Soviets had greater lift capacity than we did. You know, Americans always seem to assume that, well, we have superior technology, and we'll keep that superiority. That of course has been disproved time and time and time again. But this is another example of it, because in our first arms control agreements, our military wanted to preserve the right to MIRV, that is to put multiple warheads, because we were ahead in that technology. Ten years later, the Soviets were ahead in that technology, and we wanted to reduce or ban them. This shows both sides were making miscalculations.

However, we found that it was going to be impossible for us to develop and deploy a mobile ICBM in the United States, because it had to be passed by Congress, and who in the world is going to vote to have ICBMs moved on our railways or our reinforced superhighways? Nobody. I mean, you don't want them in your back yard. So it was politically impossible for us to develop a counterpart.

And so McFarlane said, "Okay, we've got to fool them. We'll say we'll build a defense that negates yours, if we don't reduce them." So in that case, he looked at it as, in effect, a scam. And, at one point, before Reykjavík – and at Reykjavík – Reagan actually said, "Okay, let's both develop defenses and agree to eliminate our ballistic missiles. Not just intercontinental, but all ballistic missiles." And Gorbachev never considered that. He thought, how would we ever get agreement to do that?

Well, it would have taken Reagan overruling most of his military people to do it, but he was capable of that while he was in office.

In any event, I'm rambling on a lot, but just to point out that these issues were not all that simple, that motivations differed on both sides, that in fact in Reagan's mind, and in fact, the Strategic Defense Initiative was not a threat to the Soviet Union. One can understand, and if there's not any basic trust between them, there would be those who would doubt that and suspect that. But that's why he hung on so long.

And let me say frankly that if we had not had the problem of what they call the Iran-Contra controversy – just after the Reykjavík meeting, we were on the verge of accepting Gorbachev's proposal that he made at Reykjavík – and if we had not lost our senior officials who backed that in the Iran-Contra dispute, we very likely would have accepted Gorbachev's proposal to keep SDI in laboratories for ten years. That was my recommendation when I got back to Washington. It was accepted by the national security advisor, but he got caught up in the Iran-Contra, got dismissed, and it shows how domestic politics, other issues, often intrude.

So bottom line, SDI cannot work as it was envisioned by Reagan, but it was not a threat to others as he envisioned it.

Hanna Notte
In the early 1990s, so after Reagan, we have some progress also on arms control, START 1, START 2, the Lisbon Protocol, and the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. But then this momentum gets lost during the Clinton administration. Why was that? Why was that momentum lost on arms control?

Ambassador Matlock
Well, that's a question for the people in the Clinton administration. It was a great disappointment, as far as I was concerned, that we didn't proceed. I recall strongly recommending that we come to an agreement with then the Russian Federation to eliminate all short-range nuclear missiles from Europe.

And I know the man, before he was defense secretary, but later he was Clinton's defense secretary, said, "Well, we can't do that. The west Europeans, our allies, would not agree to that." And I said, "Are you telling me that they're going to insist we keep weapons in Europe, that if they're used, are going to be used against them?" I mean, short-range nuclear weapons in Europe made no sense at all. But the Clinton administration was concentrating on other things.

And I must say the people, who earlier in the Democratic Party had been strong on disarmament, were not very prominent in the Clinton administration. There was too much feeling of triumphalism, we've got to show that we're number one, that the 20th century is the American century, and they were much more interested in, as most politicians are, in satisfying their domestic constituents.

So, as I said, I think it's too bad we didn't proceed with much more radical reductions. I think that would have been possible then if we had not been willing to do it on a fair basis. But we didn't, and then very soon we began to have the issues, such as the expansion of NATO, which probably made further reductions in nuclear weapons virtually impossible.

Hanna Notte
This is great, very clear, Ambassador. I want to stay with the early '90s for one other question and come to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 which provided one of the first tests of the developing U.S. and then still Soviet relationship under Gorbachev, especially if you consider that Saddam's Iraq had been a long-standing Soviet ally.

And, as you note in your book, Gorbachev passed the test; he went against some of his Middle East advisors and ensured that the Soviet ambassador at the United Nations supported the United States in condemning the invasion of Kuwait, and then also in supporting the legal basis for what became the first Gulf War.

So I want to ask you, Ambassador Matlock, how was Gorbachev convinced to go against his advisors? Who convinced him, and how was the first Gulf War then perceived among the Russian people at the time?

Ambassador Matlock
Well, first of all, Gorbachev didn't go against his principal advisor, Eduard Shevardnadze. It was Eduard Shevardnadze that agreed with us that if one country invades another, you've got to oppose that. And as he would say to his own specialist, "If your friend makes a mistake, you must not defend him." And the fact is, this was blatant aggression, and we had the vote of the UN, and we had the vote of almost every Arab country, except maybe Jordan, to go after Saddam Hussein.

And this is one of the most basic, I would say, rules of international... One country simply doesn't invade and take over another without any cause whatsoever. Now, this was a difficult

decision for Gorbachev because, as you say, many of his advisors were still looking as if the whole matter of the Middle East was a competition between the Soviet Union and the West. And actually, the problems there were much more insoluble, many of them; if it had been possible for the two of us to solve them, we probably would have, but it wasn't.

But anyway, what he saw was, at that time, he was then increasingly in need of American support. He was having more and more difficulties at home. And as a matter of fact, the... Bush actually met him in Helsinki to discuss that issue and got his commitment at least to abstain in the Security Council, not necessarily vote, but abstain to make it possible. And China also agreed to because this was an issue of blatant aggression.

I would also say that Bush, when we carried out the Gulf War, which we did with cooperation with about 45 countries, once he liberated Kuwait, he stopped. He didn't go to Baghdad; he didn't take out Saddam Hussein. He did exactly what he'd been authorized by the international community to do.

And I would also say that Gorbachev had a lot of simultaneous problems, and the country was beginning to come apart. He already had the violence in the South Caucasus. In January, one of the times, just as the war was beginning to start, and there were votes in the UN, was when there was an attack on the television tower in Vilnius, Lithuania, and the problems with that. So, in fact, I think that although some of his advisors wanted him to stay with Saddam Hussein, our position was, "Okay, let him leave Kuwait and we'll stand down." I mean, Saddam Hussein, and I think the Soviets tried to convince him, but he didn't. So, they took, actually, a few months for this to develop, and I think we gave Gorbachev and the Soviets every chance to have it solved peacefully simply by Saddam Hussein withdrawing to his own country.

Of course, there were a number of sentiments in the Soviet Union at that time in favor of the Iraqis, in favor of Saddam Hussein. There were demonstrations at our embassy, for example, but when I looked out at those demonstrators they were, I would say, at least 80% students from the area that were studying in Moscow. They weren't Soviet citizens, basically, getting that excited. Most Soviet citizens at that point were just trying to get enough to eat and survive in what were increasingly chaotic times.

Hanna Notte
Thank you, Ambassador. Quite a different picture from what we then saw in 2003 after the second Gulf War, but we'll come to that in –

Ambassador Matlock
Well, the second Gulf War was quite different.

Hanna Notte
Yes.

Ambassador Matlock
Quite different in almost every respect.

Hanna Notte
Yes. I do want to come to really one of the elephants in the room in any discussion about the trajectory of the U.S.-Russian relationship. And that is the issue of NATO expansion, which you've already touched upon.

Ambassador, there are many narratives and myths about what transpired in those crucial months in the early 1990s. Can you reflect for us on what was really promised to Gorbachev about the issue of NATO expansion at the time?

Ambassador Matlock
I think the use of the word 'promise' is probably not the right one. Here's the context: first of all, when President Herbert Walker Bush met with Gorbachev in Malta, in December 1989, they came to a very important agreement. One was that we're no longer enemies; the second was that the Soviet Union will not intervene in Eastern Europe if there's political change; and the third was the United States will not take advantage of changes there.

