

The Historian-King

Political Leaders, Historical Consciousness and Wise Government

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Wisdom too often never comes, and so one ought not to reject it merely because it comes late.

—Justice Felix Frankfurter,
Henslee v. Union Planters Bank (1948).

Once upon a time, Plato distinguished four cardinal virtues: wisdom, justice, courage and moderation.¹ He believed that wisdom could play an important role in politics, where it is scarce and sought after. In *The Republic*, he expounded his idea of what a wise ruler ought to be: a philosopher-king. In his words:

Unless ... either philosophers become kings ... or those whom we now call our kings and rulers take the pursuit of philosophy seriously ... and there is a conjunction of these two things, political power and philosophic intelligence ..., there can be no cessation of troubles ... for our states, nor ... for the human race either.²

Plato's proposal has been fiercely debated over the centuries, sometimes by studying real-life examples of philosopher-kings such as Marcus Aurelius, Ashoka or Frederick the Great. In 1795, Immanuel Kant expressed reservations about Plato's ideal:

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It is not to be expected that kings will philosophize or that philosophers will become kings; nor is it to be desired, since the possession of power inevitably corrupts the free judgment of reason.³

Kant thought that power stood in the way of wisdom. In 1945 Karl Popper went a step further. In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, he convincingly argued that Plato, when writing about the philosopher-king, had a completely different understanding in mind than we have. According to Popper, Plato's philosopher-kings were supposed to love the truth and yet they were allowed to lie and censor; they strived for justice only if it served state interests, their wisdom boiled down to secret or rigid knowledge and not to humanism, and their politics were intrinsically conservative and discriminatory. On top of this, Plato had only one candidate in mind for the job: himself.⁴ The idea of the philosopher-king received a fatal blow.

Meanwhile, writing in 1820, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel took a different path. He maintained that wisdom spread its wings only with the fall of dusk: 'The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering.'⁵ He meant that the wisdom of philosophy is not a matter of foresight – as implied in Plato's proposal and assumed by many today – but of hindsight. This was a new perspective: is wisdom an ability to look into the future or an ability to look into the past and then learn its lessons for the future? How can wisdom be advanced, by the seer or the storyteller? If the latter, in addition to philosophers other candidates for wisdom emerge. One could think of wise judges (King Solomon) or wise legislators (Hammurabi, Lycurgus, Solon).

Cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt gave his personal twist to this new perspective. While firmly rejecting Hegel's philosophy of history because of its 'false premises', he saw a role for history. In 1868, he wrote:

With this, the phrase 'history is the teacher of life' gets a deeper and at the same time humbler meaning. Through experience we hope to become not so much smart (for the next time) as wise (forever).⁶

He argued that wisdom increased with experience and historical consciousness. And this is precisely what I want to investigate here. The idea was not new and, of course, Burckhardt was acutely aware of this because he referred to Cicero's saying, '[H]istory, the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the teacher of life, the herald of antiquity.'⁷ Before Cicero, Aeschylus believed that memory was the mother of all wisdom, and Thucydides argued that history was 'philosophy teaching by examples'.⁸ After Cicero, Friedrich Schlegel orated that the historian was a 'prophet looking backward',⁹ and Søren Kierkegaard wrote in 1843: 'It is quite true what philosophy says: that life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other principle: that it must be lived forwards.'¹⁰

Could historical consciousness be the mother of wisdom? This is the question addressed here. Historical consciousness has two dimensions: a sustained sensitivity to the past as expressed in memory and knowledge¹¹ and, furthermore, an ability to recognize the epochal quality of a current event and to see it, as it were, with the eyes of future generations.¹² Is Burckhardt's version of the wise ruler – which we may perhaps call the 'historian-king' – plausible? In particular, are political leaders known for their distinct historical consciousness wiser than others? And, conversely, are rulers famous for their wisdom notable for their historical consciousness? I proceed in two steps: first, I identify the political leaders who display a distinct historical consciousness and within this group try to mark those with a reputation for wisdom. Then I look at the career of these wise leaders in the hope of extracting some of their secrets.

Historically Informed Political Leaders

If I talk about '(political) leaders' or rulers, I exclusively mean heads of state and government. Leaders are called 'leaders with a distinct historical consciousness' or 'historically informed leaders' or 'historically oriented leaders' if they meet one or more of the following criteria before, during or after their political career:

- They received a formal history education.
- They wrote a historical work.
- They gave important speeches with substantial historical content.
- They displayed a sustained interest in history in other demonstrable ways.

Applying these criteria, I compiled a list of 188 leaders in 86 countries for the period 1900–2018, reproduced as Appendix 1. Each of these leaders clearly developed a sustained form of historical consciousness, often in a compelling fashion.¹³ Winston Churchill, for example, was a gifted writer and historian before, during and after his career as British prime minister. In 1953, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his six-volume history of the Second World War.¹⁴ Or take Eric Williams, author of the seminal *Capitalism and Slavery*, who published a *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* on 31 August 1962, the day that he led his country to independence as its prime minister. The book was the first national history of his country and a gift to his people.¹⁵ Sometimes a quip is enough to make people reflect on historical perspectives. British Prime Minister and historian Gordon Brown, for example, once remarked: 'In establishing the rule of law, the first five centuries are always the hardest.'¹⁶

Although the list of leaders was the result of a systematic search during two decades,¹⁷ undoubtedly many leaders are still lacking, especially for the first decades of the twentieth century. In addition, some cases on the list are probably false positives while other cases that were investigated but do not figure on the list would appear to be false negatives on closer scrutiny. I am convinced that the list can be contested in more than one case. Hence, this survey should start with a warning: as its analysis is comparative and its grasp wide, I did not study in depth any of the leaders discussed below, although, evidently, I documented each of my assertions. I lean on authorities who studied the lives of these leaders in greater detail. I believe, nevertheless, that these circumstances do not affect the following impressions that emerge almost spontaneously after a glance at the list.

First of all, the expression ‘leaders with a distinct historical consciousness’ has to be qualified in several ways. The possession of a history degree, for example, was no guarantee that political leaders subsequently developed an elaborate view of history or even that history played a role of some significance in their world view, ideology or policy. Julius Nyerere is an example: a historian by training, he did not refer to the past very often, except to talk about a romanticized traditional Africa. In addition, several professional historians who became presidents or prime ministers were mediocre leaders by most standards. Think of Aleksandr Lukashenko in Belarus or Laurent Gbagbo in Ivory Coast, both educated as historians. Known as ‘Europe’s Last Dictator’, Lukashenko in 2013 received the so-called Ig Nobel Peace Prize, a prize awarded since 1991 to ‘honor achievements that first make people laugh, and then make them think’. Lukashenko received it for making it illegal to applaud in public.¹⁸ Until early 2019, Gbagbo was on trial before the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity committed during the 2010–2011 post-election crisis. When interviewed by a British journalist, he lamented: ‘It’s difficult for us to make history ... We have to carry out our own French Revolution with Amnesty International peering over our shoulder.’¹⁹

History and politics have a tense relationship, as the former demands patient research and past-oriented reflection while the latter requires future-oriented actions and decisions. If political leaders continuously take into account the wider scope of current and past events, it may become an ingrained personality trait that implicitly influences state stewardship. Inevitably, however, this also slows down the pace of political decisions, and not everybody is happy with such delays. Looking at the world around him, the Italian philosopher and historian Benedetto Croce, in 1938, contrasted historians and politicians, arguing that they belonged to different spheres of life.²⁰

Because both the development of a distinct historical consciousness and the occupation of political office take so much time, leaders who developed a historical consciousness *before* embarking on a political career had a clear advantage from our perspective. Others – certainly a Nehru, probably a Mandela and a Havel – developed their sense of history because they spent long years in prison. Still others cultivated a historical consciousness when fate brought them exile or temporary dismissal. Bertram Wolfe touched this nerve when he contrasted Stalin – who edited a history book while in office, the *History of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course* in 1938 – with other leaders:

[I]n contradistinction to a Napoleon ... or even a Churchill, who wait to turn their energies into the writing of history until defeat has deprived them of the opportunity of making it, Stalin engaged in the writing of history as one of the means by which he climbed to power.²¹

The list of 188 leaders is also illustrative because it represents only a fraction of the total. In his book about heads of states and governments, Harris Lentz counted over 2,300 leaders between 1945 and 1992 alone. The number of leaders without proven interest in history is far higher, which surely indicates that a distinct historical consciousness is not a necessary condition for political leadership. It should come as no surprise, then, that many leaders are unencumbered by the burdens of historical consciousness. When President Lyndon Johnson heard from an assistant that the Pentagon was working on a top-secret history of American involvement in Vietnam between 1945 and 1968 (the notorious *Pentagon Papers*), he reacted surprised: ‘What the hell are they writing history for? I thought they’re supposed to be out winning the war.’²² And Israeli President Shimon Peres, talking to historian Benny Morris, confessed:

But history [meaning the writing of history] in my eyes is not that important. I have reached the conclusion that a leader who worries about how he will go down in history will not be a great leader. He must give up his place in history in order to make history ... That’s the difference between us. You write history – I have to make history.²³

As far as I see, most leaders with a weak interest in history tolerated the appeal to history that their collaborators made. For maximum effect, official ideology always needs historical context and historical legitimacy. Rarely does one see leaders without any interest in history at all. Undoubtedly, some leaders who are not on the list had an aversion to history. Others may have regarded their lack of a distinct historical consciousness as a defect, especially because political office – despite its hectic agenda – induces historical reflection in two exceptional senses: sooner or later leaders are compelled to ask themselves how their own performance compares to what their

predecessors did *and* how they will be remembered. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos mused:

I often wonder what I will be remembered in history for. Scholar? Military hero? Builder? The new constitution? Reorganization of government? Builder of roads, schools? The green revolution? Uniter of variant and antagonistic elements of our people? He brought light to a dark country? Strong rallying point, or a weak tyrant?²⁴

We are also reminded of Churchill's saying: 'For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history myself.'²⁵ This curious combination of shortage of time, abundance of well-documented action, excitement of being at the centre of history and desire to safeguard a reputation inspires many a leader to take notes or keep a diary as a prelude to, or part of, writing their memoirs. As David Ben Gurion reportedly once remarked: 'Anyone who believes you can't change history has never tried to write his memoirs.'²⁶ Some developed a keen sense of the passage of time and invoked the 'court of history' for a final verdict about their actions.²⁷ Strictly speaking, however, leaders developing a strong historical consciousness *after* their political term are less interesting for our analysis because it is centred on the impact of historical consciousness on leadership.

