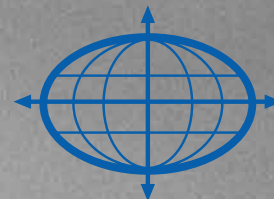


# PASSPORT



THE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS REVIEW

VOLUME 55, No. 1

APRIL 2024



In this issue of *Passport*

Teaching U.S. Foreign Relations

The CIA as a Force for Peace

Kennan: A Life Between Worlds

...and more!

# Passport

THE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS REVIEW



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**Passport 55/1 (April 2024)**

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## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

**SHAFR's Nominating Committee is soliciting nominations for elected positions.**

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# A Roundtable on Frank Costigliola *Kennan: A Life Between Worlds*

*Kristin L. Ahlberg, Christopher Dietrich, Thomas A. Schwartz, Jeremi Suri,  
Christopher McKnight Nichols, and Frank Costigliola*

## Introduction

*Kristin L. Ahlberg*<sup>1</sup>

On May 11, 1987, the Department of State hosted a special session of the Secretary of State's Open Forum to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Policy Planning Staff (S/P). "Future Foreign Policy Challenges for the United States" served as that afternoon's theme. Director of the Policy Planning Staff Richard Solomon, in his introduction, explained that S/P had invited all the past S/P Directors to attend (and, with the exception of two, all were in the audience) and indicated that they had been "asked. . . to think not about the past but about the future." With that, Solomon introduced the first S/P Director George Kennan, who stated: "The Policy Planning Staff. . . has come to be connected, as a great many of you know, with the principle, the question of containment and I am often asked where we stand today with all of this. The answer is, of course, that containment as conceived in 1946 has very little to do with the problems that we face today." After expressing his doubts that the Soviet Union was poised to "attack" Western Europe, engage in "supposed adventurism in the Third World," or undermine stability in its relations, Kennan asserted: "This is why I think that we must be careful in thinking that we can just go on as we have been doing over these recent years." He also expressed his disappointment that over the last 40 years policymakers and others had failed to grasp that containment, as Kennan conceived it, intended to "prepare the ground" for eventual "negotiation and compromise and accommodation with the Soviet Union over the negotiating table."<sup>2</sup>

I quote the 1987 Kennan here to demonstrate that yes, individuals can and do moderate their thinking over time. They can and do express regret that others fail to grasp complexities, often resulting in unintended consequences. And going beyond Kennan's Open Forum lamentations, trauma and past experiences can and do impact how we view the world and how we act within it; however, they don't have to circumscribe or completely define one's life, rather their lessons can compel us to take different paths. Frank Costigliola's tour de force *Kennan: A Life Between Worlds* amplifies these truths. Family structures or dysfunction, money or lack thereof, professional setbacks and successes, cultural upheaval, and isolation all impacted Kennan's mindset and influenced his actions and thoughts within his personal and professional lives. Understanding and interpreting Kennan requires us to be aware of how both emotion and reason influence perceptions and shape decisions. For, as Costigliola writes, Kennan "aimed for both freedom and restraint, creativity as well as order, and wanderlust along with responsibility."<sup>3</sup>

Christopher Dietrich articulates this and other points in his review. He praises Costigliola's narrative for integrating Kennan's emotional, personal life into the rational, professional one. To separate the two, Costigliola

concludes, "would gravely limit our understanding of the Cold War." Rather, the more historians can take the full measure of a subject's life, asserts Dietrich, the better we can "supplement our understanding of how policy is made and legitimized." Kennan's "anxiety" about modern industrial life is linked to his appreciation for the Russian author Anton Chekhov and his societal criticisms. Costigliola's use of "emotive sources," such as Kennan's personal diary and his interviews with John Lewis Gaddis, allows us to inhabit Kennan's frames of reference.<sup>4</sup> These and other primary sources, and Costigliola's deft use of them, reveal not only Kennan's difficulties in managing emotions, made manifest in the drafting of the Long Telegram but also how these emotions "helped shape dynamic changes in his views." These sources collectively suggest that Kennan "was so much more than the policy" that he rued had become dogma.

Christopher McKnight Nichols and Thomas Schwartz reach similar conclusions. Both appreciate Costigliola's significant achievement and his years-long effort to "understand" Kennan. The biography goes beyond a recapitulation of grand strategy, policy formulation, or foreign policy advising, and, in so doing, results in what Nichols considers a "measured approach" to its subject. However, both Nichols and Schwartz concede that in painting with this broad brush, Costigliola does not "pull punches." Kennan's own writings, wherein he discusses his views of foreign policy, the environment, excess military spending, and modern industrial society, combined with Kennan's chronicle of some behaviors, both reveal the extent of Kennan's homophobia, misogyny, and racism, as well as unprofessionalism. It leads Schwartz to concede that he lost admiration for Kennan, whom he describes as "a cantankerous and narcissistic crank" and "a profoundly unpleasant man." Yet, as Schwartz writes, Costigliola's portrait of Kennan allows us greater insight into "the way in which he approached international politics." That Costigliola does not gloss over Kennan's views, no matter how repugnant or ill-informed they might be, might require historians, in Nichols' words, to take a more "broadened, more inclusive approach to strategy and strategists" to develop "more enlightened, effective and long-range policies."

Nichols muses as to the reason for our continued fascination with Kennan. Longevity and Kennan's "intensive, self-conscious, self-fashioning efforts," certainly played a role, and the fact that Kennan "went out on a limb" helped make him more "appealing" to scholars. Jeremi Suri goes somewhat further in describing Kennan as a specter haunting the history of the Cold War. After detailing John Lewis Gaddis' efforts in writing Kennan's official biography, he suggests that Costigliola elides over Kennan as a "prescient Cold War strategist."<sup>5</sup> Instead, the Kennan that Suri detects within these pages allowed his personal trauma to influence his world view and ultimately his drafting of the Long Telegram and the "Sources of Soviet Conduct" article. That others found Kennan's assertions

compelling meant that Kennan “spent the rest of his long career struggling to revise what he had inadvertently done.”

Costigliola, in his responses, acknowledges the incisive questions posed and comments offered by these four eminent historians. He makes a compelling case for historians and biographers to consider the interplay between emotion and reason in “yield[ing] a final decision or action.” More importantly, Costigliola advances his personal view for why “[w]e can’t seem to quit” Kennan: there simply is no one like him.

#### Notes:

1. The views expressed in this introduction are my own and not necessarily those of either the United States Government or the U.S. Department of State. All sources are publicly available.
2. “Minutes of a Meeting of the Secretary of State’s Open Forum,” May 11, 1987; Kristin L. Ahlberg, ed., *Foreign Relations, 1981-1988*, volume I, Foundations of Foreign Policy, Document 299.
3. Frank Costigliola, *Kennan: A Life Between Worlds* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 59.
4. George F. Kennan, *The Kennan Diaries*, ed. By Frank Costigliola (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).
5. John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

### Sweet and Sour Emotion

Christopher Dietrich

Containment was never meant to be grand strategy, much less dogma, Frank Costigliola tells us. In *Kennan: A Life between Worlds*, Costigliola covers the most important and passionate moments in George Kennan’s professional life. Those include the early development of his expertise in Russian history and culture; his rise through the diplomatic ranks in the 1930s and 1940s; his authorship of the containment strategy; the part he played in the negotiations to end the Korean War; his vocal calls for disengagement in the 1950s; his development of a backchannel to Moscow during the Berlin Crisis; his attack on the nuclear arms race in the 1970s and 1980s; and his warning about NATO expansion in the 1990s.

Costigliola emphasizes that separating the man’s professional life from his personal feelings would gravely limit our historical understanding of the Cold War. In the above-mentioned moments and others, he explains how Kennan’s deeply felt emotions sharpened his analysis, for better or worse. In the case of the arms race, for example, Kennan believed that the U.S. economy lay in thrall to defense spending by the 1980s. In a way not so different from Stalin’s dual emphasis on world revolution and state-led industrialization five decades earlier, nuclear militarism in the late Cold War diverted massive resources from worthier causes (117).

The voracious military spending of the arms race—Kennan called it a “viper which we have seized to our breast” that threatened “the final apocalyptic self-destruction of this marvelous Western civilization”—was part of a longer list of societal problems that plagued the United States (468–69). The era was marked by environmental destruction, dependence on Middle Eastern oil, the decay of American cities, and for Kennan a vulgar hyper-sexualization in advertising and the media. Those problems also reflected a deeper vulnerability in America’s Cold War. As Kennan warned in the oft-forgotten book *Cloud of Danger*, the “very phenomena” of industrialization and urbanization had upset “the proper relationship between Man and Nature” in the United States (453–57).

Kennan’s keen anxiety about modern industrial life is among the book’s most interesting insights. Costigliola believes that it began with the statesman’s life-long love

for the work of Russian writer Anton Chekhov. We learn that a performance of *The Cherry Orchard* (Kennan named his own country home after the estate in the play) left him “blubbering” because it spoke to the “Russian self” inside of him that was “much more genuine than the American one” (1, 350). Kennan felt an affinity for Chekhov because they both believed that modern industrial and urban society alienated humans from nature and from each other. Kennan preferred the collective experience of train travel to the individual ethos of automobiles, personal conversations to telephone calls, and ships to airplanes. He disliked modern advertising and commercialized consumption and refused to use a computer.

For Costigliola, an unpublished essay Kennan wrote on Chekhov in 1932 holds a key to a broader understanding of the man and his times. Chekhov never became a Bolshevik, even though his “ideas rang with the spirit of bolshevism,” Kennan wrote. This was for two reasons. First, Marxism-Leninism was fundamentally ideological in denying “the supremacy of art or science over political dogma.” Second—and Costigliola tells us that this belief “plumbed Kennan’s deepest core values”—Bolsheviks did not reject what Kennan called the “incurable disease of industrialism” (120).

These ways of thinking and the insights associated with them resonate throughout *A Life between Worlds*. Costigliola is an expert at using evidence to excavate the character of the past and conveying it through Kennan’s eyes. Foregrounding his critique of the blind faith in progress through industrialism shared by both Western capitalism and Russian communism neatly foreshadows Kennan’s criticism of both forms of thinking as ideologies that are sometimes shortsighted. The theme of modernist alienation and intellectual and political dissent is a compelling way to tell the history of the second half of the twentieth century, and it is especially poignant in Costigliola’s hands because it focuses on the author of the most influential justification for the expansion of American power in the Cold War. That point aligns with another theme that may at first seem at odds with Costigliola’s psychological emphasis: that Kennan consistently sought to rein in “runaway emotions” when it came to international relations (xx).

Ironically, that desire emerged from his inability to control his emotions when under pressure. It was at such a moment that Kennan committed what Costigliola says he believed was his greatest mistake: helping to “kill the last gasp of Rooseveltian diplomacy” with the “shock strategy” of the Long Telegram. Kennan wrote the famous cable number 511 while cloistered in his bedroom in the midst of an “intertwined political, psychic, and physical crisis”—a crisis caused not just by the reappearance of the Stalinist police state but by a penchant for “glorious martyrdom” that Kennan identified in a less distraught moment as a lifelong malady (283–85). “Kennan wanted Washington to contain the Kremlin, which had so cruelly contained him,” Costigliola writes. “He acceded to old habit by sharpening a painful situation.” In this case, his “emotion-infused reasoning” leaped from the personal affront of the Kremlin’s cutting off Western diplomats’ access to Russian people to arguing that Washington should isolate Moscow in global affairs (285, 286).

For historians, as for any scholar, the challenge in taking on such well-trodden landscapes as containment lies in telling a familiar story in a way that isn’t boring. Even when writing about the Long Telegram and the “X” article, Costigliola guides us through what may be overworked territory in a way that is accomplished and interesting. He tells us from the start that Kennan knew that his argument about a Soviet monolith impervious to negotiation was wrong. Kennan understood that the Soviet Union represented an ideological and political challenge to the United States and Western Europe, Costigliola says.



But he also knew that neither Stalin nor the Red Army were as implacable as he depicted. “Kennan simplified to the point of distortion the challenges presented by the Soviet Union... [H]e allowed his frustration and ambition to conjure up a Soviet menace so existentially frightening that his manifestos would assume a life of their own.” The result was a tragedy, “the monster of a militarized Cold War” that Kennan would combat for decades (290).

Costigliola profoundly evokes the isolation Kennan soon felt from his crowning diplomatic achievement. Kennan believed that negotiation with the Soviet Union wouldn’t work in 1946, but by 1948 he recommended it. In this case, as in others in the book, the emphasis on emotive sources works well as intellectual history. Building on his longtime interpretations of Chekhov and Edward Gibbon and his ongoing reading of John Quincy Adams and the United States’s “historic policy of neutrality and isolation,” Kennan began to tell anyone who would listen that the most potent danger the Kremlin faced was the Soviet leadership’s own “emotional overreaction to trouble in Eastern Europe.”

Kennan believed that the United States was close to achieving the purpose of containment by then. Adherence to Communist ideology was collapsing in Western and Central Europe, and Stalin hoped to avoid confrontation. The problem was that few people in Dean Acheson’s State Department were listening. It was at just this time that the Truman administration sought to expand the Cold War, and Kennan’s criticism of that policy made him “a misfit of the Truman administration” (315–17).

Kennan felt his way toward what Costigliola imagines is a radical critique of Cold War containment in the early Cold War years, and he was frustrated at almost every turn. Acheson and Truman’s preference for rearming West Germany subsumed his “patient diplomacy” in negotiations with the Soviet ambassador to the UN in the summer of 1951 (326). His brief ambassadorship to Moscow ended in failure after his September 1952 outburst at Tempelhof airport and the State Department’s repudiation of his analysis of NATO (365–66). Even his well-accepted Reith Lectures on the BBC in 1957 calling for disengagement ended with Dean Acheson’s aggressive deployment of the “Cold War catechism” getting the best of him (397). His problems persisted as time passed. A tirade at Swarthmore College against “the stony-hearted youth” of the anti-war movement overshadowed his cool Senate testimony against the Vietnam War in 1966 (428). He argued with “personal friend and frequent nemesis” Paul Nitze, but it did little to affect Ronald Reagan’s early nuclear policies (464).

Costigliola’s section on the Reith Lectures is reflective of his broader style and analysis. The lectures, which garnered more public attention than the concurrent NATO summit in Paris, called for changes in U.S. policy on Germany and Central Europe and on the development of the hydrogen bomb. In the case of Europe, Kennan called for a negotiated military disengagement from Germany in return for a Soviet withdrawal from its Eastern European empire. As part of the movement away from confrontation, the superpowers could pressure West and East Germany towards reunification as a “neutral, lightly armed state” (397). The father of containment thus argued that a divided Germany and Europe was not the most stable arrangement for the future.

Kennan linked the question of atomic power to the problem of a divided Europe. If part of the Cold War catechism was that the Soviet Union was “hellbent on conquering Western Europe (and then the world),” most reasoned that the Kremlin was “held back only by the threat of nuclear retaliation.” Kennan disagreed and called for “moving away from reliance on those terrible weapons” because of the risk that miscalculation or brinkmanship could lead to war. A better option for Western European countries would be the arming of local militias that would

make any Soviet occupation so costly that it would be doomed to fail (397–98).

Opponents of disengagement fiercely attacked Kennan and his ideas. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer even complained to Eisenhower that the “lectures by George Kennan unfortunately had made quite an impression.” Costigliola writes that no one was more “frightened and infuriated” by Kennan’s potential influence than Dean Acheson, who regarded the tenets of the Cold War “as nearly sacred” (401–2). Acheson not only attacked the idea of disengagement, but he also took care to disparage “his opponent’s credibility as a sound rationale thinker.” He ridiculed Kennan’s idea that local militia forces could be as useful against invasion, calling it a “divine revelation” (404). Costigliola quotes Acheson’s “visible fury” in detail and theorizes that his anger enhanced the credibility of his argument. Kennan, on the other hand, “leashed” his feelings. The result was a win for Acheson and Cold War escalation:

Given prevailing assumptions about foreign policy, gender, and thought, advocating compromise or peace could easily be delegitimized as unrealistic, soft, and emotional. By contrast, pushing for weaponry and rigidity in negotiations had the presumptive claim to masculinist realism, strength and reason. Acheson and his supporters instinctively grasped that for them as powerful men, a tough stance freed them to let loose, to express their anger, and to lash out with little risk of being criticized as emotional (404–5).

The journalist James Reston wrote that “next to the Lincoln Memorial in moonlight, the sight of Mr. Dean Acheson blowing his top is without doubt the most impressive sight in the capital.” More to the point, Acheson’s position met with mainstream acceptance while Kennan’s was dismissed. Richard Nixon and John Foster Dulles wrote to Acheson in support. So did Kennan’s one-time future father-in-law, William Hard, an editor at *Reader’s Digest*. “Send me George Kennan’s skin to hang up as a trophy on my office wall,” he said. “You took it off him completely.” The whole affair left Kennan suffering from “intellectual brokenheartedness,” his wife Annelise told his sister Jeannette (405–7).

“Outmoded” Cold Warriors consistently criticized Kennan for his views. Eugene Rostow called him “an impressionist, a poet, not an earthling.” His “chosen profession should have been that of a poet,” Paul Nitze complained (467, 464). Maybe, but probably not, even given his elegant prose and oft-celebrated mind. Whether or not Kennan deserves a place in history as anything more than a strategist and historian, Costigliola compellingly reminds us that we can no longer think of Kennan simply or even primarily as what Dorothy Fosdick once called “Containment George.” He deploys a wide range of primary sources—including Kennan’s diary and his recorded interviews with the Pulitzer-Prize-winning historian John Lewis Gaddis—that help him argue convincingly that the man was so much more than the policy.

One can imagine assigning parts of *A Life between Worlds* as a beautifully written Greek chorus that analyzes the limitations of more dogmatic Cold War mindsets like those of Acheson or Dulles, to whose battles with Kennan Costigliola devotes full sections. As he describes it, Kennan saw a massive gap between containment as a “limited, political effort” and a long-term, global, militarized one (315). Costigliola’s laser focus on using Kennan’s intellectual, personal, and emotional life is a reminder of how taking emotion and psychology seriously can supplement our understanding of how policy is made and legitimized.

Using Kennan’s conflicting emotions to capture

the directions his nimble mind took and to see how his emotions helped shape dynamic changes in his views contributes greatly to our knowledge and opens up important questions. First, Kennan seems perpetually unhappy. But gloom and fragility sit in just one corner of a much greater psychological repertoire. What does it mean for our interpretation of the Cold War to focus on those emotions? Relatedly, is it important that Kennan was at his most influential when he was angriest? Or could it be that his intense “revulsion at Soviet domination” and the Kremlin’s brutality (268–69) gave him the clarity to elucidate a policy that was in the cards regardless of how he felt over a few weeks in 1946? Asking these questions reminds us that an appreciation for emotion can help us understand not only how specific iterations of policy or ways of understanding the world came to be, but why they became influential.

That raises a bigger question about methodology. As a biographer, Costigliola is intent on exploring Kennan’s uniqueness, which more often than not resulted in personal and professional isolation. But emotion is a good entry point for historians not just to understand our subjects’ singularity, but also because it can help explain why other people shared the same assumptions, whether they felt bitter or isolated or not. What if we understand Kennan as a member of different groups or movements after he turned away from containment in 1948, not just a disaffected voice in the policymaking establishment from which he yearned for validation?