Now nobody, quite frankly, was thinking of the countries of the Warsaw Pact coming into NATO or not; that simply was not on anybody's mind. You still had the Warsaw Pact. The Berlin Wall had just come down, and it was still uncertain what was going to happen.

So, in December of 1989, Soviet policy changed very rapidly. When I came back from Malta, I called – just a few days after this was over – I called on Shevardnadze, the foreign minister, to review what went on. And I asked him, I said that, "I understand your policy is that a decision on German unity is one for the future?" He said, "Yes, we know that's a question that has to be resolved eventually. But it's one that will be resolved in the future. We have great confidence that the new regime in East Germany is determined to keep its statehood." This is at the end of the first week in December.

Just after Christmas I called on Ambassador Falin who then was head of the Central Committee – that he was known as Mr. Germany, as far as their foreign policy is concerned – and I asked him, I said, "I understand that you think this is a question for the future?" His answer was, "We thought it was a question for the future, but it's clear now, it's one that's going to be resolved now."

So they were very quickly seeing what was happening. And now in February, fairly early February, I think around the 10th and the 11th, Secretary of State Baker came to Moscow. And at that point, we were trying to set up a framework for dealing with the question of German unity. And we had proposed, with the cooperation of the West Germans, that it be resolved in a format of 'two plus four'. Two meaning that the two German states would negotiate and try to find an agreement, and four meaning that the four victorious powers from World War II would then, in effect, review and either accept or not the decision the Germans made.

And I know that when this was first floated with Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, at a meeting in Canada in January 1990, Shevardnadze's first answer was, "Why not four plus two?" And Baker said, "That may work in arithmetic, but it doesn't work in politics. We have to let the Germans make this decision." And then this was accepted. And, at that point, the Soviet position was, "Okay, if the Germans are insisting on unifying, there's one thing for sure: a united Germany will have to leave NATO for us to approve."

So, when Baker came to Moscow in February, he was trying to convince Gorbachev that it was actually in the Soviet interest for a united Germany to remain in NATO. And he consulted with German Foreign Minister Genscher on his way to Moscow, and he proposed an idea; he prefaced it by saying, "You don't have to give me an answer right now, but I want to tell you something you should think about." And the next sentence was, and I heard this so many times from him I can quote it literally, "Assuming there is no expansion of NATO jurisdiction to the east, not one inch, wouldn't it be better?"

And then he went on to explain the advantages of having a united Germany in NATO, of keeping their military united in one, and keeping an American role in military stability. Gorbachev answered immediately, "I'll think about it." And he said, "Obviously, any expansion of NATO jurisdiction to the east is unacceptable, but I understand what you're saying otherwise." And then he added, "It had been our policy to try to exclude you from Europe. That is not our policy today, I want you to know that. We want to preserve an American presence in Europe," meaning military presence, "because that can contribute to stability." He said, "Now, and I don't think you need 300,000 troops, but we want you in Europe, and that is part of our policy."

Well, and actually, Baker then repeated this to Shevardnadze. He repeated it to his delegation, including myself. In fact, as we rode in the car from the meeting, he recounted it to me and said, "What do you think?" And I said, "He's going to buy. Because the case you make is a very good case." Now, when Baker got back to Washington, the lawyer said, "Now wait, you can't include West Germany as part of Germany, and exclude it from NATO jurisdiction if Germany remains in NATO. That's a legal impossibility."

So, this question was not raised again, and there was no guarantee in the treaty, the Two Plus Four Treaty that was finally signed in the fall, and as a matter of fact, Soviet negotiators have said since then, they never thought they had a guarantee that NATO would not expand. They did have a guarantee that there would be no foreign, that is non-German, troops in the territory of East Germany, and that nuclear weapons would never be deployed there. That is in the treaty, but nothing about NATO expansion.

Now, I would also add that when we were talking about this, we were talking about Germany. We were not talking about the rest of Eastern Europe. Now obviously, if anybody had asked me in the summer of 1990, "Does that mean that there will be no expansion into Eastern Europe?" I would have said, "Well, of course." I mean, we're talking about Germany, and as a

matter of fact, if you remove your troops – and it was already evident that probably the Warsaw Pact wouldn't be continued; the East Europeans, once they went democratic, were almost certain to pull out of the Warsaw Pact. And I would have said, "There's absolutely no need to expand NATO."

And I would have considered that not a legal commitment, because it wasn't, but one that particularly in the context of the agreement, which was a formal one, we will not take advantage, because nobody could look at the changes of Eastern Europe, and then the way the subsequent... Now, I will add that it was not the Bush administration that expanded NATO. I'm quite convinced that if Bush had been reelected, he would not have. And we would have used the Partnership for Peace.

And one can say, "Well, why did we?" Well, first of all, because the East Europeans started demanding it, and we would say, "Well, they have a right to choose their alliances." Well also, the countries giving guarantees have the right to choose whom they guarantee or not, and whether that's a good idea. So, this idea that somehow a country has a right to join an alliance when the alliance hasn't necessarily invited them, is a rather, I would say, absurd idea. But the pressure did come from Eastern Europe and was supported by many, particularly, of our smaller NATO allies.

The real reason that Clinton went for it was domestic politics. I testified in Congress against NATO expansion, saying that it would be a great mistake, and that if it continued, that certainly it would have to stop before it reached countries like Ukraine and Georgia, that this would be unacceptable to any Russian government, and that furthermore, that the expansion of NATO would undermine any chance for the development of democracy in Russia.

And George Kennan had also said it was the greatest geopolitical mistake of that decade. And I think he was right.

But why, when I came out of that testimony, a couple of people who were observing said, "Jack, why are you fighting against this?" And I said, "Because I think it's a bad idea." They said, "Look, Clinton wants to get reelected. He needs Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois; they all have a very strong East European..." Many of these had become Reagan Democrats on East-West issues. They're insisting that the Ukraine [NATO] expand to include Poland and eventually Ukraine. So, Clinton needs those to get reelected.

But the fact is that, I think, the concluding issue there was domestic politics, and really not an understanding of, you might say, how best to handle the international relations.

At that time, I would say further on this matter of NATO expansion, that I think that the Clinton administration was quite disingenuous. Clinton personally told Yeltsin that the Partnership for Peace would be a substitute for NATO expansion, and Yeltsin said, "That's great. That's a brilliant idea."

At the very same time, our ambassador was instructed to tell the Poles, "This is the first step toward NATO membership." So, we were playing, I must say, to my dismay, duplicitous diplomacy at the time, and being motivated largely by domestic issues, not what would really preserve a Europe whole and free, which was the aim of our policy in the first Bush administration. And when we said Europe whole and free, that includes Russia. It's not just all except Russia.

Hanna Notte
Ambassador, fascinating. On the issue of a Europe whole and free, I do have one follow-up question to all you just said. I was intrigued by an argument that you make in your book, which is that, in fact, there was no need for NATO to expand eastward, because as you say, there were other ways those countries concerned could have been reassured and protected without seeming to redivide Europe, to Russia's disadvantage.

Could you explain a little bit more what other ways you had in mind? What could have been done differently?

Ambassador Matlock
Well, on the military side, the Partnership for Peace, which all of the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union were invited to be part of that. And that allows on a bilateral basis the maximum amount of military cooperation – help, for example, to maintain civilian control over the military.

In many cases, what they needed in Europe at that time was a great reduction of military spending, because, of course, in the '90s we had the problems in the Balkans, and these are separate issues but are relevant to politics at the time. But with the breakup of Yugoslavia, which, by the way, was not something the U.S. engineered; we did not want it to happen. I know many people think, particularly in Russia, that was part of some grandiose design. No, it wasn't.