Many historically oriented leaders used history frequently in the symbols and rituals that accompany the staging of political power. Most were men: the list contains a mere seven female leaders (in itself telling on account of the gender-biased recruitment of political talent). And many of these men were adherents of the theory that history was made by Great Men. This posed a problem for leaders of the communist brand, who had to profess the power of structural forces in history. Be that as it may, most historically oriented leaders invoked a canon of simple, often outdated and distorted historical knowledge to increase their legitimacy.²⁸ By and large, they confirm Kant: their historical insights served power rather than wisdom.

Given their long genealogies and vested interest in tradition, monarchs could have been expected to figure prominently on the list. In fact, only a small minority of the 188 leaders were monarchs: I counted 11. This is a surprisingly low number given the strong interest of monarchies in multigenerational continuity: apparently, the throne – or the prospect of the throne – does not automatically invite historical reflection. But let us look beyond monarchies. The number of those interested in history but not bound by the discipline of elections is far higher. This elicits another comment: there is no correlation between historical consciousness and regime type. Historical consciousness clearly did not deter political leaders from establishing or continuing dictatorships. Several of them picked powerful historical figures as their predecessors. For Mao Zedong, these were Qin Shihuangdi and

the Hongwu emperor; for Saddam Hussein, Nebuchadnezzar and Saladin; for Islam Karimov it was Tamerlane, for Juan Domingo Perón, José de San Martín. The Central African Republic's dictator Jean-Bédel Bokassa was an exception: he crowned himself in Napoleonic style in 1976.

Stalin was often compared to the Tsars, but, apparently, he did not like this. During a talk in 1931, the German writer Emil Ludwig asked him: 'Do you think a parallel can be drawn between yourself and Peter the Great? Do you consider yourself a continuer of the work of Peter the Great?' Stalin responded: 'In no way whatever. Historical analogies are always risky. There is no sense in this one.'²⁹ Nevertheless, he had huge admiration for the strong leadership of sixteenth-century Tsar Ivan the Terrible. He also 'appointed' court historians: he used historians Wilhelm Knorin, Yemelyan Yaroslavsky, Pyotr Pospelov and 'a whole collective farm of assistants' as ghostwriters for his *Short Course*, but he did the final editing himself.³⁰

The predilection for selected predecessors usually came with an intolerance for other options. Some leaders were so wary of the danger of rival historical representations that they singled out the historical profession for repression. Numerous leaders publicly attacked historians and sued, imprisoned or killed them because their views deviated from the official one and threatened the leader's legitimacy at its core.³¹ Let me give three quick Soviet examples. When the writer Maxim Gorky asked Lenin for clemency for the Grand Duke Nikolas Mikhailovich Romanov, a historian and member of the Tsarist family, he replied: 'The Revolution does not need historians.'³² The Grand Duke was shot in 1919. When historian A.G. Slutsky dared to question Lenin's credentials, Stalin retorted in 1931: 'Who, except archive rats, does not understand that a party and its leaders must be tested primarily by their deeds and not merely by their declarations?'³³ On 5 May 1956 Nikita Khrushchev had a conversation with a French delegation inviting him to establish a Franco-Russian commission of historical research into each other's past. When a French delegation member remarked that it was the historians' profession to analyse the past, Khrushchev replied: 'Historians too must be directed.'³⁴ It sounds paradoxical, but it is not: the zeal of leaders to censor history is proof a contrario for their historical consciousness.

Paradoxically, even leaders who unleashed an iconoclastic fury to destroy as much of the past as possible needed a view of history, either to present the post-iconoclastic era as the restoration of some golden past age or to contrast it with the epochs that had disappeared. When the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh in 1975, their spokesman proclaimed that 'two thousand years of history had ended.' The year zero had begun. Khmer Rouge leader and former history teacher Ieng Sary declared: 'The Khmer revolution has no precedent. What we are trying to do has never been

done before in history.³⁵ Nevertheless, Pol Pot saw himself as a vehicle of History, and the Khmer Rouge obstinately referred to the twelfth-century Khmer culture of Angkor Wat. Other iconoclastic leaders – Mao, Ceaușescu, Saddam – had an elaborate view of history. This did not prevent them from mercilessly choking their own historical consciousness when it suited them.³⁶

These preliminary observations are sobering. A leader's 'distinct historical consciousness' is not necessarily one supporting democracy or peace nor one justified by scientific standards. Yes, it is probable that the exercise of political power in itself awakens a manifest desire for historical consciousness – but that was not our question. All in all, at first sight, there is no evidence that rulers who display distinct historical consciousness are necessarily wiser than their counterparts who lack such outspoken awareness. Archaeologist Bogdan Filov became Bulgaria's prime minister during World War II and collaborated with the Nazis. After the war, he was sentenced to death and shot by the new communist government. At that occasion, *Time* wrote: 'The parade to the execution wall included ... ex-Premier Professor Bogdan Filo[v], Bulgarian expansionist, who preferred making history to teaching it ...'³⁷ The precise impact of writing history on making history remains a mystery.

Wise Historically Informed Political Leaders

What to do? Maybe we can consult a list of wise leaders, compare it with our list of historically oriented leaders and discuss the overlap. Unfortunately, no such list of wise political leaders exists.³⁸ Therefore, I will create one, starting from the following premise: the Nobel Peace Prize, if awarded to a head of state or government, is often considered to be an internationally accepted empirical indicator of wise government.³⁹ A list of leaders who won the Nobel Peace Prize could then serve as a proxy for a list of wise leaders. This hypothesis has a weak point at its core: it equates wisdom with peace. Undoubtedly, both have much in common: it is difficult to see how a warmongering leader can be wise. On the other hand, certainly not all Noble Peace Prize winners were pacifists.⁴⁰ Few will disagree with the just war doctrine that, as a last resort, it is morally justified to revolt against tyrants or start a war of self-defence against aggressors rather than peacefully and passively abiding one's time. This principle is even recognized in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In short, it will be imperative to bear the distinction between peace and wisdom in mind.

The plan to compile a list of leaders who won the Nobel Peace Prize comes with a few additional practical biases that can only be partly

remedied. First of all, until the 1970s, the Nobel Peace Prize had almost exclusively been awarded to highly educated white men from Europe and the United States.⁴¹ Until then, female and non-Western laureates were underrepresented among the prize winners but not necessarily among the peace brokers or wise leaders. We cannot change the list of laureates, but we can remedy these two biases by widening our scope to include the prize nominees. This constitutes a considerable enlargement. While since 1901 the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 99 times, to 130 laureates, the number of nominations from 1901 (the year of the first prize) to 1967, for example, was 4,425. Or, to give another idea of the wide scope: there were 331 candidates for the 2018 prize (216 individuals and 115 organizations).

The scope narrows down again, however, due to two problems, the first of which is that the official website of the Norwegian Nobel Committee (nobelprize.org) blocks information about nominees for 50 years.⁴² At the time of writing, the nomination database was only accessible for 1901–1967. For 1967–2001, the data is scarce. Those for the most recent period (from 2002) are gathered via shortlists drafted by other organizations than the Norwegian Nobel Committee and then based only on those nominations that had become public.⁴³ Another problem is that a one-time nomination is obviously a weaker indicator than repeated nominations from various origins. In order to rule out chance nominations, I only selected leaders who had accumulated at least ten nominations.⁴⁴ The list of those nominated less than ten times is very heterogeneous and at times disconcerting because occasionally even warmongers and mass murderers were nominated – and at moments when this should have been clear to all.

There is another thing we should know before we embark upon our analysis: experts tell us that the Nobel Peace Prize assignment pattern between 1901 and 2018 seems to show four trends: from 1901 to 1914, most prizes went to pioneers of the organized peace movement; in the inter-war years, they tended to go to active politicians who sought to promote peace by means of diplomacy and international agreements; after 1945 campaigns in disarmament, peace negotiation, and democracy and human rights were more often singled out; and after 2000 efforts to limit the harm done by man-made climate change and environment threats were embraced.⁴⁵ From our perspective, this would imply that the period 1918–1945, with its emphasis on active politicians, is slightly overrepresented – which may indeed be the case.

In the following table, I list all the Nobel Peace Prize laureates and nominees who were also on the list of historically informed leaders. For comparative reasons, I also present those historians who won the Nobel Peace Prize or were nominated for it at least ten times in Appendix 3.

Table 4.1 Historically informed political leaders and the Nobel Peace Prize (1901–2018).