To understand Kennan within a larger critical context is as important today as ever, for, as Costigliola writes, we live in a time in which many fear that American grand strategy may suffer from the intellectual indolence of binary thinking that he identifies as plaguing “outmoded Cold Warriors.” It is all the more crucial, then, that we understand how the stories we tell about the Cold War were first created and why they were criticized. The emotional strategist thus offers a final lesson: now as then, diplomats should not see the world as a relentless chain of inexorable confrontations. Like George Frost Kennan at his best, they should instead be alive to the possibilities for dialogue.

### Review of Frank Costigliola, *Kennan: A Life between Worlds*

Thomas A. Schwartz

In December 1950, in the wake of the Chinese intervention in the Korean War and the disastrous retreat of American forces, George Kennan wrote a brief note to his friend, Secretary of State Dean Acheson. It began formally with “Dear Mr. Secretary” but moved quickly toward a more personal yet fundamental point about life and the dilemma America faced. “In international, as in private, life, what counts most is not really what happens to someone but how he bears what happens to him. For this reason, almost everything depends from here on out on the manner in which we Americans bear what is unquestionably a major failure and disaster to our national fortunes.” Kennan went on to put the choice clearly and deliberately:

If we accept it with candor, with dignity, with a resolve to absorb its lessons and to make it good by redoubled and determined effort—starting all over again, if necessary, along the pattern of Pearl Harbor—we need lose neither our self confidence nor our allies nor our power for bargaining, eventually with the Russians. But if we try to conceal from our own people or from our allies the full measure of our misfortune or permit ourselves to seek relief in any reactions of bluster or petulance or hysteria, we can easily find this crisis resolving itself into an irreparable deterioration of our world position—and of our confidence in ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

Acheson was deeply moved by Kennan’s note, which he read aloud at a meeting the following day. Both men reproduced it in their memoirs. When I read it in Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas’s book, *The Wise Men, it* heightened the admiration that I felt for Kennan when I first read his famous “Long Telegram” and subsequent “X article.” However, by the time I finished *Kennan: A Life between Worlds*, I had lost that admiration, and the qualities of character and conviction I saw in the letter were subsumed in the portrait of a cantankerous and narcissistic crank, whose prejudices and bizarre beliefs made it hard to understand how he had become so beloved by intellectuals and so influential in policy circles, if only for a short period. I realize this is “way harsh,” as my niece used to say, but Frank Costigliola’s superbly researched and written biography made me really dislike George Kennan.

Although Costigliola is one of the most preeminent diplomatic historians, this biography is not really focused on Kennan’s policy choices or foreign policy advising. Chapter 7, which deals with Kennan’s time at the Moscow embassy and in Washington, when he directed the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, is only a 59-page excursion in a 539-page biography. Crucial aspects of Kennan’s role during this period, such as his involvement in setting up covert operations and helping to reverse U.S. policies on Japan, get almost no real discussion.

Although John Gaddis comes under criticism in Costigliola’s book for the role he played as Kennan’s official biographer, any historian interested in Kennan’s public role and influence over American foreign policy must still rely primarily on the Gaddis book.<sup>2</sup> Costigliola, who had edited a compelling edition of Kennan’s diaries, spends the lion’s share of his time on the issues that the diaries explore.<sup>3</sup> He has produced a work that is much more in the genre of literary biographies, biographies that explore the psyche, the emotions, and the motivations of their protagonists. Boswell’s biography of Samuel Johnson comes to mind.<sup>4</sup>

This is not to say that one cannot gain insight into Kennan’s foreign policy ideas through this deep dive into Kennan’s innermost secrets. The “Long Telegram,” a brilliant and insightful analysis of the driving elements of Soviet policy, needs to be juxtaposed with Kennan’s affection for and even identification with the Russian people and his passionate love for their language and their land. Similarly, Costigliola’s depiction of Kennan’s alienation from the United States, the country he represented abroad, and his distaste for American politics, society, and culture, also helps the reader understand the way in which he approached international politics.

In his recent book on Cold War thought, the essayist Louis Menard describes Kennan as possessing “a patrician temperament” and having “little love for the country whose fortunes he devoted his life to safeguarding.” He thought Americans were “shallow, materialistic, and self-centered.”<sup>5</sup> It is no wonder that he wanted the United States to retreat from Europe; he believed Americans unworthy of the global role they had taken on. As Costigliola quotes Kennan in 1949, “America’s domestic failings meant that ‘we are not really ready to lead the world to salvation. We have got to save ourselves first’” (317).

Fundamentally, the Costigliola biography is a largely successful attempt at arguing that the man who christened the American policy of containment toward the Soviet Union became the leading proponent of Cold War revisionism. Outside of the brief period of his wartime Moscow service and his Policy Planning Staff role, Costigliola’s Kennan is the ultimate Cold War critic, reacting negatively to almost every U.S. policy from the founding of NATO to Reagan’s Star Wars. Most of his time as a critic was spent outside of government in the comfortable academic setting of his Princeton office. However, even when he reentered government and served as Kennedy’s ambassador to

Yugoslavia in the early 1960s, he was criticizing official policy, arguing for the recognition of East Germany and proposing himself as a mediator in the Berlin Crisis. If you share most of the assumptions and beliefs of Cold War revisionism, you will regard this George Kennan quite sympathetically. If you don't, you might regard him much less favorably.

Referring specifically to my own research, I would say that Kennan's views on Germany were particularly hard to swallow. Indeed, they reminded me of the oft-quoted observation of former Defense Secretary Robert Gates that Joe Biden has been wrong on almost every major national security issue during his career. It strikes me that Kennan was consistently wrong in his assessments of Germany and Germany's development during the Cold War. His argument for negotiating a reunified neutral Germany in 1948 underestimated the fears of democratic German politicians in the West and West European leaders that they would face strong Soviet pressures without an American military presence.

Costigliola praises Kennan's Reith lectures in 1957 as "Kennan at his most effective: point-by point, relentless analysis expressed with elegance and conviction, that rationality reinforced by momentary shifts in loudness and pitch that invited listeners to share his leashed outrage" (400). However, these lectures called for an American disengagement from Germany that would have been profoundly destabilizing. They also contained what even Costigliola admits was Kennan's bizarre belief that European nations could build up local militia forces against the Red Army. Thankfully, policymakers did not listen to Kennan on these issues. As late as 1989, in the wake of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Kennan opposed German reunification and rather patronizingly complained that East Germans were only "seizing the opportunity of getting better jobs, making more money, and bathing in the fleshpots of the West" (485).

While Kennan's critique of the Cold War, the dangers of nuclear weapons, and the hubris of American foreign policy is often eloquent and occasionally persuasive, I had a much harder time accepting Costigliola's determination to portray Kennan as "a radical environmentalist at heart" (534). Indeed, Kennan, in his romanticizing of the past and the glories of eighteenth-century civilization, strikes me as the worst type of environmental hypocrite, enjoying the privileges of wealth and position while lamenting the technological progress and industrial civilization that made his life so comfortable.

Coupled with his ethnic and racial prejudices, which Costigliola faithfully if regretfully calls out, Kennan's environmentalism becomes insufferable.<sup>6</sup> His attacks on industry and progress come across as simple elitism, a regret that the "great unwashed" can now share in some of the benefits of civilization previously reserved for the aristocracy that Kennan assumed he belonged to. To his credit, Costigliola frequently quotes Kennan lamenting the "evil effects of industrialism" and "the perils of relying on machine mass production," but his sympathy for Kennan's views keeps him from calling out the hypocrisy of Kennan "the nature lover" (471).

Costigliola's biography of George Kennan was often fascinating to read and certainly kept my interest from start to finish. I can't say that about most books. However, if his intention was for readers to accept his conclusion that "Kennan was great because he never gave up on the three causes (America and Russia, environmentalism, and questioning the reliance on machines) that he championed, sometimes almost alone for decades" (539), I think he will be disappointed. Kennan played an important role in American foreign policy, but he made the mistake of leaving behind a personal record that shows him to have been a profoundly unpleasant man as well as a flawed

analyst of American foreign policy.

Notes:

1. Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men* (New York, 1986), 543.
2. John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York, 2011).
3. George F. Kennan, *The Kennan Diaries*, ed. Frank Costigliola (New York, 2014).
4. Actually, very little comes to mind for me in this regard. However, I have a vague sense of the difference between biographical studies of public figures and the literary biography tradition. But I did do a Google search. <https://www.flavorwire.com/500732/50-essential-literary-biographies#:~:text=Boswell's%20study%20of%20Samuel%20Johnson,best%2Dwritten%20of%20Woolf%20biographies>.
5. Louis Menard, *The Free World: Art and Thought in the Cold War* (New York, 2021), 9.
6. I have Italian ancestry on my mother's side, and I admire Costigliola for his willingness to include this gem of Kennan's ethnic stereotyping: "A visit to Italy prompted him to observe, 'When I see the mess the modern Italians make of their own country, I am less surprised by what Italian contractors do in New Jersey'" (473).

## Kennan's Ghost

Jeremi Suri

Like the ghost of Hamlet's father, George F. Kennan haunts the history of the Cold War. He was the most eloquent and ubiquitous promoter of American efforts to contain Soviet expansion at the end of the Second World War. He was also one of the sharpest critics of American militarization in many corners of the globe. He never renounced containment, but he never accepted it in practice either. Kennan's unavoidable Cold War presence offers mixed clues about the meaning of his long career and its legacies. We still hear his howls, but to what purpose?

Historians can't resist holding a mirror to this brooding ghost. They began combing his papers and publishing biographies in the 1980s, and a stream of Kennan-centered studies has followed ever since.<sup>1</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, Kennan's chosen chronicler, published the most complete and authoritative biography to wide acclaim in 2011. Gaddis drew on a detailed reading of the archives, decades of research on the Cold War, and hundreds of original interviews to make the ghost more visible to us all.<sup>2</sup>

Gaddis reveals that Kennan was a troubled but prescient strategic visionary. From his years witnessing the show trials, purges, and forced starvation of Josef Stalin's Soviet Union, Kennan understood the violence of the regime and its threat to neighboring states. He also recognized that communist rule stood on feet of clay, with latent opposition from the Russian people, a dysfunctional economic system, and an isolated party leadership. Although Kennan bitterly criticized President Franklin Roosevelt for allegedly discounting the Soviet danger to the West, he resisted the horrific prospect of a war between Russia and the United States.

Containment, as first formulated by Kennan in 1946 and 1947, was the way out of this dilemma. It offered, Gaddis explains, "a path between the appeasement that had failed to prevent World War II and the alternative of a third world war, the devastation from which would have been unimaginable."<sup>3</sup> The United States would patiently hold the line in Europe, pushing back against Soviet covert and overt advances. It would help rebuild sustainable non-communist states in the areas destroyed during the prior conflict. And it would offer an alternative to communism or fascism, anchored in what Kennan viewed as the promise of a civilized, open, and prosperous community of nations.

Kennan often doubted that the United States could live up to this ambitious strategic agenda, but he always

believed that the Soviet Union would eventually crumble, largely peacefully and from within. The working-class industrialism of Marxism-Leninism was alien to Russian feudal-aristocratic culture, as Kennan understood it, and the communist party could never deliver on its utopian promises. Without foreign expansion the regime could not bribe its citizens; without foreign wars it could not justify terror against its people.

More a historian than a political theorist, Kennan anticipated that the circumstances around the Soviet Union would encourage slow, transformative change within. The United States could shape but not control that process as it also insured its own security. This was the path that Kennan illuminated in his most famous writings. Gaddis identifies containment as the “grand strategy” that eventually brought the Cold War to an end, without nuclear war, on terms very favorable to the United States. In this compelling account, Kennan was very much like King Hamlet’s ghost, reminding those who would listen of uncomfortable truths obscured by the daily posturing in government palaces. Gaddis compares Kennan favorably to Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Machiavelli, and other strategic prophets.<sup>4</sup>

Frank Costigliola does not see the same ghost, nor does he compare Kennan to the same pantheon of prophets. Drawing on identical records, Costigliola rejects the heroic rendering of Kennan as a prescient Cold War strategist. His impressive biography describes a very different figure—less policymaker than critic, more moral Cassandra than diplomatic sage. In place of Gaddis’ references to Machiavelli and others, he turns to Sigmund Freud and early twentieth-century psychology, particularly the struggle between Eros (emotion) and civilization (rationality).<sup>5</sup>

Kennan lost his mother soon after his birth, and he sought affection elsewhere throughout his life, Costigliola argues. Although Kennan worked through government institutions, especially the U.S. Foreign Service, he was never comfortable in them. He craved personal meaning in relationships with others, and Russia provided a space for this possibility. Kennan developed a deep love for the land of Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and his favorite author, Anton Chekhov. Russia was a country that Kennan viewed as sophisticated and cultured, but not corrupted by the same conspicuous materialism as modern America.

The lonely boy from Milwaukee never really wanted to subject Russia to the isolation and combat that came with containment, Costigliola explains. And he always doubted the righteousness of a selfish American society, especially in the later decades of the Cold War. According to Costigliola, Kennan craved more connections, more cooperation, and more compromise between United States and the Soviet Union. He wanted intimate love, not frosty separation.

Kennan’s identification with containment is tragic, in Costigliola’s rendering. He describes Kennan’s isolation in Russia at the end of the Second World War, his frustration with the brutality of Stalin’s government, and his anger that his advice was frequently ignored by Washington. In these trying circumstances, which included frequent moments of illness, Kennan lashed out. He dictated an abnormally long message to his superiors (more than five thousand words) that was, in Costigliola’s description, “emotion-infused” rather than careful and analytical. Responding to his own personal suffering, Kennan painted what Costigliola calls a “fantastic scenario in which the Soviet Union loomed as an inhuman force without morality, unable to appreciate objective fact or truth, and pathologically compelled to destroy almost every decent aspect of life in the West.”<sup>6</sup>

Kennan overstated his case, as writers often do when they are trying too hard. Kennan wanted to be heard, but he did not intend to be taken literally, according to Costigliola. Hawks in the U.S. government circulated Kennan’s words to justify a rejection of Soviet security

demands and renewed investment in American military capabilities, especially atomic, and soon, nuclear weapons. When Kennan published a public version of his message—the “X” article of 1947—his words offered an easy answer for the citizens fearful of postwar disorder: more American force.

As Kennan’s influence grew, belligerent voices in Washington hijacked his desire for improved U.S.-Soviet relations to justify permanent hostilities. Costigliola depicts Kennan as a mad sorcerer and stunned victim at the same time. “He allowed his frustration and ambition to conjure up a Soviet menace so existentially frightening that his manifestos would assume a life of their own.” Kennan created the “monster of a militarized Cold War” that he wished to avoid. He spent the rest of his long career struggling to revise what he had inadvertently done.<sup>7</sup>

Gaddis and Costigliola both treat the early postwar years as turning points in their biographies. For Gaddis these years are the take-off period for a rocky half-century, when Kennan served as the conscience of American foreign policy—advocating containment, formulating the Marshall Plan, and conceptualizing an East Asian security structure even as he also warned, often in vain, against overstretch in the Middle East, Vietnam, and other regions where American security interests were limited. Kennan is a consistent, if also cranky, Cold War statesman in this account. That is how most foreign policy specialists still view him.

Costigliola departs from Gaddis most severely in seeing the early postwar years as the moment of Kennan’s reversal, when he began a journey to “combat this beast” of militarized containment that he had unleashed. At the height of his influence in Washington, between 1947 and 1949, Kennan felt typecast and “trapped” into defending hard-line positions that he opposed. His advocacy for negotiation and compromise with Soviet leaders fell on deaf ears as his superiors created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and deployed a thermonuclear arsenal, two strategic decisions he tried to stop. Costigliola highlights how Kennan rejected the militarized programs the United States pursued—ironically, with justification from his earlier words.<sup>8</sup>

By 1950 Kennan had left government. Costigliola claims he spent the rest of his long life trying to replace Cold War containment with more open, cooperative, and modest American policies. He gives extensive attention to Kennan’s 1957 Reith lectures in Britain, where he advocated, to the astonishment of many, American military withdrawal from Western Europe and the neutralization of Germany. In later years, Kennan opposed the Vietnam War, supported a nuclear freeze, and backed early efforts to protect the global environment. He bitterly opposed the foreign policy figures most closely associated with aggressive efforts to contain communism: Paul Nitze, John Foster Dulles, Barry Goldwater, and especially Ronald Reagan.

Costigliola clearly identifies with Kennan’s criticisms of the Cold War. They fill many more pages in his biography than the account of Kennan’s policymaking. Costigliola’s critical tone toward his subject turns sympathetic when Kennan dissents from powerful figures: “Unlike virtually every other leader present and active in the creation of the Cold War,” Costigliola explains, “Kennan worked hard to reverse course. While he spent the four years from 1944 to 1948 promoting the Cold War, he devoted the subsequent forty to undoing what he and others had wrought. That’s not a bad record.”<sup>9</sup>

Costigliola makes this case over the course of 539 tightly argued pages, but is it accurate? Is it fair to view Kennan as a critic of the strategy that Gaddis and others attribute to him? Is it compelling that Kennan’s criticisms of Cold War policies had more influence on the end of that long struggle than his defenses of American power?

Costigliola's own account raises doubts. One particularly interesting and unique part of his book is his reconstruction of Kennan's dialogue with historians Walter LaFeber and Lloyd Gardner, both of whom articulated cogent criticisms of American Cold War expansion. From Costigliola's description of Kennan's discomfort with U.S. policies, the reader would expect the former diplomat to agree with LaFeber and Gardner, or at least show them some respect. The opposite was the case.

In February 1968, after Kennan's controversial Senate testimony against the Vietnam War, Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study invited LaFeber and Gardner to share their research on the origins of the Cold War. At a seminar that Kennan attended (along with Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and other luminaries), he expressed dismay at the historians' work. Kennan defended American containment efforts after the Second World War, blamed Soviet leaders for early hostilities, and condemned Soviet subversion in Europe. He refused to accept American militarism as the cause of the Cold War, even at the height of the Vietnam War, which he (and LaFeber and Gardner) angrily opposed. Kennan's flagrant rudeness toward these distinguished historians was part of what Costigliola describes as a wider effort to discredit scholars with "revisionist" views, including William Appleman Williams, Gar Alperovitz, and C. Ben Wright.<sup>10</sup>

Kennan continued to embrace an "orthodox" interpretation of the Cold War's origins, despite his criticisms of subsequent policy decisions. He defended the use of American power to contain Soviet communism. As he condemned revisionists, he associated with mainstream Cold War institutions, including the Council on Foreign Relations, and he endeavored to increase his influence with contemporary policymakers. His favorite president, both Costigliola and Gaddis tell us, was John F. Kennedy, hardly a critic of containment. And he never let up on his disdain for Franklin Roosevelt, the one contemporary president who, Costigliola has shown in a prior book, rejected the premises of containment.<sup>11</sup>

If one is judged by the company one keeps, Kennan remained attached to his original conception of containment. That is why he was drawn to the historian who did more than anyone to elucidate Kennan's early thinking: John Lewis Gaddis.<sup>12</sup> To the end of his life, Kennan's criticisms of American foreign policy were never as fundamental as his criticisms (sometimes unfair) of revisionists. Kennan believed in containment, especially as he described it; he criticized those above and after him in government for not doing it with the same discipline and intelligence that he hoped to exercise. He was not reversing himself but affirming his own superiority—a common posture for Kennan on many issues.

Does that mean that Costigliola is wrong to criticize containment, as he does throughout his book? Of course not. Just because Kennan continued to defend containment does not mean it was a prescient grand strategy, as Gaddis maintains. Costigliola describes how containment often encouraged militarization, as it discouraged diplomacy and compromise. Those are vital lessons for current U.S. relations with China.