But without getting into the details of that, I would say that it was very clear that if we had been able to establish an all-European security organization, that could have been done by expanding the powers of the organization of European unity coming out of the Helsinki Final Act. It could have been done by the Partnership for Peace between NATO and the individual countries, including Russia and Ukraine and others who wanted to. It was precisely the thing that Yeltsin enthusiastically accepted. And it was our moving off that, into that.

Now, on the other side, I would have to say that Russia never came up with a realistic proposal of how an all-European security situation would work. And the East Europeans, I guess, were so burned by the past and things of that, they began to think that only NATO protection can solve their problems, although in many cases their problems are internal, primarily, and something that a foreign alliance was not going to help them. But these perceptions, I think, began to dominate in many ways. But on the whole, I would say, the American motivation tended to be to satisfy domestic constituencies.

Hanna Notte
And I will continue with a question that's related, really, to the issue of NATO expansion and, to me, seems equally central when we debate U.S.-Russian relations. So, in your books, Ambassador Matlock, you discuss the concepts of empire, hegemony, leadership at great length, and you warn of imperialist ambitions in the modern world. You also acknowledge the pride and the distinct traditions of the various nationalities within the Soviet Union that you encountered on your travels, and you even recall a leitmotif in your book, saying that when you encountered people in the Soviet Republics, they would say to you, "Please, don't think of us as Russians; we are not Russians."

On the other hand, you point to Russia's complicated past with Georgia, with Ukraine, when you make the argument that we, the West, failed to take into sufficient consideration Russia's worries about these countries' future relations with NATO. So, let me ask you this: does Russia have a right to a sphere of influence in what's called the post-Soviet space, or, put differently, how far should Western countries go in taking Russian concerns into consideration when they're formulating their policies towards these countries?

Ambassador Matlock
That's an excellent question. My answer would be, first of all, it depends on what you mean by sphere of influence. Obviously, Russia, and no other country, should use the idea of sphere of influence the way, say, Japanese did in the 1930s when they occupied Manchuria – and saying that they had occupied Manchuria, and in effect made it a colony, because it was in their sphere of influence. That, in my opinion, is not a sphere of influence, that's pure imperialism and aggression.

It's quite another thing when you say that any country is going to be hypersensitive to other countries, particularly if they are in alliances that seem hostile to coming close to their borders. Of all the countries in the world, the United States should understand this. It's not a matter of international law any more than, I would say, gravity is a matter of law. I mean, gravity is there. And you can deny it, well, you know, okay, we never passed a law on gravity. But you damn well better pay attention, because as I said, of all countries, the United States for two centuries has followed a policy that no external power can have either a colony or be a member of a military alliance in the entire western hemisphere. Look how we reacted to Cuba and so on, and still are reacting.

Now, the idea that any Russian government could sit still for, say, Ukraine, which had been an integral part of the country, rightly or wrongly, for over two centuries, that they could sit still for Ukraine becoming a member of NATO. Among other things, it would eliminate one of their most important naval bases, which they legally hold, on that territory of Crimea.

So, to say that, well, it's aggression. No, I think that the idea that Russia would react negatively, and that Russia has the power to prevent others from coming in, is absolutely true. Nobody is going to fight a nuclear war. And I would say that never, in my opinion, in the history of the United States or Western Europe, has any of our security depended on precisely

where the line is between Ukraine and Russia. That is a very difficult, a very emotional issue, and one that I think that foreign intervention has created more problems, though it is basically an internal problem. So, you can say they have no right to a sphere of influence.

They are going to exercise a sphere of influence if they feel threatened, and any other government would also do so. And I think we have to understand that and not keep thinking that things are abstract. "Oh, we have a right to do this; we have a right to do that." Rights? There is no international authority that creates so-called political rights. And it seems to me that the idea... Second, I would say, as far as NATO expansion is concerned, neither Ukraine nor Georgia would qualify, because NATO supposedly never takes in a county which has internal problems. And the problems with the Donbass, the problems with Crimea, the problems with North and South Ossetia, of Abkhazia. These are internal problems.

And the idea of being, "Oh yes, if they're in NATO, Russia wouldn't interfere." It's not so much Russian interference, it is the local problem. And yes, Russia has supported one side, but on the other hand, I would think there's hardly another country you can think of that would not react if it feels its own security is ruined.

And one of the basic problems has been the development over the last 25 years of the feeling that Russia is an adversary or an enemy or something like that. There is no reason in the world to create that atmosphere, but step by step we have created it. Their reactions to our steps have intensified it, and it is reaching really absurd levels today. And at a time when we are trying to deal with a pandemic, at a time when we are increasingly being affected by climate change, by global warming, at a time when many of our countries are trying to cope with the floods of refugees and so on, to be disputing, fighting, using resources over these, you might say, border issues, by methods which actually exacerbate them rather than solve them, I find totally irrational.

We have far, far more common interests with Russia and with China than we have differences, and why our politicians can't understand that is beyond me. But I attribute most of it to our own domestic political scene. And I think unfortunately it's true of most countries, particularly large ones, that domestic politics trumps everything.

Hanna Notte

Thank you for that, Ambassador. I do have one question which relates a little bit to your day-to-day activity of being an ambassador on the ground in the Soviet Union. So, you stayed on as ambassador when George H. W. Bush came into office, and as I read in your books, you would soon send three telegrams to Washington, D.C., in 1989, where you would say, "Look, the Soviet leadership will continue to be preoccupied by internal reform. Perestroika will not bring fast improvements in the Soviet economy, and Soviet foreign policy will be less threatening militarily, so there might be a window of opportunity here."

And then, of course, there's also the famous telegram that you sent in July 1990, when you advised the White House to plan for a contingency of a collapse of the Soviet Union 18 months before it happened.
I really want to ask you, how were you making those judgments at the time? What clues were you looking for, what were you doing to analyze and read the situation correctly on the ground?

Ambassador Matlock
I was talking to people. Once Gorbachev gave us the opportunity to have wide contacts in society – suddenly, by 1988, in '89, the Soviet Union itself was opening up. And we would invite a whole range of political leaders to social functions. For example, I traveled to 12 of the republics – I was not allowed to travel to the Baltic countries while I was ambassador – and our staff really had contact with these developments as they were developing.

And while there were many things going on, one of them was that genuinely by... certainly by '90, by '89 and '90, the Gorbachev Central Committee was actually protecting democratic forces as they emerged in many republics. I mean, when I would go to Tashkent, I would find that there were groups of people who were democrats who were translating the American Constitution into Uzbek and so on. And the local Communist authorities would have suppressed them, but the Gorbachev Central Committee kept them from doing so.

I remember in '90 talking to Vasil Bykaŭ, the famous Belarusian writer, and he told me that if... that his writings would be prohibited from publication in Minsk, but he would appeal to Gorbachev's Central Committee in Moscow, which would order the Belarusians to publish them. In other words, Gorbachev's policies were creating, really, well, helping the forces that eventually brought it down, but at the same time, these were the democratic forces.

However, what really caused me to send that first one about the... the message in July 1990 that the Soviet Union could collapse, was because I found that the Russian elite was beginning to talk about the advantages of throwing off the Soviet Union. I should explain that many Russians – quite inaccurately – thought that the non-Russian nationalities were, say, feeding off them. And that, I know some would say, "Look, these Tartars, these Georgians, they'll never be Russians, why should they be part of Russia?" in a sense.

And I began, and others began, to say, "The Soviet Union, it really should become something like the EU. We don't need a unified state." And these were the people who were supporting Yeltsin; these were the people who were beginning to win elections when they had them. And I said, "Look, if the Russian elite no longer wants to preserve the Soviet Union, certainly..." Well, we knew the three Baltic states were going to insist on going, but, you know, Georgia was almost out of Moscow's control already by that time. And my conclusion was, look, as the country opens up and becomes more democratic, if there is not a strong push by the Russian intelligentsia, the Russian informers, to keep the Union together, they're not going to be able to.