Laureates (7)	
1906 Theodore Roosevelt – United States	(7x nominee in 1906)
1919 Woodrow Wilson – United States	(1919 prize awarded in 1920, 22x nominee in 1918–1920)
1957 Lester Pearson – Canada	(2x nominee in 1952–1957)
1990 Mikhail Gorbachev – Soviet Union	
1993 Nelson Mandela – South Africa	
2002 Jimmy Carter – United States	
2009 Barack Obama – United States	
Nominees with at least ten nominations (2)	
Tomáš Masaryk – Czechoslovakia (17x nominee in 1913–1937)	
Jawaharlal Nehru – India (13x nominee in 1950–1961)	

Notes:

1. For discussion, see text.
2. In 1919 no prize was awarded; Wilson was awarded the 1919 prize in 1920.
3. Only pre-1967 data are available for nomination frequencies, making them unknown for Gorbachev, Mandela, Carter and Obama.
4. Leaders with a distinct historical consciousness but nominated less than ten times for the Nobel Peace Prize (attention: only pre-1967 data are available for nomination frequencies, making them unknown or speculative for many nominees): Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1x), Habib Bourguiba (1x), George W. Bush (3x), Fidel Castro (1x), Hugo Chávez (3x), Jacques Chirac (2x), Winston Churchill (2x), Bill Clinton (3x), Dwight Eisenhower (9x), Václav Havel (4x), Adolf Hitler (1x), John Howard (x2), John Kennedy (1x), Helmut Kohl (4x), Pierre Mendès-France (1x), Angela Merkel (1x), Benito Mussolini (2x), Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (2x), Juan Domingo Perón (2x), Vladimir Putin (4x), Franklin Roosevelt (5x), Leopold Sédar Senghor (2x), Joseph Stalin (2x), Dominique de Villepin (1x), Kaiser Wilhelm II (3x), Xi Jinping (1x), Victor Yushchenko (1x).

Sources:

1. List of historically informed political leaders (1900–2018): Appendix 1.
2. Information about the Nobel Peace Prize laureates and nominees at <https://www.nobelprize.org>.

Historically Informed Leaders as Nobel Peace Prize Laureates

We are ready to look at the leaders themselves. Seven historically informed leaders were laureates of the Nobel Peace Prize. I realize that acting as a judge for the wisdom displayed by persons with such impressive track records has more than a few ironic overtones. In trying to make my assessment as objective as possible, I will use a method of exclusion: in evaluating

the 'wisdom levels' of the laureates, I shall look first at the indicator value of the prize (its general appreciation as an index of wisdom in the particular instance), then at other factors.

If we assess the extent to which the prize indicates wisdom, we should first of all exclude Roosevelt and Obama, but for different reasons. Known as a voracious reader, Theodore Roosevelt was the author of works about the history of the American navy. He helped flesh out the 'frontier thesis' elaborated by Frederick Jackson Turner. It is likely that his romanticized and moralistic view of history played a role in the decisions he took as a president. When he gave his keynote address before the American Historical Association in 1912, after his presidency, he told his audience that the purpose of the historian was to be a 'great moralist' and to 'thrill the souls of men with stories of strength and craft and daring'.⁴⁶ Despite the fact that a comprehensive report by Halvdan Koht, a historian who advised the Norwegian Nobel Committee, had been rather critical, Roosevelt was awarded the prize in 1906 for his encouragement of international arbitration (he was instrumental in strengthening the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague) and in particular for his mediation during the Russian-Japanese war of 1904–1905 leading to the 1905 peace treaty. The award was much disputed because Roosevelt was not exactly known as a peace apostle. Above all, he did not shun imperialism in the Caribbean. The *New York Times* called him 'the most warlike citizen of these United States'.⁴⁷ The more controversial the laureate was, the less the prize's predictive value for noble and wise statesmanship. For that reason, Roosevelt is excluded.

Barack Obama received the prize 'for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples'. He was particularly inspired by his predecessors Abraham Lincoln, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and John Kennedy. Despite his considerable attempts to draw attention to the diversity of the American people by designating national monuments to many neglected groups, he does not seem to have had a full-fledged view of history.⁴⁸ In addition, there is widespread consensus that the prize, awarded less than nine months after he took office, came too early. Everybody, including Obama himself, was surprised: the award was more an expression of the tremendous worldwide hope that his election had aroused than a decision based on past performance. For that reason, he should be excluded as well.

Different considerations lead to the exclusion of Lester Pearson and Nelson Mandela. If we only concentrate on sitting heads of state and government, we are obliged to drop them because in contrast to the other laureates they received the prize *before* their terms as head of government and state respectively. Pearson became prime minister six years after winning the prize; Mandela president less than a year later. That would be a silly

reason to exclude them, however, as this early recognition qualifies them even more as candidates for wisdom. As the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pearson won support for sending a United Nations Emergency Force to the Middle East in 1956 to separate the warring parties in the Suez Crisis. Later, he embarked on a widely lauded career as prime minister. Mandela and his co-laureate F.W. de Klerk had worked 'for the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime, and for laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa'. There are no immediate indications that Pearson's training as a historian and Mandela's strong interest in history played an important role in their political views.⁴⁹ Especially for Mandela this needs a little elaboration. His younger years were coloured with an interest in history. After the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, he lost confidence in peaceful solutions to apartheid and co-founded the paramilitary wing of the African National Congress, Umkhonto we Sizwe. Sentenced on sabotage charges in 1964, he spent more than a quarter of a century in prison, mostly on Robben Island.⁵⁰ To his formidable credit, the country embarked on a largely peaceful reckoning with the apartheid past before and during his presidency, mainly through the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which operated from 1995 to 1998. Inspired by its Latin American predecessors, this truth commission set the standard for many to follow. When Mandela received its report in 1998, he referred to apartheid – 'this terrible period of our history' – as a system that 'committed a crime against humanity', but his speech mostly revolved around the non-recurrence theme ('never again') while dwelling on the past in succinct terms only.⁵¹ Although both Pearson and Mandela can be called leaders with much political wisdom and imbued with a distinct historical consciousness at the same time, it is not clear whether there is a causal connection between both. Therefore, I exclude them.

American President Jimmy Carter is a difficult case. He was awarded the prize in 2002 'for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development'. He is credited with having substantially contributed to the breakthrough of the idea of human rights during his presidency.⁵² And among his many peace efforts, the 1978 Camp David agreement stands out. Carter relates the following about the negotiations that led to it:

At the Camp David discussions with Begin and Sadat I didn't have to turn around to Vance [his Secretary of State] ... and say, 'Would you explain to me the history of this particular issue' ... because I knew it.⁵³

In addition, he became the author of a historical novel in 2004, *The Hornet's Nest*, a story set in the South during the American Revolution. The Nobel

Prize expressed the fact that many of Carter's feats received an aura of wisdom in hindsight: it was awarded twenty-two years after his presidential term. He was called 'the best ex-president we ever had.' That sounds unfair: if recognition came too early for Obama, it perhaps came too late for Carter. After much hesitation, I still exclude Carter, not because of this belated recognition but because the connection between his impressive achievements during and after his presidency and his historical views seems not strong enough.

Mikhail Gorbachev received the Nobel Peace Prize for 'his leading role in the peace process'. Like Khrushchev before him, he showed an intense interest in history only when forced to look it in the eye. Khrushchev had delivered a secret speech in 1956; it was a lengthy attack on Stalin and the crimes of the past.⁵⁴ In the same vain, Gorbachev had to confront the past so as to make his plea for urgent change inescapable in his book, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (1987). In addition, he gave a further speech about Soviet history and Stalin's crimes in the same year. In 1990, he signed a decree exonerating all the victims of Stalin's repressions. Even after his fall, he defied plans of the Constitutional Court to bring the Communist Party to trial and 'put our history in the dock'. When an interviewer in 2009 asked him how he saw his place in history, he growled: 'Don't consign me to history.'⁵⁵ While the wisdom of his international performance is undisputed (and, therefore, the prize deserved), judgments about the domestic consequences of his policies for the Soviet successor states are complex and they diverge. Gorbachev's pronounced historical consciousness is undeniable, but it was prompted by the Soviet Union's problematic circumstances in the first place. His historical consciousness was reactive rather than proactive – and thus a weaker index of wisdom. He unintentionally encouraged the unprecedented and unanticipated explosion of popular interest in the past that was the consequence of his glasnost and perestroika policies, but he reasoned within the bounds of a Leninist framework, cautiously and daringly at the same time.⁵⁶ In normal circumstances, the jury would be out for Gorbachev, but the circumstances in the Soviet Union's last years (1985–1991) were exceptional. On balance, I count him in.

The only laureate left is Wilson. Like Roosevelt, Wilson was an active professional historian before his political career began; like Roosevelt he received the prize during his presidency; and like Roosevelt, he led the American Historical Association after his presidency (he passed away before the completion of his term).⁵⁷ A biographer of George Washington (1897) and the author of a five-volume *History of the American People* (1902), Wilson revealed himself as a literary rather than scientific historian. Fully convinced of the power of individuals in history and of the duty of historians to morally judge them, he embraced the English historian Edward A.

Freeman's maxim, 'History is past politics and politics present history.'⁵⁸ He specialized in political and constitutional history to discover both the lessons of history for the present and the mission of the United States in the future. While president of his country, he had to tackle the challenges imposed by the Great War. In January 1918, he unfolded his postwar settlement, the famous *Fourteen Points*. This declaration eventually led to the incorporation of a covenant to establish the League of Nations into the 1919 peace Treaty of Versailles. The United States Senate, however, never approved American membership of the League. For this reason there was some disagreement in the Norwegian Nobel Committee, until a majority decided to award him the prize. All in all, the influence of Wilson the history professor on Wilson the statesman and subsequently on Wilson the peacemaker is not immediately obvious.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, he clearly belongs on my shortlist.

Historically Informed Leaders as Nobel Peace Prize Nominees

Two historically oriented leaders were nominated for the prize ten times or more: Masaryk (17 nominations in 24 years) and Nehru (13 nominations in 11 years). A philosopher by training and historically oriented by inclination, Masaryk had exposed the historical falsification for chauvinistic purposes behind the alleged 'rediscovery' of two medieval Bohemian manuscripts in 1886. He was interested in the relationship between historical understanding and morally inspired progress, and he developed a philosophy of history in his book *The Social Question* (1898). He rejected conflict-based historical views such as Marxism and radical variants of Darwinist evolutionism, and adopted an idealist view of history, always looking for the power of ideas and of individuals pursuing them.