Costigliola does push a little too far in turning Kennan into a foreign policy dissenter, which he never really was. Even in his angriest writings, Kennan did not renounce the flawed but consistent U.S. strategy that over the course of five decades promoted American security and prosperity. Perhaps the costs in blood and treasure, especially for non-Americans, were too high. Cold War policies also rationalized terrible, historic injustices at home. But would the postwar world have been better without containment? There is no reason to believe that George Kennan thought so.

Kennan's ghost, like King Hamlet's, haunts those who

crave easy answers and clear alternatives. We are left, as Kennan was after a long life, with doubts and uncertainties. In a world of small-minded ideological extremes, we desperately need that shaking of our stubborn positions. Kennan's biographers, Gaddis and Costigliola, have done us a great service.

Notes:

1. See, among others, John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean Acheson* (New York and Cambridge, UK, 1994); Walter L. Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (New York, 1989); John Lukacs, *George Kennan: A Study of Character* (New Haven, 2007); David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy* (New York and Oxford, UK, 1988); Wilson D. Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947–1950* (Princeton, 1992); Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War* (New York, 2009).
2. John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York, 2011).
3. *Ibid.*, 694.
4. *Ibid.*, 693.
5. Frank Costigliola, *Kennan: A Life between Worlds* (Princeton, 2023).
6. *Ibid.*, 286–87.
7. *Ibid.*, 290.
8. *Ibid.*, 290, 321.
9. *Ibid.*, 425.
10. See *ibid.*, 431–39.
11. Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Princeton, 2012).
12. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, rev.ed. (New York and Oxford, UK, 2005).

### Culture, Containment, and Ideology: George Kennan, the Man, the Myth, the Legend

Christopher McKnight Nichols

At a recent 2023 SHAFR panel on George Kennan's relevance today, one scholar provocatively argued that Kennan should not rank nearly as highly as he appears to with foreign relations experts in terms of his foreign policy thought and his contributions to U.S. foreign relations. What does it mean that Kennan looms so large for historians of American foreign relations, for international relations scholars, and for diplomacy practitioners? This question framed much of our discussion, although the remark about having too much regard for Kennan came toward the end of the panel, which largely pivoted around Frank Costigliola's magisterial *Kennan: A Life between Worlds*.

The book is nothing less than a masterpiece. It culminates Costigliola's prolonged commitment to understanding Kennan, which has included editing and publishing his diaries (2014), within the context of Kennan's long life (1904–2005). No one knows Kennan more intimately, I would venture to say, and it shows in this capacious and fascinating book.

Costigliola focuses on the man and the context of his times. He takes a measured approach, but does not pull punches on some of the more repugnant elements of Kennan's life and thought (and what a list it is: racism, antisemitism, misogyny, homophobia, elitism, anti-democratic values—including a loathing of a wide variety of reform movements). Central to the book is the aim to:

liberate Kennan from containment by exploring the full range of his political ideas as well as the

connections between those beliefs and his feelings. Kennan's love for the people and culture of Russia intensified his fury at the Stalinist repression that, in the 1930s–1950s, prohibited contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners such as himself. He opposed Soviet expansion after World War II in part because it extended the domain of such secret police–dominated regimes. And yet his love for what he regarded as the essence of Russia also bled into a measure of sympathy for the dilemmas of Soviet leaders. He understood their point of view in struggles with Washington. He even felt on occasion more Russian than American" (Costigliola, xvi).

When Costigliola's book is set next to John Gaddis's *George F. Kennan: An American Life*, the contrasts in approach and analytical frameworks are clear. Gaddis (who, as his official biographer, had exclusive access to Kennan and some of his papers) seeks to situate Kennan in a tradition and focuses less on the man and his times and more on his developing ideas and policy positions. Indeed, for Gaddis, the core focus in the life and work of Kennan, and the marker of his "greatness," must be strategy and containment, because his deeply nuanced approach was "not to achieve perfection but to distinguish lesser from greater evils" with "components that complemented the whole" (Gaddis, 695).

In short, for Gaddis, Kennan really was the Wise Man and archetypal grand strategist. This is the consensus view in grand strategy circles, where Kennan's own 1940s arguments are often cited approvingly. For example, in his reference to Kennan's core commitment to grand strategy, Hal Brands notes that in 1946–47, Kennan believed that if American foreign policy was to be effective, Washington diplomats and leaders would need "a pattern of grand strategy no less concrete and no less consistent than that which governs our actions during war."<sup>1</sup>

According to Gaddis, when Kennan's life and writings are considered together, it becomes clear that he should be understood as a philosopher, uniting the "objectives and capabilities that gave rise to a grand strategy at the level of geopolitics . . . [with] a personal strategy for survival" (Gaddis, 697). By contrast, Costigliola wants to move beyond containment and strategy. He focuses on Kennan as a contrarian with "a penchant for thinking otherwise, that renders his voice important" today as well as in his day (Costigliola, xxii). "Thinking otherwise" included championing the environment, being skeptical of virtually all wars, and questioning the role of machines and the values of industrial society. Costigliola's focus lies with elements of Kennan's character that Gaddis simply isn't interested in or as eager to emphasize. Gaddis, in short, prefers "the standard narrative." At a 2004 Kennan conference, Costigliola remarked that Gaddis "highlighted the Kennan of the long telegram while obscuring Kennan the would-be peacemaker" (Costigliola, 527).

Both authors, like other biographers, conclude that Kennan was "always an outsider in his own time" (Gaddis, 697), or "a man outside his time" (Costigliola, 539). Drawing on Ronald Steel's depiction of Kennan, Costigliola goes further, aptly casting Kennan "as an organic conservative in a society bent on assumed progress" (Costigliola, 539). The two books, by two of the most eminent scholars in the field, ensure that there will be no need for another Kennan biography in our lifetimes. To my mind these works simultaneously cement why Kennan should rank so highly as a foreign policy thinker and yet also why he should be assessed lower and more skeptically in terms of policy relevance, and far lower still as a cultural critic, much less as a human being.

One of my favorite aspects of Costigliola's book

is his graceful definition and exploration of Kennan's original perspective on containment and its various permutations—a task he accomplishes without having to center the book on the concept. "Kennan," writes Costigliola, "viewed containment as a postulate: first limit Soviet political expansion in Western Europe by deploying economic and political measures, such as the Marshall Plan, then negotiate a deal with Moscow. To Kennan's frustration, containment developed instead into an axiom: an ongoing state of tension that brought a kind of stability to international relations, enabled continued military spending, and enhanced Washington's influence with its allies." And, as Costigliola notes, as Kennan approached death, "he admitted his responsibility in the militarizing of containment" (Costigliola, 524).

In turning to why Kennan looms so large in history, political science, policy, and diplomacy circles, Costigliola makes his assessment clear. The fascination with Kennan and his perhaps outsized position as a diplomatic strategy colossus is in large part a product of his intensive, self-conscious, self-fashioning efforts throughout a remarkably long lifetime. It is particularly the product of his long sojourn "in the [academic] woods" at Princeton. There he met with seemingly everyone, kept copious notes, and wrote and talked constantly. He also had a deeply literary bent (he wanted to be a novelist, and Anton Chekov was his "most beloved Russian writer") (Costigliola, 472). He thus built up his reputation as a "Wise Man" at every chance, despite his own misgivings about his ultimate lack of influence.

Kennan also went out on a limb on a number of important issues, making him appealing to a wide(r) range of scholars over time. Most notably, he critiqued Cold War militarism and came out against the Vietnam War early on; he opposed NATO expansion in the 1990s; and at the end of his life he rejected the Iraq War. He also presciently argued for environmentalism and the reality of climate change, and he sought "disengagement" policies to limit the arms race and maximize opportunities to bring the United States and Russia together.

Some of those "limbs," however, did not hold up well at all. Kennan was an atavistic thinker, shaped by and continuing to adhere largely to nineteenth century values and ideas, which ranged from his elitism to various forms and manifestations of misogyny, that seemed to propel his extra-marital affairs and how he treated women and female professionals across fields, to homophobia and anti-Semitism. It is hard to see his life through a contemporary lens and not be repulsed by his profound prejudices. Given those biases, David Greenberg suggests that perhaps the United States was fortunate not to have had Kennan in more powerful positions during the Cold War. Perhaps we were "spared the consequences" of some of his ideas because he "always played a subordinate role to men like Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John F. Kennedy."<sup>2</sup>

Greenberg, who draws on the diaries that Costigliola edited, sees myriad blind spots arising from Kennan's idiosyncratic as well as most reprehensible qualities. A close look at Kennan the man in his time affirms why a broadened, more inclusive approach to strategy and strategists is so important to conceiving and constructing more enlightened and effective long-range policies. As Adriane Lentz-Smith persuasively explains, "there is an "unthinking whiteness [to] grand strategy itself"—racialized, gendered, elite, exclusive, Christian. George Kennan was very comfortable and seemingly deeply unreflective about all of that."<sup>3</sup>

In the spirit of this excellent book, which has opened up numerous avenues for (re)considering U.S. foreign relations, domestic politics, and geopolitics from the dawn of the twentieth century to the present, what do we do with the many sides of Kennan the man, the strategist, the myth,

the legend? The stakes of such questions revolve around considerations of what it means to have influence at the level of ideas and of policy—and how historians analyze, evaluate, and ultimately judge the shaping effects and outcomes of that influence. It also prompts comparisons, such as those discussed at the SHAFR panel, regarding people who could plausibly be ranked higher than Kennan for actual policy impact. And it drives me to contemplate change over time and cultural values about strategy and strategizing and to wonder: why have there seemingly been no Kennans since Kennan? Is it too early (he died in 2005)? Does that matter? Is that a good, bad, or unremarkable observation? Who comes closest in, say, the last generation or so?

We live in an era in which strategies, grand and otherwise, are virtually omnipresent. From brand marketers to influencers, self-help books and websites, strategy is everywhere. And yet, in foreign policy, we have had no recent Kennans and despite some efforts, nothing comparable to containment. To be sure, the historian's classic retort is to shout "Context!", to observe that Kennan was "singular" as a particularly influential figure at a time of global struggle the likes of which the world had never seen was part and parcel of generational containment and the larger-than-life strategist figure known as George Kennan. Fair enough. Still, no one really comes close. Kennan and Henry Kissinger share a great deal and yet also are divided by a tremendous amount, not least the large amount of time Kissinger actually shaped policy and the modest amount that Kennan had the opportunity to do so. On my list of candidates several names stand out: George Mitchell, Richard Holbrooke, Madeleine Albright, perhaps Colin Powell or Samantha Power. In intellectual circles, from a long list of "big ideas" people I would suggest that Michael Walzer, also at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, like Kennan, might be a candidate (he is still at it at age 88), and fellow conservative realist thinker Andrew Bacevich.<sup>4</sup>

However, none of these people fit the Kennan mold or reputation. Kissinger might come closest but even he fails the Kennan "test": to generate a concept and set of foreign policy ideas that has been a touchpoint for multiple administrations as well as for thinkers and wider publics. None of my prospective candidates did so or consistently for as long as "containment" has operated as a U.S. foreign policy Watch Word (however vacuous the term always was and certainly later became). None of them are likely to live on in foreign relations and political historical scholarship fifty or eighty years after their signature achievements, as Kennan did (recall that the long telegram was sent seventy-seven years ago, in February 1946). And virtually all of them were or are products of—and are largely locked into—central elements of a Cold War framework, as diagnosed by Kennan. Finally, even in the early Cold War era that "made" him, Kennan somehow overpowered the reputations of other influential figures such as Hans Morgenthau (his *Politics Among Nations* was published in 1948 and became the bible for Cold War realists).

The militarized containment strategies of the Cold War remained an overpowering presence in the strategic thought of those who tried to shape what came after. A longing for a new doctrine, a new grand strategy, and perhaps a next "Wise Man" led the Clinton administration to launch the "Kennan sweepstakes," a term coined by Anthony Lake for a process led by Lake, Warren Christopher, and a coterie of foreign policy thinkers and writers. They aimed to develop a new grand strategy to alter, adapt, or preferably entirely replace containment as the North Star for U.S. foreign policy in a post-Cold War world. But even their critiques of Cold War containment were muted by the triumphalism surrounding the demise of the Soviet Union and the often-inflated regard that they had for the role played by the

United States and the West in that result.

What resulted was not a new grand strategy, precisely, though it did encapsulate Clinton administration security strategy and diplomatic thinking, and it was nothing as elegant or long-lasting as containment. Jeremy Rosner, a speechwriter for Lake, came up with the phrase that Bill Clinton then invoked at a speech at the United Nations in September 1993: "democratic enlargement." Elements of that concept remain amorphously at work in Joe Biden's and Jake Sullivan's "foreign policy for the middle class," mixing, as it does, the domestic and the international, adversaries and partners in the pursuit of a more democratic, globally interconnected (capitalist) world order. Or, as Biden put it in 2021, "diplomacy rooted in America's most cherished democratic values: defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity."<sup>5</sup>

The "New World Order" moment of the George H. W. Bush administration and the first Gulf War, which immediately preceded Clinton's "Kennan sweepstakes," can be understood as being in line with "democratic enlargement" and the rhetoric and approaches that continue to the present. George H.W. Bush promised a golden age to come, a peaceful post-Cold War system in which freedoms advanced and the United Nations would not just keep peace, but balance large and small states, minimize aggression, and propel worldwide development.

Who and what was left out of those Bush- and Clinton-era discussions and aspirations, terms and concepts, is illuminated by the undergirding core assumptions that linked democracy and capitalism, universal values, and positive world-shaping technologies, and ignored or minimized religious, ethnic, and national differences in favor of the sort of teleological thinking Thomas Friedman later termed the "flattened world." In that world, nation states and parochial nationalisms were supposedly slipping away.

In large part, critiques of U.S. foreign policy since the Cold War (and particularly after the post-9/11 efforts to frame strategy around what became the Bush Doctrine of preemption and a Global War on Terror, which Kennan opposed) turned into the forever wars that reshaped US policy and have revolved around rejecting rash interventionism and hegemony and solving the myriad problems of finding broad, long-term strategies that move beyond paradigms of us-versus-them. They have also involved a search for ways to homogenize and universalize values and aims while finding areas of unity to match necessarily limited means to long-term ends. In short, since the end of the Cold War and especially since the backlash to U.S. foreign and domestic policy following 9/11, there has been a rejection of overt ideology and (grand) strategy as being either overly broad or too reductive. This is why, in part, when Barack Obama ran for the presidency in 2008, his foreign policy team eschewed ideology and elevated "pragmatism."<sup>6</sup> In other words, we disregard or reject grand strategy at our peril.

This brings me back to Kennan's reputation, to ideology, and to culture. Focusing on Kennan's emergence as "intellectual icon of the Cold War," H.W. Brands writes that "Kennan has been a darling in historians and other students of the early Cold War, partly because he was peculiarly literate and partly because he disavowed his early hard line." Robert Schulzinger further explains that "by the time Kennan became fair game for historians, most of them had grown squishy on the Cold War."<sup>7</sup> (Although Gaddis had not.)

Kennan's post-politics life was both a rejection and a reification of his earlier ideas. Costigliola shows that for Kennan, particularly after his experience with policy planning from 1947 to 1950 and his brief 1952 ambassadorship to the Soviet Union (and with the notable

exception of his time as ambassador to Yugoslavia, from 1961 to 1963), the era amounted to fifty years of pushing back on how his ideas about containment, Soviet conduct, and world order were used and defined. He was at odds with the majority of the Washington foreign policy establishment, even as they continued to invoke and celebrate him and his contributions.

As I pull ideas from Costigliola and cross-reference them with Kennan's writing, I can see a clear ideological through-line in Kennan's thought and policy positions. It led to some of his best and worst analyses and was essentially historical and historicist. We see it most clearly in his writings as an historian. He rejected Wilsonian idealism and moralism and pinned that to his rejection of Rooseveltian imperialism, interventionism, and what he saw as an essential humanitarianism. I would distill these thoughts to the following historical lesson for policymakers and citizens alike, a lesson that Kennan came to after assessing the results of war with Spain in 1898: "There are many things Americans should beware of, and among them is the acceptance of any sort of paternalistic responsibility to anyone, be it even in the form of military occupation, if we can possibly avoid it, or for any period longer than is absolutely necessary."<sup>8</sup>

Michael Hunt writes along similar lines about the ideological cast of Kennan's writing and thinking and his pursuit of power and influence as well as his trepidation about being a cog in the policy machine, even at the highest levels. For Hunt, Kennan's signature works—such as the "X" article—were "suffused with the moral formulations long familiar to the audience of influential that Kennan wished to reach."<sup>9</sup> These were underlined by an exceptionalist rendering of the United States's providential mission in the Cold War as a moral test for the nation and for free institutions and by a "realist" Anglo-Saxon sense of mission, which undergirded the projection of racial, hierarchical thinking and anti-radicalism in warnings about possible ideological, political, moral, and demographic corruption by foreign peoples and ideas.

So many of the prejudices and un- or under-examined assumptions about social order can be found across the public and private statements of policymakers during the early Cold War. They stand out vividly in the Kennan we find in Frank Costigliola's brilliant book, and they were essential to the construction and implementation of containment. "Why Kennan the Cold Warrior was lauded as the all-wise Grand Strategist and why Kennan the critic of that conflict was often dismissed as a sentimental poet says much about the political culture and emotional sensibility of America," writes Costigliola (Costigliola, 3–4).

Despite the many misgivings we might have about Kennan as a "great man," Kennan the American symbol, Kennan the archetype, myth, legend, and lightning rod remain remarkably salient for the kinds of conversations that we must have about U.S. foreign policy in a world in which the U.S. wields tremendous power and continues to have enormous commitments. Pivoting from Kennan to present concerns, we can ask what it says about U.S. political culture and emotional and intellectual sensibilities that there have been few recent Kennan-esque figures. What does it say that projects of grand strategy comparable to containment seem dead in the water?

#### Notes:

1. Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy?* (Ithaca, NY, 2014), 24–25.
2. David Greenberg, "The Misanthropy Diaries: Containment, Democracy, and the Prejudices of George Frost Kennan," in *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, ed. Elizabeth Borgwardt, Christopher Nichols, and Andrew Preston (New York & Oxford, UK, 2021), 268.
3. Adriane Lentz-Smith, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Grand

Strategy," in *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, 329–345, esp. 331.

4. This brings to mind Perry Anderson's argument in *American Foreign Policy and Its Thinkers* (New York, 2015), that Kennan was neither a Wise Man nor particularly impressive, and certainly not the moderate he is often made out to be; yet, despite evidence to suggest he is or can be argued to be undeserving of his ranking and accolades, Anderson notes that Kennan remains a/the main measure for American foreign policy thinkers in the historical record. See also, Jeet Heer on Anderson with an emphasis on Kennan, "Wising Up to the Wise Men of American Foreign Policy," *The New Republic*, May 29, 2015. URL: <https://newrepublic.com/article/121921/perry-andersons-american-foreign-policy-and-its-thinkers> Accessed July 31, 2023.

5. "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World," February 4, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world>.

6. David Milne and I discuss the Obama team's strategy in the introduction to Christopher McKnight Nichols and David Milne, eds., *Ideology in U.S. Foreign Relations: New Histories* (New York, 2022).

7. H.W. Brands, "Ideas and Foreign Affairs," in *A Companion to American Foreign Relations*, ed. Robert D. Schulzinger (Malden, MA, 2006), 5.