And that's why, I would say... By the way, you didn't ask the question, but I will point it out: we did not have one single spy in the Soviet Union the years I was ambassador. We got all of our information by talking to people, by looking. It was not a matter of intelligence. But I am convinced that we understood better than Gorbachev himself did what the problems were, because the KGB was giving him distorted reports. They were saying, "Oh, this Landsbergis in Lithuania, he's just a rabble-rouser, he doesn't have any support."

So another conclusion to this is that we did not reach those conclusions through espionage. We did it the old-fashioned way. We simply looked and, particularly, listened to what was going on.

PART 2

Hanna Notte
Ambassador Matlock, your books do a fantastic job bringing to life American-Soviet diplomacy under Reagan and Gorbachev. And you conclude that these two individuals were really instrumental in shaping the trajectories of events at the time. In fact, you write that it is difficult to imagine how the Cold War could have ended, when and as it did, if both Reagan and Gorbachev hadn't been in office at that, at the same time.

And I generally noticed that you touched upon the significance of individuals rather frequently in your books. At one point, you even cite George Kennan as having said that "at the bottom of all human experience, there lies, after all, the mystery of the individual personality, its ultimate autonomy of decision, its interaction with the mass." But at the same time, you also point to the problem of bureaucratic inertia, of systems and structures adapting slowly to new circumstances, like after the end of the Cold War.

And, you know, I feel that we're confronted with this question about the individual versus structure quite often when we are thinking about today's Russia, because serious scholars often criticize the use of the term 'Putin's Russia' as being, really, too simplistic to capture the reality of contemporary Russia. But then others contend that there really can't be any meaningful change in Russia's domestic or foreign policy while the individual – Putin – is in power. So, what is your take on this question on the relative weight between the individual and structural forces in shaping events?

Ambassador Matlock
Well, personally, I would say, referring to one of your latter statements, the people who say that there could be no change in Russia as long as Putin is in power – I would say that I grew up and learned about the Soviet Union when most were convinced there could be no change in the Soviet Union as long as the Communist Party was in power. They were wrong. Now. All right, let's go back to the original question. You know, when you ask about – in the abstract – about, you might say, the hero in history, obviously there are things, or circumstances, that probably very much mitigate against change. I know one of my history professors who was

talking about this theory said, “You know, Bismarck is credited with, in effect, unifying many of the German speaking states to the German state under the leadership of Prussia.”

But he said, well, and you can say, “Well, he was a great man because when he stopped guiding it, things really went very wrong.” But he said, “Well, but suppose Bismarck had been born in Portugal.” It's not that an individual, if he or she is strong enough or so on, that they necessarily are going to be able to change things. The reason I said that we were lucky that Gorbachev and Reagan were in office at the same time was because each of them did things that others in their party – that might have been elected or selected at that time – would not have done. Now, there were plenty of Democrats that could have negotiated the arms control treaties, but they could not have gotten them ratified in the American Senate.

And of course, one of the reasons these things were successful was that Gorbachev changed Soviet policy. And he changed it using the authority that he had as the general secretary of the Communist Party, and then, having changed the foreign policy and brought about an end to the arms race, he began to use that authority to institute reforms. Now, I don't think there was another plausible general secretary at the time he became general secretary who would have done that. So, that's why I say having those two individuals in the offices they had created something that, as we have already talked about, nobody predicted. Because in both cases, they were acting in a way that, perhaps, others could not have done.

In Reagan's case, it was not that there weren't other leaders that could have negotiated these agreements. But the fact that, given the American politics, they would have been very hard getting sufficient votes in the Senate to ratify them. So the fact that it was Ronald Reagan, who really could not be outflanked from the right, who expounded and backed these things. The INF treaty lost six votes in the Senate, all of them Republicans. And if you hadn't had Reagan, that same treaty would not have gone through the American Senate.

So, that's why I say in those cases, yes, I think that the individuals make a difference. It doesn't mean that an individual can overcome circumstances. And sometimes circumstances are perhaps overwhelming. And yes, part of getting things done is being able to maneuver and convince enough people on your side, given whatever the political situation is. In this respect, I might say, those with systems that are more authoritarian can often be more effective in foreign policy.

And so, I very much dislike the attempt today to say, well, some are more authoritarian than others. Well, that's true. And yet, particularly in a very divided society, sometimes you need an authoritarian streak, at least, to get anything done. And so, I think that we need to put all of these things in context, because the political leaders don't operate in a vacuum, or, you might say, a level playing field. There are always obstacles. There will always – if you are a leader trying to bring about change, particularly in your own society, this is probably the most difficult task at all. And therefore, it seems to me that... Well, let's take an American example: Lyndon Johnson and human rights. The fact that he was from Texas, was a southerner, enabled him to do things that other American presidents didn't do.

Now, if he hadn't had gotten us deeply involved in the Vietnam war, he would probably go down as one of our greatest presidents because of what he was able to do domestically. And, you might say, well, there were plenty of northern liberal Democrats who wanted to do these things, but could they have accomplished them? It really took a Lyndon Johnson to accomplish them. And was he a perfect person? Did everything he do praiseworthy? No. Absolutely not. But I think, again, when we are judging individual leaders and looking at the past, we have to put them in context, because they were operating in context.

Hanna Notte
Thank you so much for these reflections, Ambassador Matlock. There is an anecdote that you tell in your book, Superpower Illusions, which I really appreciated. It's this anecdote about a meeting that you attended in Soviet-occupied Latvia in 1986. And in fact, there were frictions at the time between the U.S. government and the Soviet Union; you still ended up going to that meeting in Latvia, even though some of your American colleagues criticized you for it. And you write in your book, and I quote you here, "Refusing to talk to an adversary is like turning into a dead-end street." And that it's basically a fallacy to confuse communication with appeasement or let alone capitulation.

But, you know, today it seems to me there is this widespread notion that our relations with Russia are so bad that one shouldn't, quote unquote, 'reward' Putin with dialogue. Now, from your experience, why is this a mistaken notion? And what would you say to those who argue – and I think there are frequently people today who argue this – you know, that dialogue and summits with Russia have in recent years really turned into these ceremonial, almost ritualized expositions of the two sides', the two parties' well-known positions; these positions are often incompatible, and so there's really no point to the summits and to these meetings.

Ambassador Matlock
Well, yes, it seems to me that if there is a problem, you have to communicate, and you have to be willing to listen to the other side and not just barrel ahead assuming that everything you do is perfect. That's going to simply exacerbate the situation. It doesn't help a thing. Now, going back to the situation that we had then, we had planned a meeting – a continuation of some of the meetings that we had had at Chautauqua, New York – and we wanted to hold one in the Soviet Union. And this had been worked out with Anatoly Dobrynin, who was then the Soviet ambassador in Washington. And he had been then transferred to Moscow and was working in the Communist Party Central Committee. The idea was that we would have a very frank debate.

And certainly, we had an American delegation among, I would say, some of our most... well, some of our most hawkish members. And we said, you know, we really want to explain clearly our position and debate it with them, and openly. And we were assured that we would be given television coverage in the entire country, and that the proceedings would be televised in full in Latvia. Now, there were people who said, "Oh, we shouldn't go because we don't recognize the Soviet occupation of Latvia." And my position was, "Of course we should go."

And I can explain that we don't recognize that Latvia is legally a part of the Soviet Union. I knew that so many Latvians, like Lithuanians and Estonians, were worried that we simply considered them Russians.