Masaryk worked to improve the relations between Czechs and Germans both within and outside Bohemia. He defended the Slav peoples against Austrian-Hungarian imperialism and successfully mediated between Austria-Hungary and Serbia in 1912. The founding father of Czechoslovakia after the fall of the Habsburg Empire in 1918, Masaryk left a lasting impression as its first president. He thought that national self-determination was a universal principle compatible with humanitarian and democratic incentives. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize because he promoted humanism, ethics and pacifism. Known as 'the Great Old Man of Europe,' he died a year before the 1938 Munich Agreement and the Nazi occupation of his country. After 1948, the communists erased Masaryk from public tributes, to be rehabilitated only, hesitantly and unofficially, 50 years after his death, in 1987, when the system was almost on the verge of collapse.⁶⁰

A philosopher by profession and a statesman by career, he came nominally closest to the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king.⁶¹ As in Wilson's case, however, it remains complicated to pinpoint the precise impact of historical views on his leadership. On balance, I select him.

Meanwhile, in British India, Jawaharlal Nehru spent nine years in prison because of his pro-independence activities. In various jails, he read and wrote as a self-educated historian about Indian and world history. Between 1930 and 1933, he sent almost 200 letters on world history to his daughter, Indira Gandhi, from different prisons. Their publication in 1934 as *Glimpses of World History* – a book of 1,000 dense pages – made Nehru one of the first non-western world historians of modern times. As late as 1989, a re-edition of *Glimpses* was published to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Nehru's birth. Another of his historical works, *The Discovery of India* (1946), was written in Ahmadnagar Fort Prison Camp between April and September 1944 during a prison term that totalled almost three years.⁶² Praised for his fair judgment and lack of resentment and nationalist bigotry, Nehru thought that India could only be properly understood if situated amid other civilizations. His works offer a fascinating insight into his titanic efforts to understand his own times and India's place in them. Mesmerized by the broad sweep of events, though, the past interested him only insofar as it could throw light on the present.

Nehru was influenced by three philosophical currents: Marxism, Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts on non-violence and non-cooperation in the struggle for freedom, and above all by a liberal and secular humanism. His sophisticated judgment regarding events in the history of India and the world were testimony to his deeply engrained humanism. His nominators praised him for his role in the independence of India, his confidence in parliamentary democracy, his neutral foreign policy and his affinity with Gandhi.⁶³ Few other statesmen delved so deeply and so critically into the past of their country. Historian and diplomat K.M. Panikkar sums up Nehru's approach:

Nehru's interest in history has affected his position as a statesman. Anyone who studies his work as the Prime Minister of India can easily see that ... he is dominated by a sense of history. The sense of urgency in dealing with India's ... problems arises from his knowledge of India's past failures ... His approach to international affairs is equally dominated by his sense of historical forces working in our time ... Thus, transcending the politician's approach to these problems as something to be dealt with ad hoc, he views them as parts of a unified whole ... In fact, even on contemporary events he brings to bear a historian's mind.⁶⁴

More than anybody else, Nehru tried to construct a historical synthesis. His interest in history transcended its potentially political use. He definitely belongs on my shortlist.

Discussion

Not all historically informed leaders are wise. Not all wise leaders are historically informed. Not all historically informed leaders who are wise are historically informed *because* they are wise. Not all wise leaders who are historically informed are wise *because* they are historically informed. Leaders who are wise *because* they are historically informed are rare. Only four statesmen turned out to be entitled to this powerful combination: Wilson, Masaryk, Nehru and Gorbachev. I will not rank these leaders in order of wisdom: judging wisdom is already precarious, but ranking leaders on a wisdom index is outright frivolous and a demonstration of lack of wisdom itself. If these four men were philosopher-kings – Masaryk literally, Wilson and Nehru in the metaphorical sense, Gorbachev moulded by pressures he mobilized himself – this is good news: the specimen is capable of surviving and thriving everywhere, as the four come from very different corners of the globe. They worked in exceptional circumstances: Wilson sought a new world order after the Great War; Masaryk and Nehru built newly independent states while resisting old frameworks (supranational and colonial respectively); Gorbachev presided involuntarily over the demise of a multinational empire. They had to find new solutions and for inspiration turned to the past as example or counter-example.

Gorbachev is a special case because, as the months in 1987 crept by, his view of history, limited and distorted as it was, suddenly looked progressive when compared with both his predecessors and many contemporaries. The other three tried to develop a consistent and comprehensive view of history. Ostensibly better than other leaders, they knew to place current and past events in a larger framework. They had at least two things in common: all three were humanists (Wilson's and Masaryk's brand was inspired by Christianity, Nehru's was secular-minded) and all three were literary historians who loved the broad sweep of events and the larger context. If humanism is the central common feature of these three, then their wisdom lies in the recognition that humanity should not repeat all the follies of the past and in the sense of urgency they derived from it. Somehow, this is a disappointing conclusion, as it is more or less what one could have expected without research. Context-sensitive? Yes! A broad grasp of events? Certainly! Humanism? Of course! To make things worse, solid evidence for a beneficial direct influence of these four leaders' distinct historical consciousness upon their decisions is missing or very difficult to pinpoint.

Moral Judgment and Age

Two pairs of factors impede firm conclusions. The first pair, the fluctuating character of moral judgments and the problematic association of wisdom

and age, varies with the leaders under consideration. Our moral judgment – and therefore our judgment about a person’s wisdom, which is part of it – can shift quickly when we suddenly learn how leaders acted or failed to act at certain moments in their political careers. Aung San Suu Kyi was adored for two decades, earning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, but she attracted criticism later for lacking the moral courage to speak out against the violations to which the Rohingya were subjected in Myanmar. Churchill, twice a Noble Peace Prize nominee, was accused in 2018 of a series of purported war crimes in at least seven countries.⁶⁵ Likewise, Wilson was criticized in 2015 – 91 years after his death – because as the president of Princeton University in 1902–1910 he was a supporter of racial segregation. Many have pointed to the complex legacies that historical personalities leave behind. Anne-Marie Slaughter, a former Princeton professor and State Department official, tweeted about Wilson: ‘... *All* our idols have feet of clay. All our heroes have dark sides; but they can also do [great] things.’⁶⁶

The age factor is even more complicated. The natural life cycle complicates the argument: typically, historical consciousness is acquired in younger years, the need for it increases during the active political career while simultaneously its cognitive growth probably stalls due to time constraints, while ‘noble rule’ is a characteristic of elder statesmen (or elder stateswomen for that matter). It is a fact that several political leaders ended up on the list of historically informed leaders partly or entirely for activities they undertook when their active political career was over; in other words, when their distinct historical consciousness could not impact on the quality of their decisions anymore (with Carter being the exception that proves the rule). Not only does the development of a distinct historical consciousness take much time, the ability to apply it at the right moment, mainly by seeing current events in a historical context, has to be practised as well. This art of applying concentrated experience and mature historical knowledge humanely at the right moment is itself a bit mysterious. I speculate that Plato’s three other cardinal virtues – courage, moderation and justice – contribute in unison to it: to be wise requires courage and moderation in its activation, and justice in its application.

Psychologists investigating wisdom leave open the impact of age: on the one hand, age may transform wisdom into something profound; on the other, wisdom may crumble under its weight. Gerard Brugman was pessimistic: ‘[O]ne needs to be old and wise to see that wisdom does not come with age.’⁶⁷ Awareness of one’s failing wisdom makes one wiser. Among the factors mitigating or inhibiting the impact of wisdom at a later age are an increasing rigidity and a risk of illness. The stroke that Wilson suffered in October 1919 is reported to have intensified his rigidity and may have affected, if not eliminated, the hope that the Senate would approve

American membership of the League of Nations. '[I]llness can make leaders unpredictable, limit their attention spans, shorten their time horizons, and diminish their cognitive capacities.'⁶⁸ Nehru's health began declining steadily after the Sino-Indian War of October-November 1962. Arnold Toynbee testified how China tormented him.⁶⁹ Nehru died 18 months later, in May 1964, and many attributed this to his surprise over the war. His overwhelming passion for history could have had contradictory effects: he understood the historical background of India's problems better, but at the same time, he may have been taken aback, even paralyzed by the sheer complexity of problems. And, naturally, there was always the risk that he overestimated the historical sensitivity of his allies and opponents. In his own words:

The burden of the past, the burden of both good and ill, is over-powering, and sometimes suffocating, more especially for those of us who belong to very ancient civilizations like those of India and China. As Nietzsche says: 'Not only the wisdom of centuries – also their madness breaketh out in us. Dangerous it is to be an heir.'⁷⁰

The Lucas Critique and the Fischhoff Critique

The second pair of factors that stand in the way of convincing conclusions consists of structural biases. I shall call them the Lucas critique and the Fischhoff critique. Is wisdom the product of foresight as is commonly accepted, or of hindsight as Hegel contended? The foresight theory is dubious, as it presupposes a clairvoyance that leaders all too eagerly claim to possess. Is the hindsight theory more plausible? Can we create wisdom by looking backward and distil lessons from the past? Even that can be doubted on account of a critical reasoning inspired by the theory of rational expectations developed by Robert Lucas, initially a historian by training and in 1995 the laureate of the Nobel Prize in Economics.⁷¹ It is, in fact, a negative application of that theory, and it can be summarized as follows. If we were rational and really able to learn from negative historical events (such as war), we would seek to reduce their impact and avoid them. And if we could have avoided these negative historical events long enough, they would have been largely eliminated by now. In other words, the lessons learned about negative historical events would have a self-cancelling effect, meaning that historical information would become useless for predicting the future. Because we still repeat many of these negative historical events, however, we should conclude that we are not so rational and do not learn from them. In itself, the Lucas critique is deadly but not completely sufficient to cast doubt on the capacity to learn from the past, as wise leaders are typically more clear-eyed than others.

