Contrary to once widely held expectations, the end of the Cold War has not eliminated the threat to national and planetary survival posed by nuclear weapons. Both the US and Russia retain huge arsenals, which both sides are working hard to modernize. A growing number of other states are acquiring significant arsenals of their own, and terrorist groups are attempting to purchase such weapons. In the meantime, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the policies of certain governments are accelerating the process of nuclear proliferation and increasing the danger of nuclear war from an accident or detonation by terrorists. At the same time, the two nuclear superpowers are faced with serious environmental damage and substantial risks resulting from the production and storage of nuclear warheads and fuel.

After receiving her Ph.D. from Harvard University, Prof. Spechler began her teaching career at Harvard. She then moved to Israel, where she taught at Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University before coming to IU. Her primary research interests are in the areas of comparative foreign policy and international relations, particularly Russian, Soviet, and American foreign policy; the foreign policies of the states of the former Soviet Union; and the international relations of the Middle East. Her current research deals with the explanation of major foreign policy change, including case studies of the decisions by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to withdraw Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to recognize Israel and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to recognize the PLO. She has also been engaged in a research project on the impact of local leadership and collective action on economic development in rural Tajikistan. Her publications include Domestic Influences on Soviet Foreign Policy, Permitted Dissent in the USSR, and Russian Nationalism and Political Stability in the USSR.