And I thought, well, we can certainly show them that we have an interest, and I'll even start my speech with a few paragraphs in the Latvian language and then finish the rest in the Russian language, in which I could express myself more adequately. Now, it happened that at that time we were in one of these spats about spies. We had arrested a Soviet citizen who worked for the United Nations, who was caught in espionage, and he did not have diplomatic immunity. So, in response, the Soviets arrested an American journalist who was not a spy, but also did not have diplomatic immunity. And so, we were having this big controversy over the arrest of Nicholas Daniloff. And his wife went on television. And the others said, "Oh, we shouldn't hold this conference. We shouldn't reward them as long as they were holding Daniloff."

Well, it seemed to me that staying away from that conference was certainly not going to bring any pressure on the Soviet Union, and the opportunity to put our case on television before the Soviet people, I thought, was a very important one. But this became so politically charged at home. I know some of the... The Friday evening before we were to leave, one of the journalists, who was very popular, was saying, "Well, this White House official Jack Matlock is going to violate our non-recognition things by actually going to Latvia, even though Daniloff still being held." Well, I was working then on the National Security Council staff, and I called the assistant to George Shultz, the secretary of state, and said, "Well, does the secretary want me to go or not?"

And he called back to say, "The secretary said you're a grown man; make up your mind." And so, then I asked the national security advisor to check with the president – John Poindexter was then advisor. He did, and he said, "Well, the president thinks you ought to go. We need to communicate." And I said, "Well, that's good enough for me." And, you know, as I said, one of the first statements I made was that we do not recognize the legality of the inclusion of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania in the Soviet Union. Later, these meetings continued at Chautauqua, New York, and after the Soviet Union broke up, one of the leaders of the Latvian Independence Movement said, "That's what gave us the start. We really –most people didn't know that that was your policy; but if you didn't recognize, we had a chance."

And so, this really, really began to fuel the independence movement in Latvia. So the idea, and I would say that some of the harder-line members of our delegation refused to go: "Well, we're not going to go there while they're holding Daniloff." You know, you are cutting off your nose to spite your face, in effect, because it's very necessary. But the idea that you are somehow rewarding somebody else because you talk to them is, I think, quite mistaken, among other things. It indicates that you're not willing to deal with them as equals. You're not willing to deal with them, to respect...

I think, in general, that is the opposite of what it should be. And I'll go back; I remember one of the things that President Reagan used to say. It was in – at one point, he said, "And regarding our dealings with the Soviet Union," this is when things were still tense, he said, "We've got to stop talking about each other so much and talk to each other more." But it wasn't just a matter of talking to each other. It was also – you got to learn to listen, to try to understand the other point of view.

And so, it's not that there's a magic in summit meetings. Both sides, if they're going to have them, used to be they want to be able to come back and say they achieve something important. But the fact is, if you are meeting, normally your staffs are going to be instructed to try to agree on as much as you can. And then to narrow the things they discussed to some of the key issues. And this can be important. I've never thought that it was useful to exclude others because of their policies from negotiation, because that just motivates them to be even more trouble, because they've got no incentive, really, to listen to you if you're not even going to talk to them.

Hanna Notte
Fascinating, thank you for sharing that story with us, and this notion of listening I'll come back to in another question a bit later. Right now, I want to ask you about something else. In your books, you draw attention a few times to diplomatic episodes where issues had to be handled quietly, privately. For example, when a Soviet defector provided the United States intelligence, I believe in 1989, with some intel on the ongoing existence of a Soviet biological weapons program, even though the USSR had signed and ratified the Biological Weapons Convention. Ambassador Matlock, why is it sometimes so important to address things in private in diplomacy? [Could you point] to some pertinent examples from your own career? And I also want to ask you this: is such an approach of handling things delicately, quietly, still possible today in diplomacy, in our age of ubiquitous social media coverage, and this demand by our publics for unconditional transparency from the political leadership?

Ambassador Matlock
I think that there are times when, if you're going to reach agreement, it really has to be developed in private, because usually on both sides, there are so many vested interests that if you get too public, you're going to have really major problems in solving it. Now, you referred to an instance when we discovered, because of defectors, that we were absolutely sure that there was a Soviet biological warfare program still in violation of their treaty obligations. And this, we found out jointly with the British. And so, the British ambassador and I were instructed to go to the foreign minister and to Gorbachev's advisor and simply say, "Look, we have this information. Close it. Because if we get into a big public hassle over this, it's going to be very hard to solve."

We were then negotiating, almost ready for the strategic arms treaty. It was when – it was the buildup to the war, the Gulf War, where we needed their support in the UN. The Soviet Union itself was beginning to fall apart. We had so many things on there. We don't need, you know, a public issue over that. And, well, to make a long story short, Gorbachev... First of all, his own

people had misled and lied to most of theirs. We were told later that Shevardnadze, the foreign minister, had never been told that they had the program. Although they suspected it, because we were constantly complaining, but people would come from the program and deny that they were doing anything illegal.

And so... what we got then was a request to – we both had acknowledged, well, programs, defensive programs. And by the way, a specialist can easily distinguish an offensive from a defensive program from the type of equipment you have. So they asked if we would have an exchange of specialists who would look at the suspect facilities, and the first reaction I got from the United States was, "No way, we don't have any problems here. Why are they asking for this?" And I said, "Look, we should accept that, because I'm sure they have told their people that they are doing it because we're doing it. And since we are not doing it, let's let them see that."

Well, that happened. And the number two in the program, their program, was there. He later defected and wrote a book. His name is Alibekov. He wrote a book about the program and said that, genuinely, he had thought we had one until he went there and actually saw that we didn't, and that therefore, they started closing things down. But the bureaucracy was such, we couldn't be sure that they would even follow Gorbachev's order to close it down. That was one of the problems in the Soviet Union – that the KGB, many elements of the military, and the other, were not completely under control of the leader.

So, this was an example of a very serious problem that it was much easier to dissolve. And I would even go back to the Cuban missile crisis. The deal that ended that, which was not announced at the time, was one that, if the Soviets would remove their nuclear missiles from Cuba, we would later remove the ones we had put in Turkey. After all, we had been the first to deploy intermediate range missiles that could hit the Soviet Union. And now, part of that deal was this would not be announced.

But Khrushchev accepted that. And I would say even those of us in Moscow did not know about that deal. The fact was we agreed, in effect, to remove them, and that was done by what they call the back channel. Kennedy's brother, who was an attorney general, was dealing with the KGB resident in Washington. And by the way, we generally knew who was running the spy agency in our capital, and these communications were sometimes used. And as a matter of fact, we had rather regular consultations between the CIA and the KGB in Vienna about issues to try to dim down misunderstandings. But the point is that sometimes, if issues are extremely delicate, you really need to talk about them privately.

I was getting signals all the time earlier, when I was in charge of the American embassy in Moscow, and before I was ambassador, that they wanted sort of a back channel to discuss things like arms control. And we would offer them sometimes that in certain issues. These were particularly useful when you were dealing with an issue where our domestic special interests are so powerful that if you go public before you have a deal which you can defend, they will do everything they can to block it.

So thinking about this issue in general, I recall that one of the principles that President Woodrow Wilson enunciated was that there should be open conventions, openly arrived at. My professor of International Relations at Columbia, Phillip Mosely, said he got it wrong. We need open conventions, secretly arrived at, because if every negotiation is totally open, you'll probably never get anywhere because of vested interests on both sides who will wreck it if they think their own parochial interests are being affected.

Hanna Notte
And so, you think these delicate negotiations are still possible today to the same extent that perhaps they were possible during the Cold War?