8. George Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (Chicago, 1951), 22.

9. Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT, 1987), 154.

## Responses to Reviewers

Frank Costigliola

I appreciate the time and effort devoted by Chris Dietrich, Christopher McKnight Nichols, Thomas A. Schwartz, and Jeremi Suri in reading and in offering such thoughtful comments on my book. I am likewise grateful to Andy Johns and the editorial staff of *Passport* for selecting my book for a roundtable discussion. I thank also Kristin Ahlberg for introducing this roundtable. In keeping with how the four reviews group themselves in terms of focus and purpose, my response comes in two separate essays, the first directed to Suri's review and the second dealing with the reviews of Dietrich, Nichols, and Schwartz.

## Response to Jeremi Suri

Jeremi Suri's essay "Kennan's Ghost" depicts George F. Kennan as an elusive, literally spectral figure. He stresses the challenge in understanding this "brooding ghost" who "haunts the history of the Cold War." As I see it, however, Kennan was not so much obscure or contradictory in his thinking as he was complex, unconventional, and alert to change, particularly in Russia. Nevertheless, Suri presses this image of Kennan as mystery, asking, "We still hear his howls, but to what purpose?" Posing the question sets up the answer.

It took John Lewis Gaddis's authorized biography to "make the ghost more visible to us all." Following this introduction, Suri devotes a quarter of his total essay to establishing the Gaddis biography as the normative standard. He marshals a staccato of affirmations: "Gaddis revealed"; "Gaddis explains"; "Gaddis identifies." This culminates with "Gaddis compares Kennan favorably to Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Machiavelli and other strategic prophets." These five paragraphs focused on Gaddis's book are actually the strongest in the essay. Suri is thoroughly familiar with the strengths of the authorized biography, and he presents them with a sure touch. Then, with the orthodox view of Kennan firmly ensconced, Suri turns to the heresies of the book actually under review.

Suri argues that "Frank Costigliola does not see the same ghost, nor does he compare Kennan to the same pantheon



of prophets. Drawing on identical records, Costigliola rejects the heroic rendering of Kennan as a prescient Cold War strategist." Costigliola's Kennan is "less policy-maker than critic, more moral Cassandra than diplomatic sage. In place of Gaddis's references to Machiavelli and others, Costigliola turns to Sigmund Freud, and early twentieth century psychology, particularly the struggle between what Freud called the tension of Eros (emotion) and Civilization (rationality)."

There is lots to unpack here. Rather than rejecting "the heroic rendering of Kennan as a Cold War strategist," I sympathize with Kennan's dilemmas as a Cold War strategist. I also applaud Kennan's far more challenging heroic role, later, as a Cold War critic. Then there is the matter of Machiavelli vs Freud. "In place of Gaddis'" normative, sensible "references to Machiavelli," Costigliola "turns to Sigmund Freud." Why turn to Freud?, many might ask. Given the resurgence of cut-throat nationalist rivalries in recent decades juxtaposed with the collapse of scientific credence accorded to Freud, which thinker, Machiavelli or Freud, should the reader trust to better inform an understanding of Kennan, or of most anything else? Suri's championing of Gaddis- Machiavelli-political theory as against Costigliola-Freud- psychological theory seems like a slam dunk for common sense.

The only problem here is that Kennan explained himself not in terms of Machiavelli, but rather of Freud. All four citations of "Machiavelli" in Gaddis's biography refer to Gaddis's own interpretations, not to Kennan's self-description or reference. By contrast, as I show in great detail, Kennan read Freud. Kennan regarded Freudian theory as settled science, and he repeatedly framed the dilemmas in his life in terms of Freudian categories. In particular, Kennan saw himself as snared by the inherent conflict between Eros—meaning not just emotion, as Suri has reduced it, but also art, creativity, and escape, and freedom; and Civilization, again meaning not just rationality, but also science, obligation, responsibility, and bureaucratic restraint. As a student at Princeton, years before Kennan had ever read Freud, he came up with a similar framework of conflicting impulses, which he labeled conventionality vs. unconventionality. Kennan even asked Gaddis if he could employ a Freudian framework for the authorized biographer, much as Leon Edel had done with his study of Henry James.

The point here is *not* that the historian should simply adopt without question Kennan's Freudian framework. In fact I do not believe in Freud, and I have not attempted a Freudian analysis. Nevertheless, the biographer, in seeking to understand her or his subject, should take into account the subject's own frame of reference.

Suri wades into parody as he attempts to sink *Kennan: A Life between Worlds* as a serious biography. He exaggerates some of my arguments to the point where they seem inane. He makes other points that are puzzling distortions. He ignores vast swaths of the book.

In terms of exaggeration to the point of ridicule, note how Suri depicts my discussion of Kennan and Russia: "The lonely boy from Milwaukee never really wanted to subject Russia to the isolation and combat that came with containment, Costigliola explains." Moreover, "according to Costigliola, Kennan craved more connections, more cooperation, and more compromise between the United States and the Soviet Union. He wanted intimate love, not frosty separation."

In the actual book, however, I argue that Kennan certainly did want to subject Russia to the discipline of containment, especially during the immediate postwar years of 1945-47, when the victorious Soviet Union appeared overly confident and dangerously brash. Kennan regarded containment as a postulate. Once the Kremlin seemed contained, then Washington should carefully and quietly

seek negotiations to ease tensions. Over time, and especially after the death of Stalin in 1953, Kennan advocated that the United States try diplomacy with the Soviet Union to ameliorate a range of issues, from the nuclear arms race, to the future of Germany, to safeguards for the environment. He favored cultural exchanges. He regarded preventing war with Russia as a prime challenge for US policy and for whatever role he had to play in influencing that policy. After the Cold War, he opposed expanding NATO into former Soviet domains.

That sums up Kennan's view on nation-to-nation ties between America and Russia. With regard to his own private life, Kennan delighted in mixing with ordinary Russians on the streets of Moscow. During the Stalinist era, he was frustrated that he could not mingle with admired intellectuals and artists. In the 1970s and beyond, he did cultivate such cultural ties on his research trips to Moscow. He remained a lifelong fan of 19th century Russian literature and music. On occasion, he fantasized about immersing himself, somehow, in the essence of eternal Russia.

Bottom line: Relations between powerful nations are of a different order from relations among individuals. Suri's review elides that basic distinction. His claim that I argue that Kennan craved "intimate love not frosty separation" between the United States and the Soviet Union exaggerates to the point of distortion. Suri's assertion collapses a complex argument into a reductive bumper sticker. If nations have interests but not friends, what are we to make of a historian, or his subject, daft enough to think such nations as the United States and the Soviet Union might approach "intimate love"? Indeed, those very words in Suri's review taint this book with a musty odor, redolent of other foolish Americans who went astray loving Russians too much.

Some further points of discussion:

First, Suri mangles my account of how Kennan came to dictate his long telegram. I referred, in a broader context, to Kennan's "emotion-infused reasoning," to, literally, thinking that was both emotional and reasoned. Suri deleted the word "reasoning" and then, with the balance gone, twisted my words into a polarity. According to Suri, I was depicting Kennan's thinking as "emotion-infused, rather than careful and analytical." (italics added by me.) Aside from misunderstanding the general pattern by which human thought routinely blends emotional and analytical elements, Suri's phraseology misses the overall tenor of my description of how Kennan crafted the powerhouse manifesto that was the long telegram. It was not emotion rather than reason, but emotion integrated with and empowered with reason.

Second, Suri sees the early postwar years as the "turning point" in my biography. That perspective glides without any comment over the first 263 pages of this 539-page book. Nor does Suri discuss in detail any of the last 216 pages of the book, aside from pp. 434-35 (about which below). Equally puzzling, Suri states that my book drew on the "identical records" of Gaddis' work. Suri somehow missed the newly discovered archival sources utilized in the first half of my book. The biography offers not only a fresh take on Kennan's fractured childhood and a revisionist view of his time at Princeton, but also an analysis of the great variety of reports that the young diplomat sent back from Berlin, Riga, Moscow, and Prague in the 1920s and 1930s. We get from Suri nary a comment on how Kennan came to master Russia so flawlessly, about his early experience with covert actions, his friendship with aristocratic Baltic Germans, and the consequence of his approaching Russia from Germany. When Kennan became founding director of the Policy Planning Staff (PPS) in 1947 at age forty-four, he was not a neophyte in terms of a global perspective. He had under his belt experience not only with regard to Russia, but also with China, Japan, Latin America, and US

domestic affairs.

Third, Suri somehow has me depicting Kennan "at the height of his influence in Washington between 1947 and 1949" as "type-cast and 'trapped' into defending hard-line positions that he opposed. His advocacy for negotiation and compromise with Soviet leaders fell on deaf ears as his bosses created NATO and deployed a thermonuclear arsenal." Really? As I make clear in my book, Kennan loved his position and authority as director of the PPS, his office next door to Secretary of State George C. Marshall's, and the sage status he enjoyed through much of the government and in the public sphere. Though he thought the pace of America's military buildup was too brisk, he went along in order to get along. He helped devise secret operations in Albania and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. He was so pleased with his status and position that his diary for 1947 amounts to only single, rather innocuous page. Well into 1949, he still expected to win the bureaucratic and diplomatic struggle over his cherished "Plan A" for defeated Germany. That would allow both the United States and Russia to withdraw from a reunited, neutral Germany. And that triumph would clinch a win for both containment and follow-through diplomacy. Only when Dean Acheson replaced Marshall as secretary of state in January 1949 and Kennan lost key policy debates, such as the defeat of his "Plan A" and the 1950 decision to build the hydrogen bomb, did the strategist feel trapped - and then he promptly took a leave from the State Department.

Kennan landed at the Institute for Advanced Study, where he found a job and a sympathetic ear in J. Robert Oppenheimer. Bottom line: Kennan's experiences and reactions in 1947-49 differed sharply from late 1949-1950.

Fourth, Suri poses a question based on a puzzling assumption. He asks, "Is it compelling that Kennan's criticisms of Cold War policies had more influence on the end of that long struggle than his defenses of American power?" Huh? The premises here are confused. It is hard to see how Suri missed a theme repeated again and again in the last third of my book: Kennan had almost no influence on US policy at end of Cold War, nor had he had for decades earlier. As for Kennan's "defenses of American power," does that refer to the 1940s? Certainly in later decades, Kennan most often advised a circumspect use of U.S. power, a focus on diplomacy, and a priority for arms reduction and compromise settlements. For instance, at his talk to the Council on Foreign Relations in December 1989, he declared NATO an anachronism like the Warsaw Pact. He urged "a new, all-European security structure" that might finally erase the division between East and West and integrate the Soviet Union into Europe. The United States could participate in the new organization, but it would have to, like Russia, abandon its reliance on massive nuclear forces. (480-81)

Fifth, another snarl of half-truths, pulled from pages 434-35, posits that if Kennan had indeed moved away from containment, by 1968 he would have endorsed the arguments advanced by Walter LaFeber and by Lloyd Gardner at a pivotal seminar on Cold War revisionism held at the Institute for Advanced Study in February of that year. Instead, Suri tells us, Kennan "expressed dismay at the historians' work and went out of his way to demonstrate his disrespect for them." True enough so far as it goes.

What Suri leaves out or fails to realize, however, are several crucial factors. Kennan throughout his life retained a fierce loyalty to the Truman Team of 1946-49, in which he himself had played a leading role. He rallied around that flag, especially if he perceived it as under assault by barbarians from the Wisconsin School or wherever. It was in defense of that Team that Kennan came to know and to appreciate Gaddis. (Nevertheless, by the end of his life, Kennan would come to worry that Gaddis did not appreciate Kennan's own efforts to ease the Cold War.)

Moreover, LaFeber and Gardner were not criticizing U.S. policy primarily because they saw it as militaristic, as Suri would have it, but rather because they saw Washington's policies as relentlessly expansionist in terms of Open Door economic penetration of the entire world, including the Soviet domain of Eastern Europe. As I discuss in the book, Kennan was not buying that sacrilege about his Team. Nor would the crusty veteran countenance for a moment the Gar Alperovitz thesis, also associated with the Cold War revisionists, holding that U.S. officials had intended the atomic bombs to send an intimidating warning to Moscow as well as to Tokyo.

One could go on and on. Overall, it remains puzzling why such a leading scholar of our field, someone for whom I retain great respect and affection, has devoted his talents to conjuring up such a hobgoblin-interpretation of this book.

### Why Kennan?

Response to Chris Dietrich, Christopher McKnight Nichols, and Thomas A. Schwartz

We can't seem to quit him. Even when appalled by George F. Kennan's egregious prejudices and blinders, many of us SHAFR-types remain unable to avert our gaze.

Thomas A. Schwartz tells us that by the time he had finished *Kennan A Life between Worlds*, his onetime admiration for Kennan's upright character had added into contempt for this "cantankerous and narcissistic crank." And yet, Schwartz acknowledges, the "biography kept my interest and fascination from start to finish, and it is rare that I can say that about most books."

Christopher McKnight Nichols starts off his review by recalling that at a 2023 SHAFR panel on Kennan's legacy, a prominent SHAFR-ite "provocatively argued that Kennan should not rank nearly as highly as he appears to in terms of his foreign policy thought and contributions." Nichols returns repeatedly to the puzzle of why Kennan has kept his preeminent perch. He notes Kennan's nearly unshakable standing among the Grand Strategists. He cites Kennan's decades-long practice of commenting on controversial contemporary issues. The strategist-turned-historian went "out on a limb" by taking a stand against the Vietnam War, the atomic arms race, environmental destruction, and then, while in his nineties, NATO expansion. In 2003, the ninety-nine year-old spoke out against the invasion of Iraq. Nevertheless, this record, no matter how impressive, ended with Kennan's life in 2005.

Why, Nichols then asks, have there "been no Kennans since Kennan?" He lists such potential candidates as George Mitchell, Richard Holbrooke, Madeline Albright, Colin Powell, Samantha Power, and Michael Walzer - only to conclude "but none of them fits the Kennan mold or reputation." None is likely to retain a reputation decades past his prime, as Kennan has already done. Perhaps the saddest effort to get out from under the shadow of the supposed giant and his containment doctrine was the "Kennan sweepstakes," launched by Anthony Lake, Bill Clinton's National Security Adviser. The effort by Lake and his team to swap out "containment" for some trendier alternative yielded only the forgettable "democratic enlargement."

Ironically, a bit of serendipity linked Kennan's becoming a Russian expert and subsequently authoring the containment doctrine with Lake's own origins. In 1928, Lake's mother, then Eleanor Hard, broke off her two-year engagement with Kennan in the belief that he would never amount to much. Stung, George shelved plans to resign from the State Department and make more money in the private sector. He threw himself instead into the Department's rigorous program training Russian language experts in Berlin. Kennan's subsequent almost non-stop,

24/7/365 effort to immerse himself in Russian language and culture, even before the formal start of his instruction in Berlin, marked the first time that he really applied himself.

He would continue to push himself and to excel, rising in the State Department more rapidly than anyone else in his cohort. His success and his becoming thoroughly at home in the Russian language did not prevent him from distinguishing himself as the only U.S. ambassador ever expelled from Russia. After Kennan left the State Department to become a historian at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, he again quickly attained top rank. His first major book, *Russia Leaves the War* (1956), snared the Bancroft Prize, the National Book Award, the Francis Parkman Prize, and the Pulitzer Prize. About these many achievements, and his equally spectacular failures, Kennan in his memoirs and in his diaries remained self-aware, largely honest, and exquisitely articulate.

Part of the lure of Kennan, then, is that he endures, with all his reasoned arguments and all his Sturm und Drang, sui generis. Through Kennan's flood of writings we get to see the dynamo at work. Dean Acheson, not always a fan of Kennan's, responded to a colleague's observation that "a man like Kennan would be excellent" to head the Policy Planning Staff, by snapping back, "A man like Kennan? There's nobody like Kennan."<sup>1</sup> Nor is there yet.

As Chris Dietrich observes, *Kennan: A Life between Worlds* tries to explain Kennan as a whole person, as someone whose reason and emotions were integral to each other and to his being as a whole. That of course is how human thinking actually works. As neuroscientists tell us, the conception of a clear-cut division between reason and emotion, between mind and body, does not accord with the integrated operations of a human being. In our commonsensical notions about thinking and feeling, most of us, as heirs to the ancient Greeks, are misled by our assumption of a fundamental mind-body duality. Human thinking does not entail either pure reason or pure emotion. Historians can most profitably focus not on supposedly isolated emotions, but rather on understanding how more emotional and more rational impulses intersected and shaped each other to yield a final decision or action.

Kennan offers a fascinating template for such analysis. Although a private person in some ways, Kennan on occasion was quite articulate about his thinking, his feeling, and his efforts to integrate it all. For instance, as the book lays out, the long telegram arose in a creative synthesis of Kennan's various modes of expression: "Kennan fused personal and political preferences." "Kennan's aggravation, ailments, and aspirations – his personal and political aspirations – came together in cable number 511." His friends back in the State Department were prodding him to write a cable that would be "a real deep one, one of his better efforts." They expected "some kind of a 'think piece.' He did not disappoint." (pp. 286-87) The long telegram had such wide appeal because it offered both a scary warning about a Kremlin "impervious to the logic of reason" and the reassurance that Russia could be contained without a war. My point here was not that the long telegram arose solely from Kennan's personal frustrations with Moscow and with Washington, but rather that he mobilized his fury to infuse the telegram with emotional as well as with rational force. The whole ended up over-charged with such emotional and rational potency that Kennan would come to regret what he had wrought.

Kennan's post-1949 challenge to Cold War shibboleths, including containment, arguments made most eloquently in his Reith lectures broadcast over the BBC in December 1957, remain controversial even today. The fault line between those scholars who praise and those who fault Kennan in this regard tracks the division between those scholars who remain appalled by, and those who remain largely undisturbed by, the risks mandated by Washington's Cold

War policies. As Dietrich observes, Acheson's full-throated fury at Kennan's Reith proposals effectively mobilized masculine-coded emotion in defense of the Cold War status quo.

Acheson's arguments still carry weight. Consider, for instance, Schwartz's protest that a late 1950s "American disengagement from Germany . . . would have been profoundly destabilizing." We should reflect on the various dangers entailed in "destabilizing." Schwartz makes Kennan appear to be urging a unilateral American pullback. Instead, Kennan specified a negotiated, mutual withdrawal of US and Soviet forces from the German-German frontier. Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev publicly praised such an idea. Kennan expected that the pullback would heighten pressures from Eastern Europe for the Russians to pull all or most of their military back to the borders of the Soviet Union. Such a withdrawal three decades before it actually occurred would have alleviated the quite "destabilizing" danger that we actually faced, of U.S. and Soviet forces facing each other along the German-German frontier. That pullback would also have ended plans to deploy short range, nuclear-tipped missiles in this tinderbox. Third, reunifying Germany would have reunited divided Berlin, thereby ending the hemorrhaging of population that was creating a crisis in East Germany. The increasingly untenable situation in East Germany pushed Khrushchev to instigate the Berlin crises of 1958-59 and 1961-62. The vulnerability of divided Berlin also heightened the stakes of the Cuban missile crisis. Any of these hot points could have exploded into a war that would have been even more "profoundly destabilizing," not to mention deadly.

