



**IN MEMORIAM:  
BRENT SCOWCROFT**

BY JAMES A. KELLY AND  
RALPH COSSA

*James A. Kelly ([kellypacf@aol.com](mailto:kellypacf@aol.com)) is Chairman of the Board of Directors at Pacific Forum International and the former US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.*

*Ralph Cossa ([ralph@pacforum.org](mailto:ralph@pacforum.org)) is President Emeritus and WSD-Handa Chair in Peace Studies at Pacific Forum International.*



*2001 Pacific Forum Board of Governors Chairman Brent Scowcroft (left to right) welcomes new President Ralph Cossa along with former presidents Joe Vasey, Amos Jordan, and outgoing James Kelly.*

The Pacific Forum has lost a treasured mentor and friend. The passing at 95 of retired Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, USAF on August 6 is another loss to our country in a challenging year. Brent Scowcroft is the only person to have served two US presidents—Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush—as National Security Advisor. At a more personal level, Brent Scowcroft was chairman of the Pacific Forum for more than a decade, from 1993 to 2006.

General Scowcroft is renowned for managing the end of the Cold War and, amid some controversy,

reopening US relations with China's leaders after the Tiananmen Uprising. His work on nuclear weapons policy—to ensure that they never again be used—was also vital. Brent is also broadly seen as a modest man. But for us at Honolulu's Pacific Forum, we will remember and cherish his wisdom, good counsel, and friendship. As chair of Pacific Forum's Board of Governors, he replaced another remarkable diplomat, Ambassador Philip Habib.

On his many visits to Hawaii, Brent did what he did so well—mentored young and old scholar-practitioners in “enlightened realism.” He spoke to the community and listened and talked with younger scholars. He was deeply interested in the Asia-Pacific, and not just China. He valued America's alliances—with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Philippines, and Thailand—and knew that Hawaii was a place where these vital relationships were nurtured.

As a person, Brent exemplified his roots in the Utah produce business by always letting others take the credit. Brent thrived as the antithesis of so many in Washington, D.C. He did not seek power, fame, or fortune, but lived a life of service to his country. He was, and remains, a role model to anyone aspiring to public service.

The book that Brent wrote with his boss, President George H.W. Bush, *A World Transformed* shows that a great leader not only knows *what* to do, but, as the key advisor, has to figure out *how* to do it. With Gorbachev and the end of the Soviet Union and, with it, the Cold War, Scowcroft and Bush showed the qualities truly needed—caution and moderation. They knew that a boastful victory march would not work—indeed, might have brought it all down.

The book also addresses Desert Storm, the 1991 rollback of Saddam Hussein's Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. President Bush and Scowcroft saw limits and their three-page discussion of why the US should *not* have marched into Baghdad after pushing the Iraqis out of Kuwait in 1991 still looks right. They understood, and factored in, the second and third order consequences when contemplating the right actions to take. And, in August 2002, General Scowcroft published an Op-Ed recommending against a new Iraq

invasion to President George W. Bush. Many of us regret that that advice was not taken.

Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Brent continued to work for the country on issues such as Turkey and China, as always, with a low profile.

We at Pacific Forum will miss General Scowcroft—he was always available to us, even in later years. His example lives on, and inspires the many young Fellows and future leaders—our next generation—who will hopefully follow in his footsteps.

*PacNet commentaries and responses represent the views of the respective authors. Alternative viewpoints are always welcomed and encouraged. Click [here](#) to request a PacNet subscription.*