Ambassador Matlock
No, they're not possible if your public image is one attacking and personally denigrating the other leader. This is something I do not understand: how intelligent, well-meaning people can allow international relations get into sort of a personal battle. Now, Ronald Reagan very famously called the Soviet Union an evil empire, and he was unsparing in his criticisms of communism. He never once denigrated an individual Soviet leader, and when he would meet them, his first words were usually, "We hold a piece of the world in our hands; we must operate responsibly." And even though we thought of Andrei Gromyko as 'Mr. Nyet' and so on, he was given full honors at the White House, treated virtually as a chief of state, with formal dinners and so on.

And I would say, well, this is one of the differences President Reagan had from many other leaders, is – and maybe it was because he was trained as an actor; after all, he was trained to put himself in the shoes of other people. And what interested him in our briefings before he met the Soviet leaders was not so much the details of arms control or these other issues. Frankly, he would often dose off if you get into too much detail on that. What he concentrated on was, who is this fellow Gorbachev? Where is he coming from? How can we establish more trust between us?

And I would say he was person – and he understood, yes, he is not a dictator. He's got a Politburo. And therefore, he's going to be a tough negotiator. And in a sense, he had what we would call empathy, which is different from sympathy. He really wanted to understand where the other person was coming from. Now, if that's the case, then simply to demonize another leader, as has been done both by the media and, unfortunately, our own political leaders with President Putin, I think is simply a no-win sort of thing. You don't achieve one thing from that. Now, that... that's not a defense of anything that President Putin has done. But the fact is, you're not going to get anywhere dealing with these problems unless you deal with them with a certain respect.

And we should recognize that he brought Russia out of bankruptcy. He brought them out of chaos, and we might not like some of the things, but the Russians still have the right to travel abroad, the right to travel internally, things that were extremely constricting with the Soviet

Union. But to act as if nothing has changed, again, is simply, I think, wrong. So that... I think it's very clear: if you get anywhere, you have to treat your interlocutor with personal respect. It doesn't mean you have got to praise them or so on. After all, who authorized us to hand out report cards on leaders of other countries? I mean, that shouldn't be; we may have our opinions, and our media and non-governmental organizations certainly should express opinions.

But as far as the president and the U.S. government, we need to keep, I would say, a respect... We need to deal with other leaders with a certain respect and not get into personal accusations or, for that matter, defenses.

Hanna Notte
Ambassador Matlock, your reflections just now on the importance of empathy are a perfect segue to my next question, which is about the importance of Russian culture. So, your own path to becoming a distinguished diplomat, serving your country in Russia and its neighborhood, started with a passion for the Russian language and for Russian literature. And that passion gave you an important window into understanding your interlocutors in Russia, gave you an appreciation for Russian culture, and you emphasize the importance of culture also quite frequently in your books. Culture, but also related notions, like social norms, ideology, concepts of honor and prestige, for developing empathy for the other side.

So I'd like to ask you, can you reflect a little bit on instances of American practice of what we might call diplomacy of empathy versus diplomacy of imposition and how an understanding for culture can make us better diplomats of empathy?

Ambassador Matlock
Yes. Well, I think that one of the jobs of a diplomat is to understand the country to which he or she is assigned, and to convey that understanding back to their own government. I would say, when I was teaching courses on diplomacy, "A diplomat is the eyes, ears, and voice of his government." I would say 'government' rather than 'country', because it's the government you're representing. They are specifically representing the president, and in the case of American diplomats – so, in another country. Now, obviously the more you know about the local culture, including the language, the history, the economic conditions, social structure, et cetera – all of these things, the better you are able to assess what goes on. That's far more important than spies or intelligence. Intelligence is important if you want to know precisely how many weapons they have and what the capabilities are.

But as far as politics, by far, to understand the country and its policies, one really needs to know the society and if possible, if conditions allow, to know personally the leaders who make that policy. So, it seems to me this is just axiomatic. Now, having said that, as far as a government is concerned, a lot depends upon how you use your ambassadors. If the ambassadors are simply not listened to or consulted in policymaking, or if they are political appointees that are appointed simply because they made a large contribution – not all the

political appointees are bad ambassadors, I would say. Sometimes they can be very good and even knowledgeable about the countries, but often they are not.

But the thing is, it is up to the government, the chief of state, the foreign minister as to how you use the ambassadors. Sometimes you can send them out as a political reward and simply ignore them. Or, as I said, I was incredibly lucky having worked directly with President Reagan before he sent me as ambassador, and also knowing very well Vice President Bush, who then became the president. So I was in an ideal position that I knew them. They knew me. They consulted me. We were able to work together in a way that, quite honestly, is fairly rare among diplomats and governments, I would say, rather than diplomats. But certainly, I was able to do my job better because I was able to, in effect, immerse myself in Soviet culture.

And I say "Soviet" because I paid as much attention to the non-Russian republics as I did to Russia. But also, and I think this, in my case, is extremely important: the fact that I was genuinely interested in Russian culture, that I could read the literature for sheer pleasure. In fact, it's one of the things that has really enriched my life, entirely aside from diplomacy. This gave me, I would say, I think, an empathy for the country, even when our relationships were most difficult. I absolutely hated communism. I did understand it. I thought it was an ideology that had been imposed upon a great people, the Russian people. And I was never one that would shirk from debating or telling them when they did something wrong.

But shortly after I arrived as ambassador, I was asked by a junior Soviet diplomat, one who often took notes in my meetings with the foreign minister. He came to a reception, and when he came through the line, he said, "I wonder if I could have a word with you later?" I said, "Well, sure." And when we had greeted the other guests, I took him aside and said, "What's on your mind?" And he said, "I got a question for you." "Okay." And he said, "You can come in and you can say things to my boss that if anybody else said them, he would climb the walls in fury. But from you, he takes it. What's your secret?" I had not been asked that question before, and I thought a minute. And you know, I said, "Basically, I think he senses that I love this country, and I hate what has happened to it. And I have to express that."

And he said, "I thought that was true. And I wondered if you understood it," which is one of the most memorable conversations I had, because basically it was true. I mean, I felt a great attraction to the cultural depth of the Russian theater, of Russian literature. I was fully aware of all of the, I would say, the horrors of Stalinism and the imposed ideology. And I knew that this was not the real Russia that I knew. And I think this was sensed. Also, as a matter of public relations, when they gave me access to television and actually, after Gorbachev began to open up the country from – particularly from 1989 on, I had many interviews, sometimes on national television. One of them ran for an hour.

And the thing is that most of the Soviet people were not that interested in discussing detail of arms control or other political issues. They wanted to know which poets I had translated, which writers I was most interested in. And being able to discuss, at a reasonable level, their own culture, their own literature, conveyed an image, not of a threatening country, which is an

enemy, but of one that really was interested in them and cared about them and was certainly not going to go to war. So this was, obviously, things that we didn't talk about directly that often. But I do think that the ability to communicate on the same grounds as the people's culture...

The other thing was that when there were changes, I was able, I think, and my staff – I have to say, I think these things I'm talking about apply to many on my staff. I had one of the greatest staffs that has ever been assembled at, I think, any embassy, and not just American ones. Our staff, they knew Russian, many of them knew other languages of the Soviet Union. They traveled, they kept in touch.

And so, I think that we were able to understand what was going on in the country. And as I may have already mentioned, I believe, later, even better than Gorbachev understood. Because we did have contacts, we did have said some rapport with the people; even if we were sort of at opposite ends of policy issues, we could explain, we could try to find a way that would satisfy both sides. I would add, as I'm talking about this, that, yes, this is important, but for diplomacy, you also have to know your own country.

And that's one thing that sometimes people ignore. You need to know the attitudes of the people in your bureaucracy and others in order to select the best arguments. As I often said, when I was working, I would always make a recommendation I thought was the correct one. But if I were explaining it to Henry Kissinger, it would be a different explanation than if I was explaining it to Cyrus Vance, for example, to name two different secretaries of state. Because by understanding where they come from, you can help to place this within their scheme of attention and values and defend it from that standpoint.