The question arises, then, whether Kennan's proposed mutual disengagement would have "destabilized" Berlin and Germany or, rather, would have eased or ended one of the most "destabilizing" confrontations of the Cold War. Because the Cold War ended without a hot war between the United States and the Soviet Union does not justify historians' regarding this lucky turn of events as a given and as nearly-inevitable.

Schwartz finds "bizarre" Kennan's notion that "European nations could build up local militia forces against the Red Army." But that of course is what the Afghan mujahaddin did do to defeat the Soviet occupation. That is also how the Iraqi and Afghani insurgents managed to thwart the US occupations of their nations.

Kennan, with his outrageous prejudices and brilliant insights, his formidable talents and even more formidable ego, still elicits emotional reactions. That is apparent in Schwartz's understandable, but to my mind unfair, criticism of him as "the worst type of environmental hypocrite, enjoying the privileges of wealth and position while lamenting the technological progress and industrial civilization that made his life so comfortable." In terms of wealth, Kennan never had that much. He lost his inheritance in the Great Depression and thereafter fretted about having enough money until almost the end of his life. Though he maintained a comfortable life style, he had to scramble to do so.

With regard to the outdoors, Kennan's inclinations since childhood were, as Dietrich recognizes, deepened by Anton Chekhov's critique of industrialism and of humanity's alienation from Nature. Regardless of whether George was idling away spring afternoons at Princeton sitting in a tree instead of studying, snow-shoeing in Russia far off the beaten path in quest of ancient churches, or navigating stormy waters between Norway and Denmark in his sailboat, he cultivated a connection with Nature. He grubbed in the dirt of his 252-acre farm in Pennsylvania. Whether it was icy waves lashing the oil rigs off the coast of Norway, or icy roads shutting down auto traffic in New Jersey, Kennan sympathized, indeed he empathized, with the forces striking back against human dominion. In musing

about the terrible destruction wrought by the nuclear war that he dreaded, he took some comfort that, in the fulness of time, evolution would heal the human damage and restore the primacy of the big trees and the wild animals. Such sentiments may strike some as weird, but they were certainly sincere and free of anthropomorphic bias.

That Kennan's hold on us is not going away soon is evidenced most recently by the just-published second edition of the canon-shaping course reader, *America in the World*, edited by Jeffrey A. Engel, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Andrew Preston. The editors allocated to Kennan some choice real estate. The first entry in their final chapter, focused on the most recent past, includes a selection from a 1985 article by Kennan.

Eerily prescient, he warned of "two unprecedented and supreme dangers," war among the great powers and destruction of the natural environment. He appealed not just to the good sense of rational thinking, but also to an emotion-inflected "moral component." In stressing the "natural beauty and healthfulness and magnificence" of the Earth, Kennan invoked the "element of sacrilege," relevant regardless of one's relationship to god, in sacrificing the environment for the narrow gratification of the current generation.<sup>2</sup>

Probably the most substantive reason why Kennan remains relevant is his faith in the efficacy of diplomacy. It is here – in Kennan's unshakable faith in the potential of diplomacy as a process that can yield agreements where initially none seem possible – that we find his most significant legacy and relevance for the troubled world of today.

Kennan believed that patient, secret talks between professional diplomats who understood and respected the culture and history of their opponents could prove surprisingly effective. As he put it, what seems like unbridgeable differences between opponents amounts to only the asking price at the start of a long bargaining process. Rather than seeking elusive trust as the basis for agreements, diplomats should focus on areas of mutual self-interest. Self-interest, he argued, was far more solid than trust. Kennan's faith in diplomacy did not mean that he thought military force was unimportant. Rather he believed that diplomacy was most effective when military force, like political and economic pressure, were kept in the background - as parts of the context of negotiations, but not brandished in the face of the opposing side. Bluster and threats he thought were most often counter productive in terms of gaining concessions from an adversary. For Kennan, diplomacy was not an admission of weakness or lack of resolve, but rather a smart strategy for winning. The world needs more such thinking.

Notes:

1. Loy W. Henderson interview with John Lewis Gaddis, September 25, 1982, p. 7, box 1, John Lewis Gaddis papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.
2. Jeffrey A. Engel, Mark Atwood Lawrence, and Andrew Preston (ed.), *America in the World*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2023), 414-15.

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Thank you!

# A Roundtable on Carolyn Eisenberg, Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia

Steven J. Brady, Amanda C. Demmer, Addison Jensen, P. Mike Rattanasengchanh,  
and Carolyn Eisenberg

## Introduction to a roundtable of Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia*

Steven J. Brady

Since 1998, I have taught undergraduate courses on the US and the Wars in Indochina. I realized early in my teaching career that I was giving short shrift to the Nixon administration. My tendency was to spend significant time on the question of why successive presidential administrations committed the United States more deeply to intervention in Vietnam, and why that intervention went so wrong. If I did not treat 1969 to 1971 as an afterthought, I nevertheless did not give it equal weight. In this, I suspect, I was reflecting a broader scholarly tendency at the time to ask “why?” and “how?” while neglecting “where to?” Jeffrey Kimball had done a great service in producing the then-definitive study of Nixon’s war.<sup>1</sup> But his book did not prompt a deluge of new works on the period. The last ten years have seen something of a correction. While the subject “Nixon/Kissinger and Indochina” has not quite become a publishing cottage industry, significant works—relying on newly-available primary sources—have raised and addressed new questions.<sup>2</sup>

With *Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia*, Carolyn Woods Eisenberg seeks to make a significant contribution to the discussion. According to the insightful assessments of Amanda C. Demmer and Addison Jensen, she has succeeded. Both are particularly impressed with Eisenberg’s ability to cogently present what Demmer calls the “paradoxes” of the Nixon-Kissinger Indochina policies. It is a complex story to tell. And both reviewers agree that it is told expertly (indeed “beautifully” in Demmer’s description). The salient paradox, or irony—highlighted by both Demmer and Jensen—concerned Nixon’s and Kissinger’s attempt to limit the people involved in proposing and deciding Indochina policy to the smallest possible numbers. This number eventually was supposed to be two, with an “assist” from White House Chief of Staff General Alexander Haig.

And yet, as Demmer and Jensen emphasize, *Fire and Rain* demonstrates that the duo in the White House was unable to prevent other voices from intruding. Within the administration, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird has recently emerged in the scholarship as a major player who was, almost uniquely, able to best Kissinger in executive infighting. Jensen observes that Eisenberg, along with David Prentice, “elevates Laird to a leading role” in the formulation of Vietnam War policy.<sup>3</sup> Joining Laird in breaking the two-man stranglehold on the war was Congress, which Jensen observes, often served as a conduit for the influence of the broader American public.

And then there was the peace movement, with which Nixon became obsessed. The presence of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) at protests, and the Moratorium, became a particular bane for a president whose gift and goal was the manipulation of public opinion on the war. No matter how much he tried to control both policy and narrative, other forces intruded.<sup>4</sup> As Eisenberg discussed in her response to the reviews, the American-sponsored 1971 Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) attack in Laos was particularly damaging for Nixon. Indeed, Lam Son 719 was a “public relations disaster” for the administration and its Vietnamization policy.<sup>5</sup>

The reviewers also highlight another of Eisenberg’s contributions, namely the impact of Nixon administration policies on the human level. In his review, Mike Rattanasengchanh observes that *Fire and Rain* “successfully links the decisions of Nixon and Kissinger to negative results on the Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Lao people.” Jensen adds to this list “American troops and aid workers, journalists, even Vietnam’s environment.” If anyone is left out of the narrative, according to Jensen, it is the people of South Vietnam, and especially the soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. This is a valid criticism, though Eisenberg is not alone among scholars of the Vietnam War in this omission.

Rattanasengchanh is less convinced of the novelty of Eisenberg’s contribution than are his fellow reviewers. While Demmer asserts that *Fire and Rain* will “surprise experts,” Rattanasengchanh writes that the book “in some ways reads like a synthesis of other narratives from the historiographies of Nixon and Kissinger.” Yet he does not explore this important criticism, nor list the titles to which he refers. This makes it difficult to assess the claim that Eisenberg’s work is, in a sense, derivative.

In her response, Eisenberg is generous to Jensen’s criticism. Calling her observation about the lack of ARVN voices in the book a “fair point,” she admits that her reliance on primary sources, together with her inability to read Vietnamese, contributed to this absence. But she concedes little to Rattanasengchanh, who, she holds, addresses the narrative of the book while “sidestepping some of the major analytical issues.” She likewise asserts that he sometimes “misunderstands my point of view,” particularly regarding the reason that Nixon and Kissinger adopted policies that exacted such a massive human cost. “Selective vision,” as she puts it, consisted not merely of discrete ideas leading to policies, but also of “a language, a set of norms, and a way of functioning that limited what [Nixon and Kissinger] could see.” She thus takes causation beyond the personalities and proclivities of a small set of policymakers.

As these three reviews indicate, *Fire and Rain* is a detailed, rich, and well-written study of a highly significant subject. Agree or disagree with Eisenberg’s conclusions, this

book will be the departure point for any future scholarship on the Nixon administration's Indochina policy. Hopefully, much more of it will follow.

Notes:

1. Jeffrey Kimball, *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).
2. See, in particular, David F. Schmitz, *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014); Jeffrey P. Kimball and William Burr, *Nixon's Nuclear Specter: The Secret Alert of 1969, Madman Diplomacy, and the Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015).
3. David Prentice, *Unwilling to Quit: The Long Unwinding of American Involvement in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2023).
4. The fact that Nixon was deeply concerned with domestic politics must come as little surprise. But, as Thomas A. Schwartz has demonstrated, Kissinger shared this obsession. See Schwartz, *Henry Kissinger and American Power: A Political Biography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2020). And see also Bernd Greiner, *Henry Kissinger: Wächter des Imperiums* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2020).
5. On the incursion into Laos, see, e.g., Robert D. Sander, *Invasion of Laos 1971: Lam Son 719* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 62.

### Keeping the Photographs on the Wall: Carolyn Woods Eisenberg on Nixon's Vietnam War

Amanda C. Demmer

On April 5, 1975, President Gerald Ford and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger met with a delegation that had just returned from a crumbling South Vietnam. This meeting is best known for the contents and consequences of a report delivered that day by Army Chief of Staff General Frederick C. Weyand. Weyand argued that South Vietnam “was on the brink of total military defeat” and required \$722 million not to halt or reverse the rapidly advancing North Vietnamese offensive, but to establish “a strong defense perimeter around Saigon” and buy “vitality needed” time. Ford would request this vast sum of money from Congress five days later.

On April 5, the president also received a report from the White House photographer, Pulitzer Prize winner David Kennerly. Kennerly delivered a blunt verbal assessment of the situation in Vietnam and then, perhaps knowing a picture is worth a thousand words, also gave a visual dissertation about the chaos and suffering in Vietnam. Photograph after photograph depicted, in Kennerly's words, “refugee kids . . . wounded evacuees . . . [a] ship filled with fleeing South Vietnamese soldiers.” Ford was evidently very moved by these images, as he ordered them displayed prominently in the West Wing. When he learned that someone had taken them down, presumably because of their graphic nature, the president demanded they be rehung so that his staff could, as the president put it, “know what's going on over there” and be reminded of the human stakes of their work.<sup>1</sup>

Carolyn Woods Eisenberg's *Fire and Rain* is a multifaceted, nuanced history. At its core, the book is a history of the Nixon administration's pursuit of the Vietnam War that forces its readers to keep the photographs on the wall, while showing that the president and his national security advisor refused to give them a passing glance. Impeccably researched, beautifully written, and relentlessly human, *Fire and Rain* will surprise experts and captivate students.

The book is filled with paradoxes. The first has to do with the almost larger-than-life quality that Nixon and Kissinger assume in the history of these years. On the one hand, Eisenberg's account adds even more ammunition to existing studies that show the paranoia, deception, and secrecy with which these two men operated and how they

centralized and consolidated an immense amount of power in their own hands.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, building on the insightful work of David Prentice, Eisenberg argues that Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird played a prominent role in the administration, especially early on. Laird won a key victory in securing Nixon's support for withdrawing U.S. troops (“Vietnamization”) over Kissinger's and the military establishment's objections.<sup>3</sup> This success had a cost, however. Moving forward, Laird was a constant target of Kissinger's wrath, was often excluded from high-level discussions, and, having already spent his political capital, minimized or silenced his own dissent on other matters, often publicly supporting the administration even when he privately disagreed.

One of the advantages of Eisenberg's thriller-like prose and the length (519 pages) and detail of the book is that readers can see how Kissinger and Nixon increasingly isolated themselves in real time. From the outset, both men favored the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Creighton Abrams' Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, and Colonel Al Haig, a Vietnam veteran who acted as Kissinger's deputy for military affairs (37–8). Nixon and Kissinger relied on the military over civilian voices and often excluded or bypassed the input of high-ranking civilian officials like Secretary of State William Rogers. This created a situation where even classified internal debates were “perfunctory” (238). Things eventually became so bad that even the Joint Chiefs resorted to “internal espionage” to get a sense of what was happening in the White House (348). By the fall of 1972, Eisenberg argues, the inner circle became so constricted that, for all intents and purposes, “three men [were] responsible for ending the war—Nixon, Kissinger, and Haig” (464).

One of the assets of Eisenberg's fine study, however, is that she refuses to play by Nixon and Kissinger's rules. The president's inner circle may have operated in an increasingly small echo chamber, but she insists on putting them in a broader context. By continually reminding readers about the voices Nixon and Kissinger refused to hear, the expertise they refused to call upon, and the experience they refused to consult, she illustrates the contingency of these years and illuminates many a possibility not pursued.

While Nixon and Kissinger were able to isolate themselves from and supersede much of the normal workings of U.S. bureaucracy, they were also some of the most visible men in the world. This is another key paradox of *Fire and Rain*: although intensely (self-)isolated, Nixon and Kissinger always operated in a larger context, one where there was no place to hide. With her repeated juxtapositions of these realities, Eisenberg reaffirms the importance of domestic politics to the conduct of U.S. foreign relations in vivid, relentless detail.

The antiwar movement and Congress are important players in these pages. *Fire and Rain's* contribution here lies not so much in unearthing sensational new research but in displaying the photographs taken either at home or abroad and refusing to take them down. Here Eisenberg's eye for detail and narrative shine. Her vivid descriptions of well-known events like the shootings at Kent State (161–66) are visceral. Lesser-known episodes, like the Justice Department barring disabled veterans in uniform and Gold Star mothers from entering the Mall in April 1971 (284), add context and human moments to the text. They also show Kissinger and especially Nixon's pervasive and paranoid obsession with the antiwar movement and their belief in the purported bias of media coverage (more on that in a moment).

*Fire and Rain's* coverage of Capitol Hill, like its coverage of the White House, reveals messy, often conflicted human beings who frequently acted in contradictory ways. There are moments where Eisenberg supports Andrew L. Johns's

argument that Congress did not merely cede control of decision-making to the administration, it was complicit in the United States' waging of the Vietnam War.<sup>4</sup> After Nixon's Silent Majority speech, Eisenberg explains, "Congress fell in line . . . and members who had intended to oppose him lost their nerve," a "collapse of will . . . so pronounced that the president felt confident enough to schedule an appearance before the House of Representatives, where he received a standing ovation" (93, 94).

Two years later, when the administration's plans were threatened by the Hatfield-McGovern amendment, which would have terminated appropriations for American troops in Vietnam after December 1971, Nixon once again went on the offensive. This time he proposed a "cease-fire-in-place" that sounded appealing but had zero chance of acceptance (203-4). Once again, Congress backpaddled in the face of the strong televised speech. This time congressional reaction was so strong that Kissinger gleefully informed the president that "senators were flocking to their side" (205). The amendment was defeated, 55-39.

Eisenberg argues, however, that to equate failure to pass amendments with failure to change the course of the war would be to miss the point. Repeated threats from Capitol Hill were a thorn in Nixon's side that he could not fully ignore. Here the author usefully distinguishes between the ground and air war. Congress failed rather spectacularly to rein in the air war, in part because it wasn't fully aware of its scope,<sup>5</sup> but Capitol Hill was very successful, *Fire and Rain* demonstrates, in curtailing ground operations by U.S. combat troops. "It was Senator McGovern and his antiwar colleagues in both houses of Congress who had forced Nixon to ultimately end American ground combat in Vietnam," she suggests, explaining that Nixon felt compelled to go with Laird's Vietnamization policy to quell popular unrest and keep members of Congress from opposing him outright. "Though almost none of the dozens of initiatives they drafted to end the war had passed, they put so much pressure on the White House that his administration had been compelled to keep withdrawing troops. Few people outside the government recognized how effective these pressures had been" (433).

One of the aspects of the book that I found most valuable is an intervention that Eisenberg does not explicitly address in her introduction or conclusion. Nevertheless, it is a main lens through which Americans understood and debated the Vietnam War: the media. *Fire and Rain* challenged and ultimately changed the way I think about the media's coverage of the war during the Nixon years. As anyone who has taught the Vietnam War in recent years probably knows, the belief that the media, especially TV coverage, presented the war in an unfairly critical way continues to hold sway. In contrast, orthodox scholars have argued that the press mostly subscribed to and upheld the Cold War consensus before the Tet Offensive shattered the optimism about the war that had been disseminated by the Johnson administration's Progress Campaign.<sup>6</sup> According to the defensively postured orthodox argument, after 1968 the media ultimately reflected widespread doubts about the wisdom of continuing the war, rather than propelled them.<sup>7</sup>

Eisenberg's account suggests that while Nixon and Kissinger certainly believed the press was out to get them, the news media's coverage could have been far more critical. If Nixon and Kissinger refused to look at the photographs, in many instances the press made it easier to look away. Some examples are familiar, including the My Lai massacre. "The media had all but ignored [the story] for the better part of a year," Eisenberg writes, noting "it was only Seymour Hersh's persistence that enabled it to be published." She adds that the public reaction against Lieutenant Calley's conviction "far exceeded any public outrage over the massacre itself" (105, 267).

Other descriptions Eisenberg offers come as a relative

surprise, especially when considered collectively. With "brilliantly crafted speeches," she argues, Nixon was ultimately able, after an intense outpouring of opposition, to "control the narrative" (192) in response to the invasion of Cambodia. She also suggests that the coverage of the antiwar movement, especially veterans' involvement, was minimized. There were many protests on military bases in the United States, but "the mainstream media was paying scant attention" (220), and the January 1971 Winter Soldier hearings held in Detroit were "virtually unnoticed by the public" because of "lack of media coverage," despite organizers' attempts to get attention (226). Lieutenant John Kerry's eloquent, oft-cited testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee suffered a similar fate, as it was not "carried on national television" (288).

Eisenberg also argues that major moments and aspects of the Vietnam War often appeared as little more than a blip on the national media radar. Before the invasion of Laos (Operation Lam Son 719) took place there was a news embargo; and then, "taking the ban to preposterous lengths, the military embargoed the embargo by forbidding news outlets from informing their readers that censorship had been imposed" (244). Although "lifted one week later," this ban resulted in a "short-circuiting of public debate over the wisdom of invading Laos" (244). Eisenberg also suggests that the coverage of Operation Linebacker in 1972 was paltry, noting that "civilian damage inside North Vietnam was a nonevent. Coverage in the United States was sparse: some scattered articles in newspapers, almost none on television" (404).

Similarly, when the 1972 Republican National Convention descended into violence and there was "a prolonged battle" in which "the authorities clubbed and arrested demonstrators" (435), "the media covered almost none of it." The contrast between the coverage of the RNC in 1972 and the attention given to the violence outside the DNC four years earlier was stark. Despite similarities, the RNC was portrayed as "a unified, orderly gathering in celebration of a great president" (436). Taken collectively, the episodes noted here, and a variety of others, suggest that rather than being the unrelenting foe Nixon imagined, the media turned down many opportunities to criticize the White House.