Equally fundamental is the doubt that we can distil any useful lessons from the past at all. A persistent bias clouds our historical judgment. The psychologist Baruch Fischhoff called this the hindsight bias.⁷² He wrote that:

Searching for wisdom in historic events requires ... a belief in the existence of recurrent patterns waiting to be discovered. Searching for wisdom in the behavior of historical characters requires a ... confidence that our predecessors knew things we do not know.⁷³

Aside from the painful but not impossible fact that in certain respects we may well know less than our ancestors, as Fischhoff suggests here, the existence of the hindsight bias corrupts historical knowledge at its core: ‘Thus the very outcome knowledge which gives us the feeling that we understand what the past was all about may prevent us from learning anything about it.’⁷⁴ On top of these biases identified by Lucas and Fischhoff, the usual, distorting partialities and passions in approaching the past should be added. The conclusion is ineluctable: Popper buried the philosopher-king; Lucas and Fischhoff buried the historian-king.

Afterword

When all is said and done, after leaders bury their axes, smoke their peace pipes and cultivate their gardens, do they gratefully recall and apply the lessons of their ancestors? It would surprise me if wise leaders – with the dust of the past on their shoes while boldly looking into the future – really exist and, if they do, if their magic has a secret recipe. Kant wrote that one could not possess wisdom, only feel love for it. Wisdom informed by history is a North Star.

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Appendix 1: List of Historically Informed Political Leaders (1900–2018)

Note: Leaders are called ‘historically informed political leaders’ if they meet one or more of the following criteria before, during or after their political career:

- They received a formal history education.
- They wrote a historical work.
- They gave important speeches with substantial historical content.
- They displayed a sustained interest in history in other demonstrable ways.

Disclaimer: The author does not necessarily share the views, historical or otherwise, or approve the actions of the persons on this list.

Source: Compiled by Antoon De Baets.

Albania: Enver Hoxha, Aleksander Meksi	China: Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Hu Yaobang, Xi Jinping
Argentina: Bartolomé Mitre Martínez, Juan Domingo Perón	Colombia: Eduardo Santos
Armenia: Levon Ter-Petrosian	Costa Rica: Cleto González Víquez, Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, Carlos Alvarado Quesada
Australia: Alfred Deakin, Paul Hasluck, Gough Whitlam, Paul Keating, John Howard, Kevin Rudd	Croatia: Franjo Tudjman
Azerbaijan: Abulfaz Elchibey, Haydar Aliyev, Ilham Aliyev	Cuba: Alfredo Zayas y Alfonso, Fidel Castro Ruz
Belarus: Aleksandr Lukashenko	Cyprus: Demetris Christofias
Bolivia: Carlos Mesa Gisbert	Czechoslovakia: Tomáš Masaryk, Gustav Husák
Brazil: Jânio Quadros, Dilma Rousseff	Czech Republic: Václav Havel, Petr Pithart
Bulgaria: Ivan Geshov, Bogdan Filov, Todor Zhivkov, Nikolai Todorov, Zhelyu Zhelev, Georgi Parvanov, Sergey Stanishev	Denmark: Niels Neergaard, Margrethe II
Burma: U Nu	Dominican Republic: Juan Bosch
Cambodia: Norodom Sihanouk, Pol Pot	Egypt: Gamal Abdel Nasser
Canada: Lester Pearson, Joe Clark, Justin Trudeau	Estonia: Lennart Meri, Mart Laar
Chile: Luis Barros Borgoño	Ethiopia: Haile Selassie
	France: Jean Jaurès, Louis Barthou, Pierre Mendès-France, Charles de Gaulle, Maurice Couve de Murville, François Mitterrand, Edouard Balladur, Jacques

- Chirac, Dominique de Villepin,
Emmanuel Macron
- Germany: Wilhelm II, Adolf Hitler,
Konrad Adenauer, Theodor
Heuss, Walter Ulbricht, Willy
Brandt, Helmut Kohl, Richard
von Weizsäcker, Angela Merkel,
Joachim Gauck
- Greece: Eleftherios Venizelos,
Spyridon Lambros, Themistocles
Sophoulis, Panayotis
Kanellopoulos, Spyridon
Markezinis, Kostas Karamanlis
- Grenada: George Brizan
- Guatemala: Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán
- Guyana: Cheddie Jagan
- Haiti: Jean-François Duvalier, Leslie
Manigat
- Hungary: József Antall, Viktor
Orbán
- Iceland: Kristján Eldjárn, Guðni
Johannesson
- India: Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra
Prasad, Indira Gandhi
- Indonesia: Sukarno
- Iran: Mohammed Reza Pahlavi,
Haji Ali Razmara, Ruhollah
Khomeini
- Iraq: Saddam Hussein
- Ireland: Douglas Hyde
- Israel: David Ben Gurion, Itzhak
Ben-Zvi, Ariel Sharon
- Italy: Benito Mussolini, Luigi
Einaudi, Amintore Fanfani,
Giovanni Spadolini
- Ivory Coast: Laurent Gbagbo
- Jamaica: Michael Manley
- Japan: Yoshihito, Yasuhiro
Nakasone, Shinzō Abe
- Kenya: Jomo Kenyatta, Mwai
Kibaki
- Korea, North: Kim Il-Sung, Kim
Jong-il
- Kosovo: Hashim Thaçi
- Laos: Katay Don Sasorith
- Libya: Muammar al-Qaddafi
- Lithuania: Vytautas Landsbergis
- Malawi: Hastings Kamuzu Banda
- Maldives: Kenereege Mohamed
Nasheed
- Mali: Alpha Konaré
- Malta: Ugo Mifsud Bonnici
- Mexico: José López Portillo
- Netherlands: Jan Peter Balkenende,
Willem-Alexander van Oranje,
Mark Rutte
- New Zealand: Bernard Fergusson
- Pakistan: Mohammad Ali Jinnah,
Benazir Bhutto
- Palestinian Authority: Mahmoud
Abbas
- Panama: Ricardo Joaquín Alfaro
Jované
- Paraguay: Cecilio Baez González,
Juan Natalicio González Paredes
- Philippines: Ferdinand Marcos
- Poland: Henryk Jabłoński,
Mieczysław Rakowski, Lech
Kaczyński, Donald Tusk
- Portugal: António Salazar, Marcelo
Caetano, Mário Soares
- Romania: Nicolae Iorga, Nicolae
Ceașescu
- Russia: Vladimir Putin
- Senegal: Leopold Sédar Senghor
- Serbia: Stojan Novaković
- South Africa: Nelson Mandela
- Spain: Niceto Alcalá-Zamora y
Torres
- Sweden: Nils Edén, Gustav VI
Adolf
- Tajikistan: Emomali Rahmonov
- Tanzania: Julius Nyerere

Trinidad and Tobago: Eric Williams	Dwight Eisenhower, John
Tunisia: Habib Bourguiba	Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, Bill
Turkey: Mustafa Kemal Pasha,	Clinton, George W. Bush,
Şemsettin Günaltay, Bülent	Barack Obama
Ecevit, Turgut Özal, Recep	Uruguay: Eduardo Víctor Haedo
Tayyip Erdoğan	USSR: Vladimir Lenin, Joseph
Ukraine: Mykhailo Hrushevsky,	Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev,
Victor Yushchenko	Mikhail Gorbachev, Gennady
United Kingdom: George V,	Yanayev
Elizabeth II, Winston Churchill,	Uzbekistan: Islam Karimov
Margaret Thatcher, Gordon	Vatican: Pius XII
Brown	Venezuela: José Gil Fortoul, Hugo
United States: Theodore Roosevelt,	Chávez Frías
Woodrow Wilson, Franklin	Vietnam: Tran Trong Kim, Ho Chi
Roosevelt, Harry Truman,	Minh

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Eleftherios Venizelos: Paschalis Kitromilides, 'Venizelos' Intellectual Projects and Cultural Interests', in Idem (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 377–88.

Eric Williams: Paul Sutton, 'The Historian as Politician: Eric Williams and Walter Rodney', in Alistair Hennessy (ed.), *Intellectuals in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan Education, 1992), 98–114; Paul Sutton, 'The Scholar: A Personal Appreciation', in Ken Boodhoo (ed.), *Eric Williams: The Man and the Leader* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America), 29–48.

Woodrow Wilson: Stockton Axson, 'The Literary Historian', in Idem, 'Woodrow Wilson as Man of Letters', *The Rice Institute Pamphlet*, 22 (October 1935), 195–270; Marjorie Daniel, 'Woodrow Wilson Historian', *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 21 no. 3 (December 1934), 361–74; Marcia Synnott, 'Woodrow Wilson', in Clyde Wilson (ed.), *Dictionary of*

Literary Biography, vol. 47, *American Historians 1866–1912* (Detroit, MI: Brucoli Clark and Gale Research, 1986), 342–57.

Xi Jinping: Alison Kaufman, ‘Xi Jinping as Historian: Marxist, Chinese, Nationalist, Global’, *The Asan Forum* (15 October 2015) [<http://www.theasanforum.org/xi-jinping-as-historian-marxist-chinese-nationalist-global>].