So, it's a matter of balancing. I think it is also a matter of being absolutely truthful. There is this old halfway joke about the British ambassador who was going off to be ambassador, I think, in Turkey to the Ottoman empire. And he stopped at a friend in Western Europe on their way and wrote in the guest book in Latin that an ambassador is an honest man who goes abroad to lie for his country. Now, this was a double entendre because the instruction at that time to a foreign ruler was that one sovereign was sending a representative, an ambassador, to represent him, "to lie near you," meaning to live near you. But this became "to lie abroad for his country." And my answer to that was: in my opinion, effective diplomacy is, must be truthful. And there is only one permissible lie, which is, "I don't know."

Now, there are things that obviously, because of your secrecy rules, you can't discuss directly, and we all understand that. But you don't say something to mislead. And I think that's a true, effective diplomacy. So the idea that you're sent abroad to trick other people or, as some have said, well, you say "nice doggy" until you can pick up a stick. No, that is not diplomacy. I think it has to be absolutely frank, and I think it is entirely possible to oppose certain policies quite vigorously and argue against them without insulting the other person and without somehow denigrating them personally.

Obviously, the people you're dealing with, also the other diplomats, they're representing their political system. And one has to understand that. So anyway, one could go on and on about this because there are so many qualities, but I think that for effective diplomacy, you need to make sure you are accurately representing your government.

If you have disagreements about policy, you should be able to let your government know, but not anybody else. In other words, once the president or the secretary of state decides what the policy is going to be, you must try to execute that faithfully. That's also part of it. So, there are so many factors here, and I would say very often, very often, governments, particularly American governments, don't make full use of their diplomats. I think we have one of the finest diplomatic services in the world, or at least we had, until very recently, when it has taken a number of blows, but, and more often than not, the professionals are either ignored or sidelined.

Hanna Notte
Fascinating, Ambassador Matlock, and I do want to ask a follow up question on a few important moments that we just touched upon. This importance of understanding your own side, your own government. You also mentioned previously, it's important how a government chooses to use its ambassador abroad. So I want to ask you to reflect a little bit about the process of foreign policy making in the U.S. It appears to be a complex process with a crowded actor landscape. We have the president, the secretary of state. We have an interagency process, Congress, the media. Who makes foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia? And when the Washington bureaucracy is in direct contact with Moscow, which I imagine must happen frequently, then what is the role of the ambassador on the ground, and what are some of the constraints and opportunities within which the ambassador operates?

Ambassador Matlock
There is, among the countries that are most important to their counterparts, you might say, the secretary of state, even the presidents or the prime ministers do a lot of direct conversation. Now you can have classified telephone calls, even, probably, classified calls on the equivalent of Zoom or Skype. And so, there is much more possibility of the direct contact between the senior people without going through their embassies. That has changed things a lot.

Now, that has several implications. One thing is, if your country, as the United States, really has global interests and has diplomatic and consular representations in virtually all the independent countries in the world – and they're close to 200, now – there is no way in the world that the secretary of state or the president can take care of more than just a few.

And yet, relations with these other countries are extremely important. And, of course, the functions of embassies include a lot of things other than negotiating with the top. You are protecting American citizens. You are promoting American commerce. There are many on-the-ground jobs that require diplomacy in the sense of knowing the local people, knowing the

local lands. Americans travel widely, at least before COVID. And they do get into trouble elsewhere, and the consular officer has to deal with that.

They lose their passport sometimes. And so, we have many reasons to have very active and compliment diplomatic things, other than talking to the top people. But the thing is, if they rely almost exclusively on that, then they are really missing, I think, the possibility, because you really need the people on the spot who, day after day, continually, or, you might say, are monitoring what is going on in the society.

And when you do prepare your talking points for these telephone calls, usually that's done by your staff, and the staff – to the degree they can rely upon an active and knowledgeable embassy – they will prepare these in cooperation with the staff, let the staff know in advance. Often, if you're going to make a speech, or if you're going to meet the other leader, you want to alert the staff to any new proposals you are making, and try to make sure you get a positive response. And through diplomatic channels, you can say, "Look, this particular thing is a no-no here. Can't you emphasize something else?"

So, in other words, there's so all sorts of ways that the staff can help guide the leaders when they use them correctly, even though they're having more direct contact. On the whole, I think that direct contact is good. But I think it can be a problem if a given president or secretary of state think they know it all, and really don't need a lot of advice. And that has happened at times.

Hanna Notte
Thank you so much for that. Ambassador Matlock, we have talked a lot about the Soviet period. We've talked about the 1990s. I want to come to 9/11 as an inflection point. You point out in your books that perhaps after 9/11, there was a chance to change the dynamics of the U.S.-Russia relationship when President Putin decided to cooperate with the United States in the so-called global war on terror. But what then followed instead was the U.S.'s unilateral abrogation of the ABM treaty, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, further NATO eastward expansion, and so on and so forth. And then, eventually, we ended up with President Putin's famous 2007 Munich speech, and the Russia-Georgia war of 2008. So, I want to ask you, do you think there really was a chance in 2001 to set the relationship onto a different trajectory, considering all that had gone wrong in the 1990s already?

Ambassador Matlock
Yes. I think we would've had a much better relationship if our policy had been different during the second Bush administration. I think that continuing to expand NATO, I think, was a mistake. I think, frankly, that once we took in Czechoslovakia and Hungary and Poland, we almost had to include the three Baltic states. And I think Putin reluctantly accepted that. I remember he was asked about it before it happened, in a speech in New York. And he said, "Well, I don't think it's necessary, but it's not..." In other words, they did understand that, as far as the three Baltic countries are concerned, that they, you might say, historically, legally

and other things, are in a different position from the other countries in the so-called near abroad, that is the other ex-Soviet republics.

But what happened was that not only did we continue to expand NATO, not only did we conduct an aggressive war against Iraq without UN sanctions and actually against opinion not only of Russia, but also allies Germany and France, and, at the same time, we were going out of arms control treaties. The ABM treaty, which had been, you might say, the anchor of arms reduction with the Soviet Union. We then signed an agreement which was so general. We had no verification, nor did we destroy those weapons that were taken off alert; until we got the New START treaty in the Obama administration, we, in effect, had walked out of all the verification measures that had taken us decades to negotiate during the Cold War.

So, I think these were all very serious mistakes, and then, as we began to take the countries in the Balkans into NATO, and then to talk about, and by 2008, actually vote to put Ukraine and Georgia on, you might say, on a road to NATO membership. This was crossing a very clear red line. And so that, I do think that at that time, different policies could have brought about an entirely different result. Now, I would say that if we expected Russia to become a 'democracy', I'll put that in quotes, if it operates just like it does in the United States, then no, I think that was, that was an impossible dream, at least at the time.

And frankly, some of our problems developed because, clearly, we were expressing strong preferences over some factions over others. We like to talk now about foreign interference in American elections. I would say, for several decades, the U.S. interfered whenever it thought its national interests were involved, and deterred only by not appearing to do so, because they knew that could backfire. So, this idea that nations shouldn't interfere in elections of others, well, nations do. And usually, they create more harm for their candidates than support if they do it too openly.

But to continue, I would say the speech that President Putin made in Munich listed the problems he had. And, I would say, in my opinion, none of those things were necessary to American security. We would have been better off without them. And in general, our overt support for the so-called color revolutions, I think were quite unwise.