The Richard Nixon who appears in *Fire and Rain* is malicious, deceptive, and callous, but he is also an undeniably brilliant storyteller and speechmaker (even though those narratives often involved bending the truth or telling outright lies). This was true both of his Vietnam-related addresses and his speeches about his administration's openings to China and the Soviet Union, which served as a PR coup for the administration. This is one of Eisenberg's larger arguments: that the "Vietnam problem increasingly shaped interactions with Moscow and Beijing," not the other way around (8). In other words, by the early 1970s, the president viewed the communist superpowers not as enemies—as reasons to continue the fighting (despite some speeches inflected with Cold War analogies)—but as potential allies in securing a face-saving exit from the Vietnam War.

The war in Vietnam certainly increased Nixon's appetite for positive press coverage, which the highly choreographed, ceremonial summits with communist superpowers provided in spades. The mere announcement of the trip to China took "Vietnam off the front pages" (278). The president's trip to China was *the* story, which created a hierarchy where mundane details about the China trip superseded coverage of the ongoing violence in Indochina. The summits also rehabilitated the administration's image and established Nixon's bona fides as a peacemaker, Eisenberg argues. "Journalists and politicians who had been lambasting his administration for months over its mishandling of the Vietnam War were rushing to praise



him." In the end, she writes, the China summit amounted to a "public relations windfall exceeding all expectations" (310, 371). This groundswell of galvanizing support was surpassed by reactions to the Moscow trip, which prompted an "enthusiastic response from the public, the press, and members of Congress in both parties" that "exceeded Nixon and Kissinger's expectations" (419).

Eisenberg suggests that selective coverage of the Vietnam War (which often took down the photographs or hung them in a back room) combined with front-page approbation about Nixon's détente policies to make the Vietnam War a second-tier story earlier than most of us think. All of this was enabled by the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops, which meant that fewer Americans were dying. Long gone were the days when *Life* magazine ran photos of each of the 241 Americans who died in a single week (63). By the fall of 1972, Eisenberg argues, "the war was disappearing from the front pages of most newspapers and receiving scant coverage on television news" (438).

*Fire and Rain* is a tour de force. It is sure to prompt further study of a variety of topics, and I especially look forward to seeing how future scholarship will engage with her descriptions of the relationships between the administration and the media. In addition, although the this book (or any other individual book) is unlikely to settle the lively scholarly debates about the Vietnam War, I do expect that Eisenberg's seminal study will help set the terms of the discussion. One of the book's key contributions is to challenge future scholars to keep the photographs on the wall—to put internal policy debates and their human consequences in conversation. As the events of the Vietnam War are no longer within living memory of the majority of people in the United States, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, this approach to history is more vital than ever.

#### Notes:

1. These events and their reverberations are described in Amanda C. Demmer, *After Saigon's Fall, Refugees and U.S.-Vietnamese Relations, 1975–2000* (Cambridge, UK, 2021), 32–34.
2. On this topic see Bob Brigham, *Reckless: Henry Kissinger and the Tragedy of Vietnam* (New York, 2018).
3. David L. Prentice, "Choosing 'the Long Road': Henry Kissinger, Melvin Laird, Vietnamization, and the War over Nixon's Vietnam Strategy," *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 3 (2016): 445–74.
4. Andrew L. Johns, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War* (Lexington, KY, 2010).
5. Operation Menu, the fourteen-month secret bombing of Cambodia that began in March of 1969, was not revealed to Congress until July 1973. Eisenberg discusses the planning of the operation and its shocking revelation (41, 47, 512).
6. Chester Pach, "'We Need to Get a Better Story to the American People': LBJ, the Progress Campaign, and the Vietnam War on Television," in *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century*, eds. Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank (Gainesville, FL, 2010), 170–95.
7. See Gary R. Hess, "The Media and the War: Irresponsible or Balanced Journalism?" in *Vietnam: Explaining America's Lost War*, ed. Gary R. Hess, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hoboken, NJ, 2015), 133–54.

### Review of Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia*

Addison Jensen

In 1969, shortly after becoming Richard Nixon's national security advisor, Henry Kissinger received some unsolicited advice from none other than Daniel Ellsberg, the future whistleblower behind the leak of the infamous Pentagon Papers. At the time, Ellsberg was working as an analyst for the RAND Corporation, but the two men had become acquainted during their years at Harvard.

In a piece of advice that would prove prescient, Ellsberg warned Kissinger of the pitfalls that accompanied the immense power, high security clearances, and abundance of "Top Secret" information given to the national security advisor. The danger, Ellsberg cautioned, would be the temptation to listen exclusively to other top-level elites while ignoring the views of individuals on the ground level who lacked such clearances. In the end, he warned, "you'll become something like a moron. You'll become incapable of learning from most people in the world, no matter how much experience they may have in their particular areas that may be much greater than yours" (242).

Ellsberg's advice was sound. But when it came to the United States' policies during the Vietnam War, it ultimately went unheeded by both Kissinger and Nixon—a fact made evident in Carolyn Woods Eisenberg's impressive work, *Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia*. Eisenberg assigns herself the formidable task of chronicling Nixon and Kissinger's policies during the Vietnam War and their resulting diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China. The overarching question of the book is simple but challenging. "How," Eisenberg asks, "can leaders of a democracy conduct an extended war on behalf of a repressive, unpopular regime [the Republic of Vietnam] when the human costs are enormous and defeat seems likely?" (14).

There is no single answer to this question. A variety of factors—including the need to demonstrate U.S. "credibility," Nixon and Kissinger's personalities, and the willingness of the national security bureaucracy to rely on military power—all provide insight into Eisenberg's query. But one important explanation can be linked to Ellsberg's 1969 warning to Kissinger. Though standard narratives of the Vietnam War tend to emphasize the intellectual errors made by "the best and the brightest" of Washington's policymakers in the Johnson and Nixon administrations, Eisenberg rejects this formulation. In examining U.S. policy, she argues, the key is to understand that the tragedy of the Vietnam War was "less a failure of intellect than the selective vision of people in power" (12)—the ability of top officials to engage in self-deception to justify their goals, while ignoring perspectives that challenged their opinions.

The objective of the book is therefore twofold: "to describe and explain the policy choices that were made" by the Nixon administration, and to "consider the impact of these choices on the lives of particular people" (12). A lofty goal, but one that is deftly handled by Eisenberg, who draws on thousands of recently declassified materials—including transcripts from Kissinger's telephone calls and the Nixon presidential tapes—to tell this story.

Unsurprisingly, Eisenberg's account focuses mainly on Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. But one of her underlying motivations for undertaking this project was to shine a light on other individuals involved in the decision-making process and to situate "Nixon and Kissinger within the wider context of the people, the social and political institutions, the prevailing ideology, and the existing practices that framed their decision-making" (8). The two men, Eisenberg reminds her readers, were not empowered to act alone. Their policymaking often reflected the views of other top-level members of the national security bureaucracy—just the sort of individuals Ellsberg had cautioned Kissinger to avoid relying on exclusively. While Nixon and Kissinger, especially in the early years of their administration, leaned heavily on the opinions of career military men such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington and the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), Eisenberg also draws attention to two other sources of influence.

Both the organized peace movement and public opinion (often expressed through congressional activity) limited the options available to Nixon as he unsuccessfully waged war

in Vietnam. A central, if camouflaged, antiwarrior was none other than Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. Up until this point, and with the notable exceptions of Dale Van Atta's book, *With Honor: Melvin Laird in War, Peace, and Politics* (2008), and David Prentice's upcoming book, *Unwilling to Quit: The Long Unwinding of American Involvement in Vietnam* (2023), Laird has occupied a secondary position in scholarship centered on Vietnam War era foreign policy. *Fire and Rain* elevates Laird to a leading role by arguing that the secretary of defense played a pivotal part in advocating for U.S. troop withdrawals.

Despite his public-facing appearance as a hawk, Laird often privately disagreed with Nixon and Kissinger's policy decisions—particularly those related to the expansion of the war in Cambodia and Laos. Publicly, however, Laird defended the administration's decisions to Congress while working tirelessly behind the scenes to advance his policy of "Vietnamization"—a strategy aimed at gradually bringing American troops home and replacing them with South Vietnamese forces. This approach put Laird at loggerheads with Kissinger and other top military officials, who viewed the American military's presence in Vietnam as the most powerful incentive for the North Vietnamese to negotiate and thus judged Vietnamization a mistake.

Nevertheless, between 1969 and the fall of 1972, Laird succeeded in bringing home tens of thousands of American combat troops. He was helped along in this endeavor by Nixon, who, unlike Kissinger, saw the value of troop withdrawals. While it is true that the president escalated the war in Cambodia and Laos in an attempt to force Hanoi to the negotiating table, Nixon also maintained a close awareness of how long the public (Congress, the peace movement, and the "silent majority") would be willing to tolerate what seemed to be a never-ending war. For Nixon, Vietnamization played a crucial role in both combating the antiwar movement and pacifying a Congress that had shown itself increasingly reluctant to fund the war (the Cooper-Church and Case-Church amendments are just two of the antiwar congressional measures explored by Eisenberg).

The book is divided into two parts, which chronicle Nixon and Kissinger's policies before and after the spring of 1971, a moment Eisenberg identifies as a commonly overlooked turning point in the war. In part 1, "The War," Eisenberg focuses heavily on the Nixon administration's policy of vietnamization and its decision to expand the war into Cambodia and Laos. The policy culminated in Lam Son 719—a South Vietnamese offensive into Laos in February and March 1971.

While the campaign aimed to cut off North Vietnamese access to the Ho Chi Minh Trail (and thus, Nixon and Kissinger hoped, forestall a future enemy offensive), the operation ended in failure. With only the support of U.S. air power, the South Vietnamese troops were overrun. The sight of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) hastily retreating from the battlefield seemed to undermine the Nixon administration's claims that Vietnamization was working. Compounding the failure of Vietnamization—while simultaneously reinforcing the urgency of troop removals—was the emergence of a new faction of the antiwar movement, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW).

By June 1971, it had become clear to Nixon and Kissinger that their Vietnam policies were failing. It was time to focus their energies on a different approach, one that necessitated the assistance of the United States' adversaries, the Soviet Union (USSR) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Eisenberg turns her attention to these efforts in part 2, "War and Diplomacy." Covering the period between June of 1971 and the Paris Peace Agreements in January 1973, the second half of *Fire and Rain* chronicles Nixon and Kissinger's repeated attempts to enlist the USSR and China

in their quest to achieve "peace with honor" by extricating the United States from the war. Here, Eisenberg puts forth another assertion that is at odds with traditional accounts, "which assume that US military actions in Southeast Asia were the consequence of Cold War fears of the communist 'superpowers'" (8).

While Eisenberg acknowledges that the Nixon administration's early decision-making related to the Vietnam War was motivated by concerns about the Soviet Union and China, this explanation rings hollow for the post-1968 years. During that period, she argues, the exact opposite was true: instead of seeing U.S. involvement in Vietnam as an answer to the threat of Chinese or Soviet aggression, Nixon and Kissinger increasingly viewed China and the Soviet Union as possible solutions to their troubles in the country. Perhaps the communist superpowers could encourage Hanoi to come to the bargaining table. As a result, the two men made sizeable concessions on such important issues as arms control (the USSR) and the United States' relationship with Taiwan (China).

The irony of this approach, Eisenberg points out, is astounding. For years, American politicians had justified their escalating policies in Vietnam by arguing that the war was just one front in the global battle against communism. Yet by 1972, Nixon and Kissinger appeared downright friendly with both of their former opponents. Ultimately, their attempts at détente yielded little in the way of favorable negotiations with the North Vietnamese. In fact, the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement looked very similar to the agreement outlined in the 1969 negotiations. Even the Christmas Bombings of 1972, intended to cow the North Vietnamese into submission, failed to change the terms of the negotiations.

In the end, the Paris Peace Agreement was essentially the same as a deal reached in October 1972, prior to the bombings. The Paris Agreement's chief provisions were a ceasefire in place, an agreement to "withdraw all foreign troops from South Vietnam," and the return of all American prisoners of war (POWs). Undermining the Nixon administration's repeated claims that the United States was in Vietnam to preserve democracy, the final agreement left the fate of South Vietnam undecided. Instead, a "National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord" was established to organize the election of a new South Vietnamese government (492).

Nixon and Kissinger failed to leverage their relationship with the USSR and China into a favorable compromise with Hanoi. Politically, however, their triumphant and historic visits to China (in February 1972) and the Soviet Union (in May 1972) were a success, allowing both men to position themselves as peacemakers and international statesmen and gaining them the approbation of the American public. Unfortunately, their dealings with the Soviet Union and China entailed such significant concessions that the two men often preferred to operate on their own—bypassing Congress, State Department officials (including Secretary of State William Rogers), and U.S. ambassadors in their maneuverings. By cutting nearly everyone out of the decision-making process, Nixon and Kissinger were, in Eisenberg's words, "actively overturning some of the chief safeguards of democratic governance without so much as a backward glance" (369).

But it was not merely top-level officials whose opinions were ignored (or rather, unsolicited). Time after time, Nixon, Kissinger, and a host of other officials within the national security bureaucracy turned a blind eye to the impact their policies were having on the ground—on Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian civilians; American troops and aid workers; journalists; and even Vietnam's environment. Operations such as the 1969 bombing campaign in Cambodia ("Operation Menu," with individual components designated "Breakfast," "Lunch," "Dinner,"

“Snack,” and so forth) were given names that showed a callous disregard for the heavy toll the bombings took on civilian populations.

Eisenberg recounts one particularly shocking story about Kissinger’s reaction to the release of photos documenting the March 1968 My Lai massacre. At Nixon’s request, Kissinger had phoned Laird to strategize about how best to limit the negative publicity that was sure to follow the news of the massacre. The photos, Laird admitted, were “pretty terrible.” Kissinger, it turned out, had yet to look at them. “Should I?” he asked (103). This brief anecdote offers a shocking reminder of the stunning levels of detachment present among the top officials of the Nixon administration. “Not seeing or learning about discomfiting realities,” Eisenberg comments, “was often the prerequisite for career advancement” (12).

While Nixon, Kissinger, and other members of the bureaucracy may have chosen to overlook the experiences of individuals who were witnessing the war firsthand, Eisenberg is determined to bring these voices to the fore. Among the many commendable qualities of *Fire and Rain* is the way the author skillfully blends traditional top-down diplomatic history with a bottom-up approach that emphasizes the human consequences of decisions made at the highest levels of the U.S. government. In addition to combing through a veritable avalanche of recently declassified government documents, Eisenberg weaves the voices of everyday people into her narrative. *Fire and Rain* makes ample use of memoirs, news reports, magazine articles, documents from civilian-run organizations, and interviews to remind her readers of the human costs of the sterile policy decisions made by the Nixon administration.

Included in these accounts are the stories of Ron Kovic (a Vietnam veteran who was paralyzed in the war and subsequently joined the VVAW peace movement), Kim Phuc (a nine-year-old Vietnamese girl who was photographed running naked down a road after being burned in a napalm attack by the South Vietnamese Air Force), and students from Kent State University. Each perspective buttresses Eisenberg’s claim that a complete understanding of U.S. policy during the war is possible only if we also consider the impact of these decisions on people’s lives.

If there is one shortcoming of this work, it is the notable absence of the perspectives of South Vietnamese soldiers. Throughout *Fire and Rain*, the reader is repeatedly asked to consider how the Nixon administration allowed the United States to remain in the quagmire that Vietnam had become. Given the high levels of casualties and the unpopularity of the South Vietnamese government, how did the United States justify its decision to remain at war? One of the official answers to this query, of course, was that the American government was committed to preserving the democracy of the freedom-loving people of South Vietnam. Yet the voices of ARVN soldiers—the very people tasked with shouldering the bulk of the fighting, particularly as the policy of Vietnamization was implemented—are barely present in *Fire and Rain*.

For example, in chapter 14 of the book (“Take a Stinking Hill”), Eisenberg provides her readers with a detailed accounting of the failed Lam Son 719 campaign. While the chapter includes the perspectives of Nixon, Kissinger, President Thieu, military officials, American troops, and journalists, only one ARVN soldier is quoted in the chapter, leaving the reader to wonder how South Vietnamese soldiers felt about the mission, their American sponsors, the policy of Vietnamization, the South Vietnamese government, and the war itself.

By omitting the experiences of the ARVN military, *Fire and Rain* allows the opinions of Nixon, Kissinger, and other military officials to dictate the reader’s view of ARVN troops. These American actors held South Vietnamese soldiers in low regard, viewing them as

lazy, inept, cowardly, and overly reliant on the American military. Such characterizations relegate South Vietnamese soldiers to mere pawns in a chess match between the North Vietnamese and the United States, thereby stripping them of their agency in shaping the war experience. In recent years, works such as Robert K. Brigham’s *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army* (2006) and a host of memoirs written by ARVN veterans have helped to correct this imbalance, but *Fire and Rain* is overwhelmingly dominated by the voices of Americans.

That objection aside, Eisenberg has provided historians with an impressive piece of scholarship—one that draws attention to the ways in which policymakers selectively listened to some voices, ignored others, and in the case of Nixon and Kissinger, repeatedly circumvented the Constitution by depriving the American people of the right to contribute to policymaking decisions. *Fire and Rain* is a thought-provoking book. By blending an examination of policy with a consideration of its impact on human lives, Eisenberg has provided a fresh perspective on the Vietnam War while offering sage advice to future decision-makers.

### Review of Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia*

P. Mike Rattanasengchanh

This is a lengthy book that endeavors to explain the many nuances of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger’s approach to the war in Southeast Asia. Carolyn Woods Eisenberg brings together many events and actors to create a narrative explaining that Nixon and Kissinger’s foreign policymaking process was based more on the “selective vision of people in power”—in this case, theirs, rather than “the consequence of Cold War fears of the communist ‘superpowers’” (12, 8).

The book is divided into two sections. The first is focused on Nixon and Kissinger’s use of the battlefield as another form of diplomacy to force Hanoi to concede to U.S. demands. They failed, producing only more death and destruction. Domestic politics also played a role in the administration’s strategy, as Eisenberg shows that the home front placed constraints on “presidential decision-making” (9). However, Nixon found the right words and emphasized the right events to maintain some support and popularity.

The second section of the book shows Nixon and Kissinger’s lack of interpersonal awareness. Eisenberg provides ample evidence that Nixon and Kissinger were oftentimes aloof and misjudged other leaders and peoples. Ideas that they had mulled over in countless meetings and that were at the heart of many backchannel agreements rarely produced the desired outcomes the two men had envisioned. Eisenberg also demonstrates in this section that the real tragedy of Nixon’s administration is that his role in the Watergate scandal received more attention from the House Judiciary Committee than the Vietnam War’s devastating impact on the lives of Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Lao did. Southeast Asia was an arena for Nixon and Kissinger to play their political games in order to save both of their and America’s images, not to bring peace.

Part 1 of the book begins by unpacking the ambiguity of Nixon’s presidential campaign slogan about ending the Vietnam War with “peace and honor.” What the Nixon administration actually tried to do was devise a way for the United States to end the war without losing face. American involvement in the war would be phased out via Vietnamization, which called for the incremental withdrawal of U.S. ground troops and expanded efforts to help Saigon learn to fight for itself.