Notes to Appendix 2

1. Some writings discuss the historical views of heads of state and government who were not particularly interested in history, for example: *Pope Francis*: Bronwen McShea, ‘Pope Francis as Historian’, *First Things* (23 March 2017) [<https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/03/pope-francis-as-historian>]. *Daniël Malan*: Albert-Jan Bosch, ‘Daniël François Malan: Het Boerenverleden als Zuidafrikaans toekomstbeeld’, *Groniek: historisch tijdschrift* 27(125) (1994), 71–79 [<https://rjh.ub.rug.nl/groniek/issue/view/2393>]. *Donald Trump*: Ryan Walters, ‘Trump as Historian’, *The Abbeville Blog* (2 May 2017) [<https://www.abbevilleinstitute.org/blog/trump-as-historian>]. Several other articles about Trump’s historical views are available, including at *History News Network* and *Politico*, and in *Time* and *The Washington Post*.

2. Some writings discuss the historical views of other influential political figures, for example: *Mahatma Gandhi*: Balkrishna Gokhale, ‘Gandhi and History’, *History and Theory*, 11(2) (1972), 214–25. *Leon Trotsky*: Peter Beilharz, ‘Trotsky as a Historian’, *History Workshop* 20 (1985), 36–55; Isaac Deutscher, ‘Leon Trotsky as a Historian of Revolution’, in Alex Simirenko (ed.), *Soviet Sociology: Historical Antecedents and Current Appraisals* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 150–67; Bertram Wolfe, ‘Leon Trotsky as Historian’, *Slavic Review* 20(3) (1961), 495–502.

Appendix 3: Historians as Nobel Peace Prize Laureates and Nominees

Below are thumbnail sketches of the historians who won the Nobel Peace Prize or were nominated for it. The list was initially compiled to detect possible overlap with the leaders' list.

Table 4.2 Historians and the Nobel Peace Prize (1901–2018).

Laureates (7)	
1906 Theodore Roosevelt – United States	(7x nominee in 1906)
1919 Woodrow Wilson – United States	(1919 prize awarded in 1920) (22x nominee in 1918–1920)
1921 Christian Lange – Norway	(7x nominee in 1914–1921)
1927 Ludwig Quidde – Germany	(35x nominee in 1924–1927)
1957 Lester Pearson – Canada	(2x nominee in 1952–1957)
1973 Henry Kissinger – United States	
1986 Elie Wiesel – Romania/United States	
Nominees with at least ten nominations (4)	
Fyodor Martens – Estonia/Russia	(24x nominee in 1901–1908)
James Shotwell – United States	(19x nominee in 1927–1955)
Salvador de Madariaga y Rojo – Spain	(12x nominee in 1930–1965)
Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi – Austria	(54x nominee in 1931–1967)

Notes:

1. For discussion, see text.
 2. Only pre-1967 data are available for nomination frequencies, making them unknown for Kissinger and Wiesel, and possibly incomplete for de Madariaga and Coudenhove-Kalergi.

3. Historians and history producers with less than ten Nobel Peace Prize nominations (attention: only pre-1967 data are available for nomination frequencies, making them unknown or speculative for many nominees): Hashem Aghajari (1x), Lyudmila Alexeyeva (2x), Rafael Altamira y Crevea (6x), Giulio Andreotti Institute and Secret Archives, and archivist Patrizia Chillelli (5x), Akram Aylisli (1x), Arthur Charles Frederick Beales (1x), Ismail Beşikçi (1x), Homer Boyle (2x), Winston Churchill (2x), Hans Viktor Clausen (1x), Mustafa Dzhemilev (x2), Arnaldo Fortini (1x), Svetlana Gannushkina (7x), Gabriel Hanotaux (1x), Ienaga Saburō (x2), Instituto Histórico-Geográfico Brasileiro (1x), International Committee of Historical Sciences (4x), Maxim Kovalevsky (1x), Memorial (6x), Peter Munch (4x), Sulak Sivaraksa (2x), Tiananmen Mothers (4x), Thich Quang Do (7x), Tong Zeng (1x), Toshitaka Onodera (1x), Leyla Yunus (1x).

4. Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 1984, was a high school teacher of English and history in 1955.

Sources:

Information about historians as Nobel Peace Prize laureates and nominees at <https://www.nobelprize.org/search/?query=historian>.

There is overlap between the historians' list and the leaders' list for three laureates: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Lester Pearson – I have discussed their profiles in this chapter. The following are thumbnail sketches for the remaining eight historians. The Norwegian Christian Lange was awarded the prize in 1921 in his capacity as secretary-general of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He studied history, was known for his solid historical knowledge and published a famous *Histoire de l'internationalisme* (his PhD history thesis) in 1919, barely two years before he won the prize.⁷⁵ The German Ludwig Quidde received the prize in 1927 for his lifelong work in the cause of peace. He had a strange career. As a medievalist, he was the founder of the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* and a respected editor of the *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, but in the years 1894–1896, he was gradually excluded from the profession because he had published an extremely successful pamphlet about the Roman Emperor Caligula with satirical allusions to Kaiser Wilhelm II.⁷⁶ In the following decades, Quidde switched careers and became a renowned leader of the national and international peace movement.⁷⁷ His peace work earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1927. In 1933, when Hitler came to power, he went into exile in Geneva. Quidde's razor-sharp criticism of political leaders was memorable. Henry Kissinger was an American National Security Adviser (1969–1975) and Secretary of State (1973–1977). Technically a political scientist, he considered himself a historian. He was intensely interested in historical figures such as British Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh and State Chancellor of the Austrian Empire Klemens von Metternich. Together with Le Duc Tho, he won the prize in 1973 for negotiating the Paris Peace Accords that stopped the Vietnam War.⁷⁸ At the same time, Kissinger was associated with United States support for several repressive dictatorships. Most commentators in the international press, therefore, considered the award highly questionable.⁷⁹ Author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, who won the prize in 1986, was a historian in all but name. The Nobel Prize website observed: 'He made it his life's work to bear witness to the genocide committed by the Nazis during World War II. He was the world's leading spokesman on the Holocaust.'⁸⁰ From 1976 he was the Andrew Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University where he taught 'Literature of memory'.⁸¹

Four historians were nominated at least ten times. Fyodor Martens was an Estonian jurist and legal historian operating in the service of the Tsar. He is celebrated in the history of human rights for formulating the so-called Martens Clause, which in 1899 introduced the fundamental idea that principles of humanity and public conscience offer residual protection for persons in times of war.⁸² Canadian-born American historian and diplomat James Shotwell was an adviser to President Wilson. He edited the 150-volume *Economic and Social History of the World Wars* (1919–1929). He contributed,

among others, to the Versailles Peace Conference (1919), to the foundation of the League of Nations (1920) and the International Committee of Historical Sciences (1926), and to the San Francisco Conference, which established the United Nations (1945).⁸³ Salvador de Madariaga was a leading Spanish liberal historian who was forced to live in exile for four decades during Francisco Franco's regime. He was the leader of the disarmament section of the Secretariat of the League of Nations. From the 1920s, the Austrian historian Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi led the Pan-European Movement and devoted his life to the idea of a 'United States of Europe'. Madariaga and Coudenhove-Kalergi were nominated intermittently during no less than thirty-five years. Coudenhove-Kalergi's score of fifty-four nominations was the highest. Curiously, many of the historians discussed here do not figure prominently in the histories of historical writing. This impressive parade of historians deserves wider recognition.

Notes

1. All websites mentioned in this chapter were last consulted on 31 December 2018.
2. Plato, 'The Republic', book V, 473c–d. (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0168>).
3. 'Daß Könige philosophieren, oder Philosophen Könige würden, ist nicht zu erwarten, aber auch nicht zu wünschen; weil der Besitz der Gewalt das freie Urteil der Vernunft unvermeidlich verdirbt', in Kant, 'Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf'. English version: 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', 115.
4. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 150–69 ('The philosopher king'), 673–91 (notes).
5. '[D]ie Eule der Minerva beginnt erst mit der einbrechenden Dämmerung ihren Flug', in Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, 21.
6. 'Damit erhält auch der Satz *Historia vitae magistra* einen höheren und zugleich bescheideneren Sinn. Wir wollen durch Erfahrung nicht sowohl klug (für ein andermal) als weise (für immer) werden.' Originally from a course taught in 1868–1869, the text was published posthumously in 1905 in Jacob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, 9. English version: *Force and Freedom: An Interpretation of History*, 78. Burckhardt's criticism of Hegel is at 72–73. See also Burckhardt's essay, 'The Great Men of History', based on three lectures delivered in 1870, in the same edition, 267–306. Burckhardt identified (at 288–306) a number of 'great men' (by which he meant 'irreplaceable men'), apportioning praise and blame to different historical figures in ways barely recognizable today. Interestingly, however, he also argues that great men are exceptions, not examples, and that, therefore, greatness is not a moral ideal (291, 294, 301).
7. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Oratore* (55 BCE), book II, section IX. For a study of the topos 'historia magistra vitae', one can start with the exchange of views between Holger Thünemann and Thomas Sandkühler, 'Historia Magistra Vitae? The Banality of Easy Answers' (<https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/4-2016-3/historia-magistra-vitae-banality-easy-answers>).
8. And, following him, Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Bolingbroke.
9. 'Der Historiker ist ein rückwärts gekehrter Prophet', in Schlegel, 'Fragmente', *Athenaeum*, Fragment 80. James Birren and Cheryl Svensson ('Wisdom in History', 16–18)

list 17 definitions of wisdom. To give one good example: ‘Wisdom is expertise in the domain of fundamental life pragmatics, such as life planning or life review. It requires a rich factual knowledge about life matters, rich procedural knowledge about life problems, knowledge of different life contexts and values or priorities, and knowledge about the unpredictability of life.’ (Quoted from Baltes and Smith, ‘Toward a Psychology of Wisdom and Its Ontogenesis’, 87–120). As may already be inferred somehow from the problem of defining wisdom with precision, the utility of the concept, although it has been around for millennia, is still disputed in philosophy. One major problem is that it presupposes that knowledge reflects perennial truths. See Osbeck and Robinson, ‘Philosophical Problems of Wisdom’, 61–64. Max Weber analysed the personal attributes needed by politicians; he did not single out wisdom but passion, responsibility and a sense of proportion, recommending a balance between an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility. See Weber, ‘Politik als Beruf’, 35–88. English translation: ‘Politics as Vocation’, 192–207, especially 198.

10. Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals: A Selection*, 161 (reference to Danish original 1843. IV.A.164).

11. De Baets, ‘Democracy and Historical Writing’, 34–36 (‘Democracy and historical awareness’) (<http://www.unizar.es/historiografias/numeros/9/debaets.pdf>).

12. Philosopher Arnold Gehlen, as quoted in Schieder, ‘The Role of Historical Consciousness in Political Action’, 1.

13. The 2016 study ‘Getting Political With Education: Evaluating the Educational Path to Congress and to the Presidency’, *Trade Schools, Colleges and Universities* (11 October 2017) (<https://www.trade-schools.net/learn/presidential-colleges.asp>) showed that in the United States ‘the most common presidential undergraduate degrees are in history, economics, international affairs, and political science.’

14. Many historians and historically oriented novelists were nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature; a few were also awarded it (Theodor Mommsen, Romain Rolland, Winston Churchill, Boris Pasternak, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Svetlana Alexievich).

15. Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, vi–x.

16. I could not find the origin of this often mentioned quote, which possibly dates from around 1995. Another quip is attributed to Zhou Enlai, Premier of the People’s Republic of China. During Nixon’s visit to China in 1972, he was asked about the impact of the French Revolution, and answered: ‘It is too early to say.’ See Nicholas, ‘Zhou Enlai’s Famous Saying Debunked’, *History Today* (<https://www.historytoday.com/dean-nicholas/zhou-enlais-famous-saying-debunked>) [link no longer available].

17. I first explored the topic in ‘Herauten van een groots verleden: de geschiedvisie van Derde-Wereldleiders’ [Heralds of a Glorious Past: The Historical Views of Third World Leaders], 6–21 (<https://rjh.ub.rug.nl/groniek/article/view/16447/13937>). In *Groniek’s* special issue, I presented my insights as a prelude to seven leader studies carried out by my students. An early, concise version of the present text was published in Dutch as ‘Het historisch besef van wijze leiders’ [The Historical Awareness of Wise Leaders], 19–26. The present text has been thoroughly rewritten, expanded and updated. Its basis was a complete search of Lentz, *Heads of States and Governments: A Worldwide Encyclopedia of over 2,300 Leaders, 1945 through 1992*, supplemented with innumerable historical dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographies, memoirs, autobiographies, obituaries and commemorative addresses, ad hoc searches (since the early 1990s) and *Historical Abstracts* and *Wikipedia* searches.

18. See <https://www.improbable.com/ig/winners>. See also ‘Belarus’s Crackdown: No Applause, Please’, *The Economist* (7 July 2011) (<https://www.economist.com/europe/2011/07/07/no-applause-please>). In 1996, French President Jacques Chirac received the Ig Nobel Peace Prize ‘for commemorating the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima with atomic bomb tests in the Pacific’.

19. Quoted in S. Smith, 'The Story of Laurent Gbagbo', 10–12 (<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n10/stephen-w-smith/the-story-of-laurent-gbagbo>). I thank Thijs Bouwknegt for alerting me to this quote.

20. Croce, 'Historians and Politicians', 175–78. For background, see D.M. Smith, 'Benedetto Croce: History and Politics', 147–67.

21. Wolfe, 'Totalitarianism and History', 161. Like Stalin, Ceaușescu and Kim Il-Sung were also prolific authors of historical works while they stood at the helm of the state.

22. Johnson to John Roche as quoted in Wise, *The Politics of Lying: Government Deception, Secrecy, and Power*, 184.

23. Morris, 'Making History: Israeli President Shimon Peres Reflects on his Mentor, His Peace Partner, and whether the State of Israel Will Survive' (<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/40409/making-history>).

24. Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator: The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in His Secret Diaries*, xii; Curaming, 'Official History Reconsidered: The Tadhana Project in the Philippines', 237–53.

25. 'Speech in the House of Commons on 23 January 1948', UK House of Commons Hansard Archives, Foreign Affairs, volume 446, paragraph 557 (https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1948/jan/23/foreign-affairs#S5CV0446P0_19480123_HOC_99).

26. I could not find the origin of this often mentioned quote. See the discussion at https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/David_Ben-Gurion.

27. Examples are Sukarno in the Dutch East Indies (1930) and Fidel Castro in Cuba (1953) as prisoners during trials years before their accession to power; the Argentinian junta (1983) on leaving power; Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō while attempting suicide (1945); and Brazilian President Getúlio Vargas while committing suicide (1954). See Paget (ed.), *Indonesia Accuses! Soekarno's Defence Oration in the Political Trial of 1930*; Fidel Castro, 'History Will Absolve Me' (La historia me absolverá) (1953) (<https://www.marxists.org/history/cuba/archive/castro/1953/10/16.htm>). For the Argentinian junta, see *Documento final de la junta militar sobre la guerra contra la subversión y el terrorismo* (no place [Buenos Aires]; April 1983). For Tōjō, see Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936–1945*, 872. For Vargas, see '1954: Brazilian President Found Dead', *BBC News* (24 August 1954) (http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/24/newsid_4544000/4544759.stm).

28. See for more analysis, De Baets, 'Herauten'.

29. Stalin, 'Talk with the German Author Emil Ludwig (December 13, 1931)', 106–25, here 106 (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/dec/13.htm>).

30. It had a print run of 15 million copies. Knorin was detained and eventually shot in July 1938 – during the very summer that Stalin was editing the final text. See Brandenberger, 'Ideological Zig-Zag: Official Explanations for the Great Terror, 1936–1938', 143–57.

31. De Baets, *Crimes against History*, especially chapter 3 ('Public Attacks of Political Leaders on Historians').

32. Grand Duke Alexander of Russia, *Once a Grand Duke*, 371. For the context, see Cockfield, *White Crow: The Lives and Times of the Grand Duke Nikolas Mikhailovich, 1859–1919*, 242.

33. Stalin, 'Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism: Letter to the Editorial Board of the Magazine "Proletarskaya Revolutsia"', 86–104, here 99 (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/x01/x01.htm>). See also Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928–1932*, 107–42, 174, 176.

34. 'Mais les historiens aussi ont besoin d'être dirigés'. Pivert, 'Problèmes du socialisme: quelques aspects théoriques des entretiens du Kremlin', 289 (<http://chs.univ-paris1.fr/Voyages/probl%E8messoc.pdf>).

35. Chandler, 'Seeing Red: Perceptions of Cambodian History in Democratic Kampuchea', 34.

36. De Baets, *Crimes against History*, chapter 4 ('Iconoclastic Breaks with the Past'). See also <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/CulturalRights/DestructionHeritage/NGOS/A.DeBaets.pdf>.

37. '100 Death Sentences', *Time*, 45(7) (12 February 1945), 36.

38. See, however, the list in Weststrate, Ferrari and Ardel, 'The Many Faces of Wisdom: An Investigation of Cultural-Historical Wisdom Exemplars Reveals Practical, Philosophical, and Benevolent Prototypes', 666. The thirteen nominees (in order of number of nominations) were: Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus Christ, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr, Winston Churchill, Thomas Jefferson, Socrates, Albert Einstein, Mother Teresa, Barack Obama, King Solomon, Benjamin Franklin and Nelson Mandela. Six were heads of state and government, with Lincoln, Churchill, Jefferson and Obama falling within the 'practical wisdom' category, Solomon falling within the 'philosophical wisdom' category and Mandela falling within the 'benevolent wisdom' category. Only Churchill, Obama and Mandela come within our ambit of research, and they are on my list of historically informed leaders (and the latter two also on my list of Nobel Peace Prizes). Etheredge, "Wisdom in Public Policy," in Sternberg and Jordan, eds., *Handbook of Wisdom*, 299, gives another list of wise leaders (loosely based on one compiled by historian Barbara Tuchman): Pericles, Marcus Aurelius, Ashoka, Charlemagne, Founding Fathers (United States), Franklin Roosevelt, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Nelson Mandela. All those falling within my scope (Roosevelt, Mandela, Gorbachev) are on my list of historically informed leaders (and the latter two also on my list of Nobel Peace Prizes). For Tuchman's observations, see her 'Pursuit of Policy Contrary to Self-Interest' and "'A Lantern on the Stern'", in Idem, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (London: Abacus, 1985), 2–40, 475–486 (her list of wise rulers is at 18–21).

39. I also checked other international prizes, such as the Stalin Peace Prize, the Lenin Peace Prize, the World Peace Council Prize, the Sakharov Prize, and the Right Livelihood Award, but none has the prestige and continuity of the Nobel Peace Prize.

40. For example, Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Kissinger and (the younger) Nelson Mandela. According to Etheredge ('Wisdom in Public Policy', 315) all the wise rulers on his list used violence.

41. Between 1901 and 2018, 17 women, 89 men and 24 organizations were awarded the prize. Since 1980, a total of 26 Nobel Peace Prize laureates has come from countries outside Europe and North America (<https://www.nobelpeaceprize.org/Prize-winners>). See, for an analysis, Tønnesson, 'Trends in Nobel Peace Prizes in the Twentieth Century', 433–42. I am very grateful to Øyvind Tønnesson, historian at Agder University (UiA), Norway, and previous editor of the official [nobelpeaceprize.org](https://www.nobelpeaceprize.org) website (1998–2000), for a long conversation on 2 June 2018 at UiA in which he answered many of my questions about the Nobel Peace Prize.