Now, it's not that the people that were demonstrating did not have valid grievances; they did. But to appear to be trying to support unconstitutional changes, not just influence elections, but trying the overthrow of other governments by a faction that favored us and, in many cases, had the goal of NATO membership – I think this became very destructive, because one thing no Russian government could tolerate would be taking countries like Ukraine or Georgia into an alliance, a military alliance hostile to Russia.

These were, I think, very big mistakes. And now, I think that Putin's reactions sometimes have, and often have not been in the interest of Russia. So yes, there was a, you might say, a mutual escalation. I do think it started with the actions by the United States. I think there was overreaction on the other side, and then the development of a personalization of the problem

has only made it more difficult. But to get back to your question, yes, I think there was a possibility of having, of developing much more normal relations, relations which would not have been a Russia with a system precisely like ours. How could that possibly be the case: two countries with such different history and such different, you might say, geographical locations.

After all, we have two oceans separating us from Eurasia on each side, whereas Russia occupies a very large part of Eurasia with most of its neighbors along land borders. The situation of the two is quite different. So, I think that, as I had mentioned earlier, the effort that we made, a quixotic effort to quote 'support democracy', and the methods that we used, didn't actually support democracy but actually exacerbated problems that developed there and elsewhere in the world.

Hanna Notte
Thank you for that, Ambassador Matlock. I think we have covered a lot of ground in our conversation about the things that didn't go quite right in the relationship over the past decades. I want to come to today. It appears to me sometimes that, nowadays, Russia uses 'whataboutism': a criticism of what it sees as U.S. double standards; criticism of past U.S. foreign policy mistakes, almost as a sort of knockout argument to stifle any substantive discussion on any policy issue. I'll give you one example: the moment that you criticize, for instance, Russian policy in Syria, Russian diplomats will make references to the United States' mistakes in Iraq in 2003, or in Libya in 2011.

And this doesn't always make for the most constructive or substantive debate on the actual issue at hand. So I want to ask you, given all that happened, how do we overcome this vicious cycle of both sides constantly dishing up the other side's past policy mistakes?

Ambassador Matlock
I think there is a way to get away from that. You know, when I helped draft a speech that President Reagan gave about U.S.-Soviet relations that was given actually a year before Gorbachev came into the general secretaryship in the Soviet Union, what we did instead of... We set forth what we called a four-part agenda of things that we wanted to do with the Soviet Union. One of these was to reduce arms. And another was to reduce our confrontation, military confrontation, in third areas where we were backing different factions in local wars. Third, and one of the most important, was to improve human rights. And then the fourth was to try to break down the iron curtain and have more, actually, communication between our countries.

Now, how do you phrase that? Do you say they've got to reduce their arms? They've got to stop interfering in foreign countries, they must respect more human rights? And by the way, they need to open up their country? That's not the way we put it. What we said is we must cooperate to achieve arms reduction. We must cooperate to withdraw from involvement in other people's wars. We must cooperate to improve human rights. We must cooperate to improve our bilateral relationship. We didn't say, "Tear down the iron curtain." We said, "Let's develop a better working relationship."

In other words – and I think the word cooperation was used something like 30 times in that speech. When Secretary of State Shultz met the first time with Eduard Shevardnadze, just after Gorbachev had named him foreign minister, he [Shultz] always started the meeting with a list of human rights cases in the Soviet Union. And he handed Shevardnadze that list, and Shevardnadze said, "Okay, I'll take this, but tell me, can we talk about the status of women and Blacks in the United States?" And Shultz said, "Yes, of course." He said, "I think we're making progress, but we've got a way to go, and we can use all the help we can get." That was his attitude.

So, we made these issues. It was not a matter of denying we have a problem or saying that these were all equivalent. And it was only two years later when the two of them met in New York, and Shultz always began his presentation with a request for human rights. He gave Shevardnadze the list of refuseniks, political prisoners and others. Shevardnadze took that. He looked up at Shultz. They were on a first name basis by then he said, "George, I'll take this back to Moscow. And if what you say I can confirm, I'll do my best to correct it." He paused. And then he said, "But I want you to know one thing. I'm not doing this because you asked me to; I'm doing this because it's what my country needs to do." Shultz stood up, other side of the table, put out his hands. And as they shook hands, Shultz said, "Eduard, let me assure you, I will never ask you to do something that I do not think is in your country's interest."

I had trouble keeping the tears back. I was at the table watching that. The Cold War was over for those two. So, you know, it depends on how you frame it. And today, we say, well, Russia has invaded Ukraine. Well, yes, they have supported the separatists in the Donbass. But when the Russians say, "Well, who are you to sanction us for that, when you invaded Iraq? Iraq had not attacked you. You had not approved it in the UN. You used false information. You are accusing us of belligerence?" Quite frankly, I think they have a point. And I think this is not the, you know, 'whataboutism'. But I think obviously the way to deal with it is to recognize that we're not perfect either. And as a matter of fact, if you be perfectly fair, we have been more egregiously belligerent than Russia has over the past 20 years.

And one can talk about some of the things individually, but it seems to me that our official line in that of many, much of our media has been so one-sided that we're simply unable to see that there is another side, and things are not quite, in fact, not nearly as simplistic as some of our charges are made.

Hanna Notte

Thank you so much for that, Ambassador Matlock. This has been such a rich and diverse conversation. I'm sure future generations of diplomats and scholars will benefit from it. I do want to turn to my last question for you today, if I may. Now, given all that we have discussed today, given all that you have experienced throughout your long career, what do you think it takes to set the U.S.-Russia relationship on a fundamentally different trajectory? To return to the role of individuals, do you think this can only happen when the stars align again, and we happen to have two individuals, two visionary leaders, another Reagan-Gorbachev kind of

combination in the White House and in the Kremlin? Or is it indeed necessary that we relearn our history, that we converge on an interpretation – the West and the Russian side – on an interpretation of what went right and wrong in the 1990s in order for us to move forward?

And I want to come here to one quite amazing insight that you share in one of your books. And it really sort of stuck with me. You write in *Autopsy of an Empire* that "faithful convulsions in history have always produced a variety of interpretations." And then you cite World War I, the fall of the Roman Empire, the end of the Cold War. So, do we really need to agree on the history of the relationship in order to chart a better path forward?

Ambassador Matlock
I don't think we need to come to complete agreement to have a much, I would say, more productive relationship, a relationship that is much more in accord with the true national interests of our peoples. And I don't think we need different leadership to do it. We just need different policies. First of all, we need to understand that the most important threats we face today, we both threat [face] together. The pandemic, global warming, the breakdown of states and the whole flow of refugees that comes from wars, but also from global warming and climate change. These are big issues. These are issues alone, and then there is the matter of control of nuclear weapons, which is truly an existential issue for us both. This is so much more important than the sort of things we are now quarreling over, that we really need leaders that will recognize that.

And let's put things in perspective, and let's stop trying to run other people's business. Yes, human rights are important, but we may have different views of them. And none of us are perfect. None of us have a system that necessarily is quite right for other people. We have to step back and understand that. So I would say, if we had leaders that concentrated on the main things and kept the inevitable competitions peaceful, that I think we could, with our current leadership, do a much better job. I think it has been really a shame that with the pandemic, we haven't had more solidarity. Obviously, we're not going to get that under control until it's under control everywhere. It's not only important to vaccinate our own people; we need to get other people vaccinated.

And therefore, I mean, I think that, for example, the government-financed research for vaccines should result in a sort of open technology so that you license without large charges, production anywhere, and so on. I think there are a lot of things we could have been doing differently. And so that, I think it is going to take a willingness to concentrate on the big issues which should unite us, because it affects us all, rather than these issues that divide us, most of which are not nearly as important as the bigger ones.

Hanna Notte
Thank you for that. And thank you again, Ambassador Jack Matlock, for being with us today and sharing all your insights and expertise.

Ambassador Matlock
Thank you for your very insightful questions.