Another way to help the South Vietnamese government was to expand the war into Cambodia to rid enemy

sanctuaries and thus create some semblance of security for Saigon. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, often ignored by Nixon, and Secretary of State William Rogers expressed hesitation about this plan because of possible domestic backlash. The move also seemed to contradict the administration's claim to want peace and an end to the fighting. Eisenberg provides examples of Laird and others who disagreed with Nixon being sidelined. Nevertheless, Laird remained a "team player" until the end (499).

The concerns that Laird and Rogers had expressed proved justified when news broke about the invasion. Americans demanded to know why Nixon had expanded the war to Cambodia and why U.S. soldiers were still dying in Southeast Asia. Anti-war protests spread, pushing Nixon to accelerate the removal of troops. However, the violence did not stop, and Nixon continued secretly bombing Cambodia in hopes of destroying Hanoi's military options in the south and of gaining the upper hand at the negotiation table.

Nixon and Kissinger's next desperate move to salvage American prestige and extricate the nation from Vietnam on their own terms was to help Saigon invade Laos. There were pressures on the domestic front for a deadline to remove all U.S. troops and broker a peace agreement with Hanoi. Washington wanted to show that Saigon could conduct a campaign by itself, and the incursion into Laos, referred to as Operation Lam Son 719, was a possible answer. The United States had been bombing Laos since 1964. Prior to that, the Central Intelligence Agency worked with the Hmong in a secret war. The goal of Lam Son 719 was to interdict the Ho Chi Minh trail near Tchepone in southern Laos so as to halt supplies and manpower coming from the north.

Eisenberg goes into great depth about the planning for and conduct of this operation and shows how badly Nixon and Kissinger wanted Lam Son 719 to work. Unfortunately, it was a disaster, with South Vietnamese troops retreating in disarray. Some Americans were also confused about why the fighting had expanded. The United States was supposed to be ending the war and bringing peace to Vietnam. Anti-war protests increased across college campuses, as they had after the Cambodian incursion. Washington withdrew U.S. and South Vietnamese forces, but the bombing of Laos persisted, just as the bombing of Cambodia did.

Somehow, Nixon was able to win-over some of the American public. Eisenberg describes how the President used his oratory skills to sell his Vietnam policies. She cites the "silent majority" address, describing it as "by far the most brilliantly executed speech that Nixon had ever given" (92). Instead of promoting immediate peace in Vietnam, the president used the occasion to try to convince supporters that only he could bring "a just peace" (91). Similarly, Nixon used an address that was supposed to set the stage for his secret plan for Cambodia to praise America's superior morality, even though his intent to bring more destruction to the region. Eisenberg calls the speech "disingenuous." Some of his best speaking performances took place when he was promoting his meetings with the Soviets and Chinese, where he portrayed himself as a peace-maker. Eisenberg cites favorable polls and positive comments from officials and politicians in reaction to Nixon's speeches as indication of his success. Even some policymakers who opposed Nixon's actions reluctantly supported him.

Part 2 of the book delves into the diplomatic side of Nixon and Kissinger's policies. Between dealing with battlefield issues and domestic upheavals, both men met with the Soviets and Chinese. Their strategy was to try to use the two communist nations to pressure Hanoi to concede to some of Washington's demands.

America's rapprochement with these countries was ground breaking. Eisenberg's treatment of Nixon and Kissinger relations with the Soviets is one of the more

novel parts of her book. Like China, the two men thought, Moscow could have some influence in making Hanoi more amenable to U.S. peace proposals, especially since the Soviets were the chief military suppliers to North Vietnam. Nixon chose this time to introduce the idea of linkage. When engaging with other nations, he told the Soviets, the United States and the Soviet Union should "do what we can in a parallel way to defuse critical situations such as the Middle East and Vietnam" (44). Kissinger, for his part, dangled the carrot of improved relations and reduced arms productions as incentives. These offers lessened tensions somewhat between the two nations, but they failed to sway North Vietnam. Both men misjudged the Chinese and Soviet hold over Hanoi. Vietnamese leaders remembered being bullied by the two communist powers in 1954, making them obstinate to demands from Beijing and Moscow (46, 89).

Nixon and Kissinger's consternation at the North Vietnamese response to their proposals was not out of character. Eisenberg describes how both men were often disconcerted when a leader did not acquiesce to their overtures or a situation did not turn out the way they planned. And it would not always be in the realm of big power relations that they exhibited judgment errors. Eisenberg points to instances where they misunderstood the American public, the North Vietnamese, and Congress. Both Nixon and Kissinger seemed unable to fathom that others could think differently from them. They were in their own world.

Eisenberg successfully links the decisions of Nixon and Kissinger to negative results for the Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Lao people. The book draws in statistics of the approximate death counts and the enormous amount of ordnance used on these countries and includes descriptive accounts of wounded adults and children. Air power became the only tool left for Nixon and Kissinger to use, as they thought it would lead Hanoi to change its mind. However, it only brought more unnecessary suffering. In Laos, for example, tens of thousands of civilians were killed or wounded. The U.S. invasion of Cambodia destabilized the country and gave the Khmer Rouge room to grow. In March of 1972, the North Vietnamese launched a large offensive. In response, Nixon initiated massive air operations, bombing both the north and south. Kissinger cabled the president calling the bombings "absolutely awe inspiring" and assured Nixon that they were "really punishing these people, believe me" (423). Military targets were the focus, but as Eisenberg states, "this phase of the American air war was hurting civilians in the South..." (423). Congress eventually found out about the secret bombings in Cambodia, which lasted for fourteen months in 1969 and 1970. This discovery spurred calls for impeachment, but for some reason the House Judiciary Committee left Cambodia (and Laos) out of their investigations.

Eventually, the United States chose to wash its hands clean, even though doing so meant forcing its ally, Nguyen Van Thieu, to accept unfair terms. Eisenberg shares some of Thieu's laments at being easily disregarded, "The Americans let the war become their war... When they want to stop it, they impose on both sides to stop it" (496).

The book ends with a look at Southeast Asia post-1973. The Geneva Accords had some big question marks for Vietnam, but it lacked even more specificity regarding Laos and Cambodia (505). Violence continued in both countries because of domestic rivalries and U.S. intervention. The suffering lasted longer than necessary. Nixon and Kissinger's desires were less about "peace with honor" and more about their vision of wanting to end the war on terms that suited them and not the American, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Lao people.

This book covers a lot of topics, people, and events, and in some ways, it reads like a synthesis of other narratives from the historiographies of Nixon and Kissinger, U.S.

diplomatic history, and the Vietnam War. Eisenberg provides context to Nixon and Kissinger's Vietnam policies, and she had a lot of ground to cover. First, she examines the international scene showing the Soviet and Chinese role in foreign policymaking. Second, we see domestic politics intersecting with foreign, as protests and congressional action constrained the White House to some extent from the beginning and then more so by 1973. However, Nixon still had a sizable following that gave him some confidence that what he was doing in Vietnam was right. Third, the book delves us into the fractured relationships within the White House. Nixon and Kissinger insulated themselves, ignoring opposing and more realistic views.

Lastly and most importantly, Eisenberg gives us a glimpse into the rationale of the president and his national security advisor (and later secretary of state) when it came to foreign policy. Both men were shrewd and saw the world through a realist lens, basing policy on self-interest and not Cold War ideology. At the same time, their policies seemed to emanate more from what they perceived to be right or what they thought others should be thinking, and all too often their actions often led to more confusion and ruin.

*Fire and Rain* is a very long examination of two men and how they engaged in foreign policy. The strength of the book is that it is an almost comprehensive study of Nixon and Kissinger's plan for Southeast Asia and shows the complications of the Vietnam War and the people involved. We see the many influences and factors that shaped foreign policymaking and the opinions of the leaders who engaged in it. It was interesting to learn how two leaders thought they could use what seemed like unlimited power to force their ideas and will on others.

Much of the information and arguments in Eisenberg's book can be found in other scholarly works on U.S. foreign relations and the Vietnam War. *Fire and Rain* brings many of them into one integrated narrative centered on Nixon and Kissinger. Those who are unfamiliar with Nixon's Vietnam policy will get a good in-depth overview. Eisenberg frames both men's decision-making process as part of their own "selective vision" (12). They turned away from the old Cold War ideology, but from the sources in the book, readers may conclude that their actions could be explained as part of détente, which is barely mentioned. Détente was supposed to relieve superpower tensions so Nixon and Kissinger could maneuver, like in Vietnam.

Is Eisenberg's book another way of looking at détente and its flaws? Détente was supposed to ease tensions with the Soviets and allow for more foreign policy mobility for the White House. She gives plenty of evidence against Nixon as there is a strong connection between the administration's decisions and the deaths of hundreds of thousands in Southeast Asia. Nixon and his associates were deep in legal troubles because of Watergate, but Article IV—the article that accused the president of deceiving Congress by misleading and downright false testimony concerning American military operations—could have implicated the president and Kissinger in larger problems beyond domestic. Détente enabled the president to engage in policies that served his own interests and made the nation's involvement in Southeast Asia more destructive without the fear of drawing in the Soviet Union and China.

### Author's reply

Carolyn Eisenberg

Book reviews, whether written or spoken, can offer invaluable insights into themes and concepts that may not have come across as clearly in the manuscript as the author intended. I am, therefore, especially appreciative of the detailed reviews provided by historians such as Amanda C. Demmer and Addison Jensen, who amplify

certain features of my book that have attracted less attention despite their intended significance.

Situating Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in a wider context posed one major challenge for me in constructing a narrative. On the one hand, these larger-than-life figures were "the deciders" — often the first and last two people to advance and settle U.S. foreign policy. On the other hand, they were responding to diverse domestic and global pressures, the balance of which shifted over time.

Both men made their careers by conforming to Cold War orthodoxy and cultivating its practitioners. Upon entering the White House, their early decisions reflected the pressures from the "national security" bureaucracies, especially the military. As Addison Jensen reflects, it is the "selective vision" associated with these entities organizations that proved so detrimental.

That "selective vision" encompassed not only specific ideas, but a language, a set of norms, and a way of functioning that limited what options would emerge at the top that they could see. By the time Nixon and Kissinger had completed their first year in office, more than 11,000 U.S. soldiers had died, Cambodia had become a more dangerous place, and the situation in South Vietnam was not significantly improved, pacification charts notwithstanding.

Against this backdrop, the American peace movement was continuing to grow as exemplified by the October 1969 Moratorium, which involved millions of people across the country participating in a wide range of non-violent activities. As the reviewers note, I devote considerable attention to this movement, not simply its presence but its impact on policy.

In thinking about the peace movement, I want to elaborate on a point which may not have emerged with sufficient clarity: the pivotal position of Nixon's Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. Nixon chose him for this position because of his extensive experience as a Republican leader in Congress. As politicians Laird, along with many of his peers, were keenly attuned to public opinion, including the power of the protest movement among civilians and increasingly within the military.

Responding to that pressure, Laird was a constant advocate for troop reduction throughout the entire four years of Nixon's first term. On this issue, he reflected the growing disillusion about the war on Capitol Hill. Historians have tended to underestimate that sentiment among members of Congress because resolutions cutting off funding for the war repeatedly failed. But at times formal votes can obscure strong attitudes, which are expressed in various forms of policymaking and influence.

Both reviewers, Demmer and Jensen, note the increasing isolation of Nixon and Kissinger from the relevant executive bodies, including career military leaders. This estrangement evolved over time, producing a distinctive mindset. A major factor was Nixon's need to be re-elected, which by the third year was driving key decisions. Because the election of 1972 was a landslide for Nixon in the end, it is easy to forget how challenging the situation appeared to him the year before. Indeed, fearing a 1972 North Vietnamese offensive, Nixon was mindful of how Lyndon Johnson's popularity diminished in the aftermath of the Tet Offensive.

By mid-summer 1971, Nixon faced an impatient electorate, a dwindling amount of ground troops, and a perceived corrupt, timid South Vietnamese Army. As election day approached, he and Kissinger worried about what they would have to show for the sacrifice of so many young Americans. Out of that dilemma, they became even more secretive and dishonest than before. In her review, Jensen gives welcome attention to Nixon's and Kissinger's diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China. Indeed, when I began reading the declassified transcripts of those conversations from early 1971 on, I was amazed by how

these old Cold Warriors were so assiduously cultivating the communist leadership of their ostensible foes, not just in words, but in promises and concessions on key issues.

There is no single explanation for this about-face. However, as discussed in my book, the need for dramatic achievements to overshadow their costly failures in Southeast Asia was a critical factor. Furthermore, they harbored fresh hope to enlist Soviet and Chinese help in obtaining North Vietnamese acquiescence in a peace agreement, an achievement that might yet appear as a qualified success to war-weary Americans. Some of that assistance from Moscow and Beijing did materialize. However, the final peace accords, signed in January 1973, left the South Vietnamese regime in peril. While the US finished bringing American troops home, the army of North Vietnam and their NLF allies could remain in place, operating in the South. Kissinger himself doubted that the Thiệu government would last more than two years against the onslaught.

The most significant criticism Addison Jensen offers is that “the voices of ARVN soldiers — the very people tasked with shouldering the bulk of the fighting, particularly as the policy of Vietnamization was implemented — are hardly present in *Fire and Rain*.” It is a fair point. My lack of knowledge of the Vietnamese language, and a tendency to rely so heavily on primary sources written in English, limited the voices of soldiers in South Vietnam. From the outset of my project, I wanted to integrate the study of high policy with events on the ground. As a professor, I had come to appreciate how the study of high-level policy, which did not convey the impact of those choices on living and breathing people, lacked meaning. However, in making these connections, I came to appreciate how this indifference to human costs partly explained why Nixon, Kissinger, and their colleagues so frequently miscalculated.

In her generous review, Demmer forefronts this aspect of the book: “By continually reminding readers about the voices Nixon and Kissinger refused to hear, the expertise they refused to call upon, and the experience they refused to consult, (the author) illustrates the contingency of these years and illuminates many a policy not pursued.”

The third reviewer Dr. Mike Rattanasengchanh restates some of the main points of the book, while sidestepping the analytical issues. In one instance, he misunderstands my perspective. In my view, the problem was not that Nixon and Kissinger lacked “interpersonal awareness,” although this was arguably a Nixon flaw. The relevant deficit, I believe, was their lack of concern, interest, or sensitivity to entire categories of people.

Rattanasengchanh usefully calls attention to the events in Laos, providing brief historical background for Operation Lam Son 719, an almost forgotten military campaign during February-March 1971. In that effort, thousands of South Vietnamese soldiers, operating for the first time without U.S. help on the ground, crossed into Laos heading for the cross-roads town of Tchepone. This was less “a desperate plan ...to salvage American prestige,” than a narrowly defined attempt to cut off the flow of North Vietnamese manpower and supplies into the South. At a time when U.S. airpower was still available to assist the ARVN, General Creighton Abrams and his colleagues were optimistic, believing that a successful mission would prevent a North Vietnamese offensive over the next year. However, for this to occur, South Vietnamese troops would need to keep fighting in the area for at least two months.

Unfortunately, for Nixon and Kissinger, the South Vietnamese military proved less competent than anticipated. After a slow advance to Tchepone — facilitated by U.S. helicopters — the Thiệu government shockingly ordered a retreat. Contrary to expectations, there were tens of thousands of North Vietnamese troops in the area, which were inflicting major casualties. President Thiệu

considered the political price too high. The net result for the Nixon administration was a public relations disaster, as millions of American saw on the news the spectacle of fleeing South Vietnamese soldiers clinging to the skids of U.S. airplanes.

For Nixon, Kissinger, and much of the news media, Lam Son 719 was a moment of truth — illuminating the fact that despite millions of dollars spent on weapons and training, the South Vietnamese military could not readily stand on its own. During the next eighteen months, for Richard Nixon, “damage control” remained an overriding imperative. However, in that enterprise, he was paradoxically assisted by decisions he had made in warding off the peace movement.

Though the steady removal of U.S. ground troops weakened the position of South Vietnam on the battlefield, it was a great boon for the president politically. In the run-up to the presidential election of 1972, George McGovern defined himself as the “peace candidate.” Yet national polls showed that most Americans had more faith in Nixon’s ability to end the war. To antiwar activists, this seemed absurd and provided clear evidence that the American public was, in their eyes, truly gullible. But this criticism of the president overlooked an important factor driving Nixon’s showing in the polls: by November 1972, Richard Nixon had brought most U.S. troops home.

In early 1973, as the U.S. troops came home and the prisoners returned, it seemed almost certain that the Vietnam experience had taught the country some valuable lessons. Yet fifty years later, we continue to grapple with lessons learned or forgotten in applying U.S. foreign policy. There has never been a proper reckoning of the enormous civilian suffering, the United States inflicted upon the civilians of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. And associated with that lack of accountability, was the failure to recognize the dangers of an overly militarized national security state, or to make necessary change.

# Seven Questions on... Teaching U.S. Foreign Relations

Lori Clune, Catherine Forslund, Luke Griffith, Justin Hart, Michael E. Neagle,  
John Sbardellati, and Kimber Quinney

**Editor's note:** "Seven Questions On..." is a regular feature in *Passport* that will ask scholars in a particular field to respond to seven questions about their field's historiography, key publications, influences, etc. It is designed to introduce the broader SHAFR community to a variety of perspectives for a given field, as well as serving as a literature and pedagogical primer for graduate students and non-specialists. This iteration, however, focuses on teaching the history of U.S. foreign relations. **AJ**

**1. What are your 25 favorite books and/or articles to assign in a survey course on the history of U.S. foreign relations (e.g. U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776; U.S. and the World since 1914)? Do you use a textbook? Why (and which one) or why not?**

**Lori Clune:** We don't offer a traditional history of U.S. foreign relations course. The department never really embraced a broader survey of U.S. diplomacy and as the only faculty member in my department interested/trained, I have focused on specialty courses. I do use a foreign relations focus in my lower division, GE modern U.S. survey class.

**Catherine Forslund:** The main text I use in my 300-level diplomatic history survey (1776-1940 and post-1940) is the Oxford University Press *Very Short Introduction* book on *American Foreign Relations* by Andrew Preston. We only read about half of it in the first part of the survey, but we read the whole thing in the second semester. The ideology of US diplomatic leaders is so engrained in the foreign relations culture that those short chapters lay the foundation for those influences in the best way for students studying in the second semester. While really brief, it hits all the key issues students really need, and in these days of students reading less and less (at least at my institution), something that gets the major points across as efficiently as possible is welcome. In addition, I put a general US foreign policy history textbook on reserve in the library (by LaFeber, Patterson, etc.) for students to augment their knowledge on various events in diplomatic history depending on their existing knowledge.

My favorite readings are collections of core primary source documents that almost by themselves, with the proper context, encapsulate most/all of the ideological foundations of US foreign policy throughout its history. Can't name them all here, but starting with John Winthrop's *City Upon a Hill* and Washington's Farewell Address/Jefferson's inaugural speech, through Monroe and Truman Doctrines, Open Door Notes, the Roosevelt Corollary, and George Kennan's Long Telegram/Mr. X Article, even into the Reagan, Bush, and Obama Doctrines (these and multiple others) are the most powerful statements students can get of what US leaders based decisions on and set policy with for the nation.

One novel I like to use in class is *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene (1955) which gives a very engaging look at the transition in Vietnam from French colonial power to US power in the years leading up to the America's war there. The various elements at play in South Vietnam and the intrigue of the story makes it compelling and instructive both at the same time.

