



## A Conversation with James A. Baker, III, Peter Baker and Susan Glasser

"The Man Who Ran Washington: The Life and Times of James A. Baker III," by journalists [Peter Baker](#) and [Susan Glasser](#), tells the story of [Secretary Baker's](#) remarkable career at the highest levels of government — a born and bred Texan who shaped history for a quarter-century.

On Wednesday, Secretary Baker joined the authors for a webinar about the book and to reflect on Washington, then and now. Mark Updegrave, president and CEO of the LBJ Foundation, moderated the conversation.

Glasser observed that Baker was a "secretary of state who mattered at a moment that mattered." Among other successes, Baker oversaw U.S. foreign policy during the end of the Cold War — negotiating the framework for German reunification in 1990 — and during the first Gulf war. Volatile world events moved quickly, but Baker and President George H.W. Bush "figured out how to harness them and steer them in a direction that led to a positive outcome," said Peter Baker (no relation). "In hindsight it may look inevitable but it really wasn't. It could have easily gone the wrong way."

Secretary Baker said success came from "working for extraordinary presidents of the United States. They were in Washington to get things done, and that's what drove me — to get things done for the American people."

Washington today is a different story, Baker said. "Our political dysfunction is one of the biggest challenges that we face. We have got to find a way to get back to doing business like we used to, where major political parties cooperate to do the people's business."

Baker also emphasized the need to repair relations with our international allies. "Some don't appreciate how important our alliances are to our international well-being and to the well-being of our domestic polity," he said. Currently, "I don't think we're particularly respected by our allies, I'm sad to say, and the reason is we're not leading."

At a time when any compromise seems elusive in Washington, Baker's record is remarkable, said Glasser. He was able to work with Democrats on social security and tax reforms, end fighting over U.S. support for the contras in Nicaragua, and negotiate arms control with the Soviets, among other achievements. He was a statesman and a "master political strategist, but in a big definition of politics. Whether it was politics in the American sense, running five national presidential campaigns, or politics in an international sense, creating a post-Cold War order that would endure, it defined the age from the end of Watergate to the end of the Cold War."

His four years as secretary of state "stand out as the hinge of history changing," said Peter Baker. "It's hard to beat that legacy."

To watch the full interview with Secretary Baker and for information on Peter Baker and Susan Glasser's book, please visit our [event page](#).

***"If (carbon capture) is going to happen anywhere, it's going to happen in Texas. Politically, there's a strong motivation to ensure the energy industry becomes sustainable."***

[Kenneth B. Medlock III](#), James A. Baker, III, and Susan G. Baker Fellow in Energy and Resource Economics and senior director of the Center for Energy Studies, to [S&P Global Platts](#)



## Time to Reapply Defense Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific region is rife with potential geopolitical conflicts. From the disputed waters of the South China Sea to China's rising tensions with Taiwan to the contested line of demarcation separating India and China, the risk of armed conflict between China and its adversaries appears to be growing. These and other flashpoints should motivate the United States to protect its interests, mitigate conflicts and avert further crises with China, writes nonresident scholar [Daniel Katz](#) in a new China Studies brief.

Since it is unlikely that the traditional tools of coercive diplomacy would be successful against China's economic and military strength, Katz proposes the U.S. pursue discreet defense diplomacy. Specifically, he recommends that the United States maintain its alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia, and that the U.S. military focus on avoiding minor or proxy conflicts and maximizing all efforts aimed at strategic stability. Above all, writes Katz, it is imperative that the United States remains actively engaged in the region to ensure a stable security environment for the future.

Read Katz's full policy brief [here](#).

## Upcoming Events

**2020 Election Series — Fiscal policy and the U.S. economy in the wake of Covid-19: Taxes, spending and economic growth.** At this webinar, public finance experts discuss recent economic trends and the outlook for fiscal policy and economic growth, depending on the results of the coming election. **October 13 | 1:00 pm**

**Webinar — Assessing the impact of the USMCA's new rules on the auto sector.** Join a panel of experts for the third webinar in the series, "USMCA: From Negotiation to Implementation," as they consider the new rules and challenges facing the auto sector under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. **October 14 | 11:00 am**

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