42. Each year, the Norwegian Nobel Committee extracts a shortlist from the list of nominees. These confidential shortlists are also inaccessible.

43. Most importantly, the director of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) has offered a personal shortlist for the Nobel Peace Prize every year since 2002. For the complete series, see <https://www.prio.org/About/PeacePrize>. I thank former PRIO director and historian Stein Tønnesson for this information.

44. Multiple nominations per year are allowed. I took into account the absolute number of nominations over all the years but not the number of submitters per nomination or the latter's status. Those with the right to nominate are restricted to members of national assemblies and governments, current and former members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, Peace Prize laureates, professors of certain disciplines, directors of peace research and foreign policy institutes and members of international courts.

45. <https://www.nobelpeaceprize.org/Prize-winners>.

46. Roosevelt, *History as Literature and Other Essays*, 19.

47. Tønnesson, 'Controversies and Criticisms' (<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/themes/controversies-and-criticisms/>). For John Hope Franklin's opinion about the 'aggressive-minded' Roosevelt, see his 'The Historian and Public Policy', 357.

48. In 2014, Obama said during a speech: 'But I promise you, folks can make a lot more, potentially, with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art history degree. Now, nothing wrong with an art history degree – I love art history. (Laughter.) So I don't want to get a bunch of emails from everybody. (Laughter.)'. The White House, 'Remarks by the President on Opportunity for All and Skills for America's Workers' (Waukesha, WI, 30 January 2014) (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/30/remarks-president-opportunity-all-and-skills-americas-workers>).

49. In 2004, Mandela launched a memory project: 'Address by Nelson Mandela at launch of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Commemoration Project' (2004) (http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/2004/040921_memory.htm). One of Mandela's speechwriters was historian Carolyn Hamilton; former deputy director of National Archives Verne Harris was his personal historian and archivist from 2004.

50. See Bady, 'Robben Island University', 106–19. Mandela has sometimes been called 'a historian of human emancipation'. See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *The Decolonial Mandela: Peace, Justice and the Politics of Life*, 6–7, 17–18, 25.

51. 'Statement by Nelson Mandela on Receiving Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report' (29 October 1998) (http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/1998/981029_trcreport.htm). Other leaders of emerging democracies also commented on the violent past of their countries. For example, during the presidential elections of November 1985, the later President of Guatemala, Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo, declared: 'We are not going to be able to investigate the past. We would have to put the entire army in jail.' Quoted in Americas Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, *Guatemala: Getting Away with Murder*, 1. Julio María Sanguinetti Coirolo, president of Uruguay in 1985–1990, ruled out mass trials of the military, reportedly saying: 'The best thing that can happen to the past is to leave it to the historians.' Quoted in Gillespie, *Negotiating Democracy: Politicians and Generals in Uruguay*, 219. And the first non-Communist President of Bulgaria, Zhelyu Zhelev, said around 1990: 'Before we turn the page, we should first read it.' Quoted in Todorov, 'The Evil that Men Do', 18.

52. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, 4, 122, 149, 150–60, 216–17.

53. 'Jimmy Carter Oral History, President of the United States: Transcript', *Miller Center Presidential Oral Histories* (29 November 1982) (<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/jimmy-carter-oral-history-president-united-states>).

54. Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, 'Special Report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union' (Moscow 1956) (<http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/his242/Documents/Speech.pdf> and <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm>).

55. Quoted in Beaumont, 'Mikhail Gorbachev: The Forgotten Hero of History', (<https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2009/nov/08/observer-profile-mikhail-gorbachev>).

56. See, among many sources, Davies, 'Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution: The First Phase', 42–44, 74–75; Nekrich, 'Perestroika in History: The First Stage', 23–27; Sherlock, 'Politics and History under Gorbachev', *Problems of Communism*, 16–17.

57. The American Historical Association has had a Theodore Roosevelt–Woodrow Wilson Public Service Award since 2003.

58. The quote is comparable to leading Soviet historian Mikhail Pokrovsky's famous dictum 'It is the essence of history ... that it is the most political of all sciences.'

59. During World War I, Wilson twice appealed to Kaiser Wilhelm II (himself very interested in history, particularly Greek archaeology) to release imprisoned Belgian historians Henri Pirenne and Paul Frédéricq. See Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study*,

237. Wilson once remarked: 'The history of liberty is a history of resistance.' Speech at New York Press Club (9 September 1912), in Link, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 124.

60. Betts, 'Masaryk's Philosophy of History', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 30–43; Schmidt-Hartmann, 'Forty Years of Historiography under Socialism in Czechoslovakia: Continuity and Change in Patterns of Thought', 300–24; Schieder, 'Role of Historical Consciousness', 11–12. About Masaryk's role in exposing historical falsification, see Renner, 'De oude handschriften uit Bohemen', 84–86.

61. Inspired by Masaryk, the dissident playwright and later president of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic Václav Havel was, in a sense, also a philosopher-king. See, for example, his 'Stories and Totalitarianism', 14–21. Another president with a background as philosopher was Zhelyu Zhelev (Bulgaria).

62. Nehru, *Glimpses of World History, Being Further Letters to His Daughter, Written in Prison, and Containing a Rambling Account of History for Young People*; Idem, *The Discovery of India*.

63. The Norwegian Nobel Committee considers the fact that Gandhi never received the prize its biggest mistake: it is certain that he would have received it in 1948, the year of his assassination. Between 1937 and 1948, he was nominated twelve times. The committee considered in earnest to award him the prize posthumously, and when that option was not chosen, the prize was not awarded in 1948. See Tønnesson, 'Mahatma Gandhi, the Missing Laureate' (<https://www.mk Gandhi.org/nobel/nobel.htm>).

64. Panikkar, 'As a Historian', 406–7.

65. Tharoor, 'In Winston Churchill, Hollywood Rewards a Mass Murderer' (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/03/10/in-winston-churchill-hollywood-rewards-a-mass-murderer/?utm_term=.5005c7dff1f8). Several commentators have disputed Tharoor's claims. See also Heyden, 'The 10 Greatest Controversies of Winston Churchill's Career', *BBC News* (26 January 2015) (<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-29701767>).

66. Quoted in 'Princeton Considers Dropping Woodrow Wilson Name after Protests', *BBC News* (20 November 2015) (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-34883289>). Originally at <https://twitter.com/SlaughterAM/status/667312627228389377>. The quote has a biblical origin. See Book of Daniel 2: 31–33.

67. Birren and Svensson, 'Wisdom in History', 16, 17, 19. Quote on 19.

68. Mukunda, 'Don't Trust Anyone over 70: Why Old Leaders Are Dangerous' (http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/27/dont-trust-anyone-over-70/amp/?__twitter_impression=true).

69. Toynbee, 'Jawaharlal Nehru', 4.

70. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 33–38 ('The Burden of the Past'), quote on 36. Original: 'Nicht nur die Vernunft von Jahrtausenden – auch ihr Wahnsinn bricht an uns aus. Gefährlich ist es, Erbe zu sein.' Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra – Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*.

71. He was influenced by the views of Belgian historian Henri Pirenne. See 'Robert E. Lucas Jr. – Biographical' (https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/1995/lucas-bio.html).

72. Others have also pointed to the hindsight bias, while using other terms. David Hackett Fischer called it 'the historians' fallacy', 'the error of assuming that a man who has a given historical experience knows it, when he has it, to be all that a historian would know it to be, with the advantage of historical perspective'. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, 209–13 (definition on 209). Nassim Nicholas Taleb wrote about related terms such as the narrative fallacy, retrospective distortion, the illusion of posterior predictability and the reverse engineering problem. See his *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, 62–84, 304.

73. Fischhoff, 'For Those Condemned to Study the Past: Reflections on Historical Judgment', 83. An earlier version appeared as Fischhoff, 'Hindsight ≠ Foresight: The Effect of Outcome Knowledge on Judgment under Uncertainty', 288–99.

74. Fischhoff, 'For Those Condemned to Study the Past', 84.
75. Tønnesson, 'Christian Lous Lange (Peace, 1921)', 83–117. See Lange, *Histoire de l'Internationalisme*.
76. The affair became a complicated case of *lèse majesté*. For the pamphlet with the title *Caligula, eine Studie über römischen Cäsarenwahnsinn*, see Quidde, *Caligula: Schriften über Militarismus und Pazifismus*, 63–80 (originally in *Die Gesellschaft*, 1894, 413–30). Online version at <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/caligula-7268/1>. I analyse the episode in my *Crimes against History*, chapter 6 ('The Subversive Power of Historical Analogies').
77. Rürup, 'Ludwig Quidde', 144–45; 'Ludwig Quidde: Biographical', *Nobelprize.org* (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1927/quidde-bio.html).
78. Le Duc Tho refused the prize.
79. Tønnesson, 'Controversies'. In 2001, the journalist Christopher Hitchens published *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, listing Kissinger's alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.
80. 'Elie Wiesel – Facts', *Nobelprize.org* (https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-facts.html).
81. 'Elie Wiesel – Biographical', *Nobelprize.org* (https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-bio.html). See also 'Elie Wiesel – Nobel Lecture: Hope, Despair and Memory', *Nobelprize.org* (11 December 1986) (http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-lecture.html).
82. The Martens Clause first appeared in the preamble of the 1899 Hague Convention II – Laws and Customs of War on Land. It is echoed in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and repeated as article 15.2 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (and then meant to apply also in times of peace). *Professor Martens' Departure* (1984), a fictional memoir written by Jaan Kross (himself a Nobel Literature Prize nominee), recounts Martens's life.
83. About Shotwell, see Erdmann, Kocka and Mommsen, *Toward a Global Community of Historians: The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences, 1898–2000*, 75, 79, 84.

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