In recent years, I've used the following books with good results: *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World*, Frank Lambert (2005); *From Isolation to War 1931-1941*, Justus Doenecke and John Wilz (2015); *The Killing Zone: The US Wages Cold War in Latin America*, Stephen Rabe (2011); *Crisis & Crossfire: The US & the Middle East since 1945*, Peter Hahn (2005); and *The Vietnam War: An International History in Documents*, Mark Atwood Lawrence (2014). Lambert presents a topic usually glossed over in most histories with a few sentences or paragraphs and students do get interested in talk of pirates! Doenecke and Wilz's classic about the leadup to World War II is short, to the point, clearly written, and gives students a great, intense deepdive into the topic. Rabe and Hahn offer students another chance to study more in-depth regions of the world that often get shorter shrift but are of interest to them and often in the news. While I have students read from both books, I let them do a project expanding their knowledge in either Latin America or the Middle East and they can follow their interests. Lawrence's Vietnam text has just the right combination of documents, narrative, and analysis and isn't prohibitively expensive. None of these books are overly costly which matters a lot with my students.

**Luke Griffith:** In survey courses about U.S. foreign relations at New Mexico Junior College (NMJC), I assign traditional, readable monographs and a textbook. My goals are to introduce students to academic prose and the foundational arguments in the field about important subjects, such as the origins of the Cold War, the U.S. decision to nuke Japan in 1945, and the Americanization of the Vietnam War in winter 1964-1965.

I tend to assign classic monographs in my courses. For instance, I require students to read Melvyn Leffler's *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953*, an orthodox explanation of why American policymakers feared communism in the early Cold War. To outline the debates about the U.S. atomic bomb decisions in 1945, I assign Wilson Miscamble's *The Most Controversial Decision: Truman, the Atomic Bombs, and the Defeat of Japan*. To shed light on President Lyndon Johnson's thinking about the Vietnam War, I also assign the introduction and conclusion of Fredrik Logevall's *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam*.

In addition, I assign portions of a textbook, David Shi's *America: A Narrative History*. It is a well-written, narrative history, which provides students with the background information that is required to interpret U.S. history.

**Justin Hart:** I teach the survey of U.S. foreign relations in two halves, breaking at 1914. My favorite book to assign in both halves is what functions as the textbook, the Merrill/Paterson volumes, *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations* (which also conveniently break at World War I). Although now somewhat dated, not having been updated for almost 15 years, these volumes are the only things out there that combine primary documents with different scholarly interpretations of those same documents. *Major Problems* therefore remains essential in teaching students what it means to “do” history, in terms of the way that an evolving secondary literature grows out of individual authors’ engagement with an often-fixed set of primary documents. (n.b. Someone could do the profession a real service by releasing a new edition of this book.)

Alongside *Major Problems*, I also assign 23 supplementary books, both novels and monographs. I have tried various novels, including (of course) *The Quiet American* and *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, but my current favorite is Viet Thanh Nguyen’s *The Sympathizer*, which gives a Vietnamese-American perspective on the American war in Vietnam. The monographs that have consistently elicited the best discussions for me are Kristin Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood* for the first half of the survey and Mary Dudziak’s *Wartime* for the second half of the foreign relations survey. Students tend to have a very polarized response to Hoganson; most do not expect to encounter such an explicitly gendered analysis in a foreign relations class and they are often either fascinated or repelled by it, which leads to excellent discussion in either case. *Wartime* elicits equally good discussions, but for the opposite reason, as both conservative and liberal students come together in critiquing the military-industrial complex and endless war from different ends of the political spectrum. In fact, what might be described as a neo-isolationist sensibility among the current generation of students is the most striking attitudinal shift over the twenty-ish years I’ve been teaching U.S. foreign relations—so drastically different than the gung-ho militarism of the immediate post-9/11 period when I started teaching.

**Michael E. Neagle:** My U.S. foreign relations survey is titled “American Foreign Policy” and covers the 1890s to the present. The course is designed to illustrate how the United States evolved into a global power.

I don’t use a textbook or monographs in large part because students simply didn’t do much of the assigned reading. Over the years, I’ve taken a “less is more” approach. I typically assign shorter readings—articles, essays, op-eds, primary-source documents—but analyze them in greater depth during class discussions. To that end, for many years I used *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations* (Merrill, Paterson, eds.). The selected documents in each chapter were usually edited to a digestible length while preserving the richness of meaning and ideas. The essays often provided differing arguments about a particular issue, which demonstrated to students the importance of interpretation and evidence in historical analysis. In recent years, I’ve shifted my main reader to *America in the World* (Engel, Lawrence, Preston, eds.), which provides much of the same thing as *Major Problems* at a more affordable price. Students seem to appreciate getting different perspectives from each excerpt.

My course readings lean more toward primary sources

than secondary ones to enable students to engage more directly with historical actors and their ideas. Some of the documents that have produced the most fruitful discussions include FDR’s Pearl Harbor address, George Kennan’s Long Telegram, and George W. Bush’s post-9/11 address to Congress. There is a bounty of assumptions contained in these texts—particularly about America’s place in the world and how challengers to that presumption are framed—that I try to help students tease out.

**Kimber Quinney:** I teach the entire chronology of American foreign relations. The course begins prior to 1776 because we approach early Euro-American and Anglo-American diplomatic relations with indigenous nations as an essential chapter in the history of “American” foreign relations. The course continues to the present (quite literally to the present day sometimes) as a way to underscore the ways in which that history directly and indirectly affects contemporary U.S. foreign policy.

The course begins with the assumption (be it wrong or right) that American foreign policy has historically had three primary goals: to maintain security, to promote prosperity, and to spread American values. I ask students to assess the extent to which those three goals continue to guide foreign policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We pay particular attention to the relationship between American foreign relations and American democracy, interrogating questions such as: Does a “democratic tradition” exist in the history of U.S. relations with other nations? To what extent does or should the United States promote democracy abroad? What is the relationship between national security and civil liberties at home?

I do not use a textbook, but in recent years I have relied consistently on the following books:

Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *American Empire: The New Rules of World Order, 1776 to the Present* (2013).

Michael Cox, Timothy J. Lynch, and Nicolas Bouchet, eds., *US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion from Theodore Roosevelt to Barack Obama* (2013)

Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young, eds., *The New American Empire: A 21st Century Teach-In on U.S. Foreign Policy* (2005—we need a new edition!)

Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008)

**John Sbardellati:** I am a big fan of the “Major Problems” series, and I always use *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations, Volume II: Since 1914* by Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson. The selection of documents and secondary sources in each chapter is superb, and I always have more than enough to engage students in discussion. I appreciate that each chapter has at least two secondary source selections, and that these offer students a gateway into the debates that have shaped the field. Sometimes the interpretations put forward in these selections are diametrically opposed to each other, and this creates an opportunity to stage an in-class debate, which students often enjoy since it gets their competitive juices flowing. In other chapters the source selection is more about surveying the range of methodological approaches historians have utilized to study the topic at hand, which is useful in exposing students to the ways in which historians’ methodology influences our understanding of the past. In other words, how history itself is shaped by the questions we choose to ask.





# **2024 SHAFR ANNUAL MEETING**

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Years ago I assigned a lot more readings than I do today. Another of my favorite series is "Debating Twentieth-Century America." This series doesn't have a long list of titles, and only a few are specifically on foreign relations, but the volumes are excellent. I especially find the book on FDR's foreign policy—*Debating Franklin D. Roosevelt's Foreign Policies, 1933-1945*—by Justus Doenecke and Mark Stoler to be superb. I have fond memories of dividing my students into two groups, Doeneckians and Stolerites, and having them engage in rousing debates. As with the "Major Problems" series, this one also includes both secondary sources and a selection of primary documents, but the difference here is that the essays were written specifically for this book rather than being excerpts. They are more comprehensive, and much longer as a result. Each volume in this series is 200+ pages, which is hard to assign to undergraduates these days, especially if this is only covering a week of material in the course.

My US foreign relations course is a single semester standalone class at the 3rd year level. So I don't teach the first half of the US foreign relations survey, but instead I begin in 1898. So I usually have a number of additional readings that I start the course off with since the Merrill & Paterson volume begins in 1914. For example I've often assigned a chapter from Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood* which pairs very nicely with just about any speech by Teddy Roosevelt. Next time around I may adopt Hoganson's Bedford Series book *American Empire at the Turn of the Century*, which features a wide array of documents that could lend itself to multiple in-class discussions and even an early semester writing assignment.

## 2. What is your favorite lecture to give and why? What lecture topic do you dread as it approaches on the syllabus?

**LC:** I love teaching most of the twentieth century. Students are nearly a blank slate in U.S. foreign relations, so it is all new to them. I feel less confident teaching 9/11 and after. Students often have relatives who fought in Afghanistan or Iraq and it can be difficult to grapple with the complexities of the more modern conflicts.

**CF:** I'm not good at picking favorites of anything, but I do really enjoy the lecture covering the "freeing" of Panama, the "negotiations" of the Canal Treaty, and the Colombian general spirited across the isthmus on the railroad, all combined with the intrigue of Cromwell and Sullivan, the bluster of TR, and the slapstick of the Marx brothers. I've never done it, but I'd like to find the right film clip of Groucho and his brothers putting something over on someone in one of their film which so well portrays the images these Panamanian events evoke to show students none of whom (usually) know of the great Marx brothers. The reason I like this one in particular is the great story it is which includes so many elements of US policy in Latin America in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries and illustrates them in an engaging way. Another lecture topic that's enjoyable for similar reasons is one covering the Open Door Notes.

If there's anything that I dread, it's covering treaties with Native American tribes across a wide spectrum of eras, with the Trail of Tears/Jacksonian years the worst. There are many sad stories in US history, but these are among the worst and I believe it is necessary for students to know the dark sides of history, but that doesn't mean I enjoy teaching them so much.

**LG:** My favorite lecture to deliver about U.S. foreign relations focuses on the recent U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It builds on my previous lecture about the

U.S. role in the creation of Israel in the 1940s and the Suez Crisis of the 1950s.

I enjoy teaching contemporary U.S. history, including the Trump and Biden administration's policies in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is also a way to connect history to popular culture, such as comedian Will Ferrell's impressions of President George H. W. Bush.

In contrast, I am less enthusiastic about my lecture on the Spanish-American War. It is an important subject—the U.S. acquisition of an overseas empire—but my students grow weary of my emphasis on overseas markets and naval bases. In the spring I will jettison some of the diplomatic context to show how the U.S. media and domestic politics helped to cause the conflict.

**JH:** My favorite lecture is probably the one titled "The American War in Vietnam," perhaps because it is the subject I know best outside of my own research. It can often be hard to distill one's own research specialty into a survey-sized lecture that does not lose the forest for the trees. With Vietnam, I have a breadth of knowledge unencumbered by the depth gained through a research specialty, so I am able to speak authoritatively without becoming bogged down in endless asides. Regardless of the reason, I enjoy providing the long view in Vietnam, going back to the early 20th century before culminating in the Johnson/Nixon period of peak U.S. involvement.

My least favorite lecture is on the interwar period. Perhaps wrongly, I feel an obligation to cover dollar diplomacy and the politics of isolationism (Neutrality Acts & such) and I struggle to care very much about the Washington system, the Dawes Act, or Gerald Nye and company. I have thought about jettisoning these topics entirely in favor of a straight cultural perspective on these years, but my lecture on the coming of World War II would make far less sense without a base knowledge of the high-level policy-making between the Versailles Treaty and the late 1930s.

**MEN:** As a course on modern U.S. foreign relations, which I consider to be in my professional wheelhouse, I really enjoy talking about all the topics we address. While some matters are certainly more somber to discuss than others, I think they are all worthwhile as I connect them into the broader story of the United States' rise as a global power. If there were any topics that I did dread, then students surely would, too.

The one lecture/lesson I look forward to most, though, is about the end of the Cold War. In that class, I tap into popular culture. As a child during the Cold War, I never appreciated the depth of complexity and meaning. But looking at it historically, it becomes more evident. I open with a couple of videos: a professional wrestling match between Hulk Hogan and Nikolai Volkoff and the opening scene from the film *Red Dawn*. In both cases, we collectively read the videos like texts and consider how the antagonists reflect popular mid-1980s fears of the Soviet Union as evil and threatening. Over the duration of the class, though, I go over some of the subtle shifts in such views highlighted by the evolving Reagan-Gorbachev relationship that aimed to reduce the threat of nuclear war. I close with the last scene from the film *Rocky IV* in which Rocky Balboa famously asserts after his defeat of Ivan Drago that "everyone can change."

**KQ:** My favorite lecture is titled "Civil Defense versus Civil Liberties," which I give during our discussion of the Truman administration and McCarthyism. The tension between safeguarding homeland security and protecting

civil liberties has deep roots in American history, and we review that history prior to the late 1940s. Then we delve into the elaborate system of government controls and lack of transparency constructed during the Cold War system created in and justified by secrecy: secret agencies, secret budgets, secret documents, and secret decisions affecting not only issues of war and peace abroad but also freedoms at home.

I dread the lecture on the War of 1812. Even today, scholars suggest that the conflict was “crucial” for the United States, that it left a “profound and lasting legacy” by testing the U.S. Constitution and by revealing the U.S. potential for world power in the economic contest with Great Britain. With all due respect to my colleagues who continue to analyze the War of 1812 and conclude that the war was not motivated by westward expansion, I find the debates about economic warfare with Britain to be a distraction from more interesting and consequential issues: the fate of Tecumseh, the obliteration of the American Indian confederacy, and the devastating implications for any remaining Native American resistance against American encroachment. But, until very recently, historiographical debates seem to have smothered consideration of such issues. Moreover, generally speaking U.S. sources describe the conflicts with Native Americans with a profound lack of empathy and remorse. For these reasons, I find myself embarrassed by the lecture despite my efforts to emphasize what I find to be the most significant long-term impacts of the war.

**JS:** I enjoy a number of the lectures in this course. I like when I can find a good detail or anecdote that grabs student attention. Like the story about Taft when he was in the Philippines and had reported about riding around for miles on horseback, which provoked Root’s great reply: “how is the horse?” Or LBJ’s quip about the Tonkin Gulf resolution being like “grandma’s nightshirt.” This generation of students can be a tad prudish so I often find myself giving them the PG-13 versions of Johnson’s quotes. Perhaps my favorite lecture in this class is the one on Reagan’s Cold War. The students take a lot of interest in the idea of a “Vietnam syndrome” that may have hemmed in policymakers in the 1980s. And they are usually very interested in learning about the Iran-Contra scandal, especially about Ollie North and his “neat idea.” Most of them confuse the arms-for-hostages part of the scandal with the Iranian hostage crisis that befuddled Carter, so I enjoy clarifying that for them. I also like challenging the pervasive myths that are part of the “Reagan Victory” interpretation, and then really throwing them for a loop when I give Reagan a ton of credit for embracing diplomacy with Gorbachev. But most of all I love my PowerPoint slide that features the 1985 “Ronbo” cartoon from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. The students immediately get the joke with the juxtaposition of Reagan and Rambo, though sadly the Marx Brothers reference completely eludes them.

I don’t have any lectures in this class that I dread giving. But there is one that I’ve never attempted, and that’s the Cuban Missile Crisis. I fear that I can’t do justice to the conflict, that I can’t truly impress on them just how high the tensions rose, and how close things came. So this is one where I turn to film. I think the best one may still be the Cuba episode from the CNN/BBC documentary series on the Cold War. At just under 50 minutes it can be screened in its entirety, and it contains fascinating interviews with figures like Castro and McNamara. Students are often stunned by Castro’s brash dismay over the peaceful resolution of the conflict, and the episode pairs perfectly with the Merrill & Paterson chapter of *Major Problems*.

**3. What do you see as your biggest challenges in teaching this generation of students about the history of U.S. foreign relations (or even just in terms of teaching in general)? How have these changed since you began teaching?**

**LC:** I think we all face the challenge of teaching students who struggle with determining the reliability of information. Over the years I have shifted to consciously teaching critical reading skills.

**CF:** The biggest challenges stem from a couple things: lack of a reading habit—beyond anything longer than a Tweet or Facebook post—and a seemingly powerful disinterest in current events, whether local, regional, national, or international. That’s not to say they don’t have intense interests, they are just so seemingly-inward focused—on the latest TikTok, meme, pop star, athlete, etc.—so getting them motivated beyond that is often very difficult. In some ways, teaching foreign relations in these times of heightened tensions is a bit easier because students do hear/see news, but wars and general conflict does get their attention, showing them the world has a lot going on, some of which can affect their lives directly. In partial proof of these points, when Russia attacked Ukraine, the big question in class was whether the draft would be activated.

The general overall change since I started teaching full-time in the late ‘90s is that an increasing percentage of students over the decades seem to be in college almost only because everyone tells them they need a college degree to get a job. So, they come to college, not really wanting to, with no particular interest in a major—maybe to keep playing their sport—and have no real desire to learn, and no intellectual curiosity so it’s hard to get them engaged much or sometimes even at all. This is true much more in intro-level US surveys than in the diplomatic history classes taken mostly by history majors.

These challenges aren’t unique to diplomatic history of course, nor are the problems of students on electronic devices in class, or using AI to “improve” their papers, but they are changing some of the fundamental ways in which we must teach going forward.

**LG:** I teach students who are often unprepared for college coursework at NMJC, where my greatest challenge is to maintain student engagement in my courses. In general students from Generation Z have a limited attention span, especially in survey classes. This has always been an issue, but student attention spans have deteriorated since the Pandemic.

Therefore, I employ traditional and creative techniques to keep students focused during class. For instance, I break up lectures with multimedia clips and open-ended discussion questions about every eight minutes. Otherwise, students get bored and cease taking notes. I also make participation in classroom discussion a significant percentage of a student’s grade in the course, which incentivizes participation in Socratic discussion.

**JH:** I could write a whole separate essay about the larger pedagogical challenges of teaching the current generation of students, so I will restrict my comments to teaching the current generation of history majors about U.S. foreign relations. In another question, I discussed what I would describe as a heightened sense of neo-isolationist sentiment among the current generation of student—a striking departure from the pro-interventionist sentiments of the students who entered my classes a generation ago in the wake of 9/11. I do not find this shift either positive or

negative, per se, but it does make it harder to get students to engage critically with the assumptions that dominated U.S. foreign policy-making from 1941 forward.

I came of age as a teacher trying to provoke students to critically examine the assumptions undergirding the creation of the American empire. Trained in the revisionist tradition of the Wisconsin school, I situated myself as a critic of empire. For whatever reason—perhaps the leftward shift of the college-educated at large, perhaps growing up saturated in the failures of American imperial overreach (most especially in Iraq and Afghanistan), perhaps something else I have not yet identified—I find that fewer students today push back against my interpretation of U.S. foreign relations. This makes my central goal as a teacher—stimulating critical thinking—a greater challenge than I used to find it.

**MEN:** In general, there seems to be less curiosity or willingness to engage ideas that run counter to preconceived notions. Many students figure they can simply Google what happened and that suffices as historical understanding. I impress upon such students the importance of differing interpretations and questions, that How and Why are sometimes more important than What or Who.

My teaching challenge is compounded by the fact that I work at a business-oriented college. There is a great deal of institutional emphasis on preprofessional training and less attention paid to the development of broader, critical-thinking skills and appreciating wider contexts. Moreover, much like at other schools, the History major here was phased out, so there are fewer students seeking upper-level, advanced courses in History like my U.S. foreign relations course.

**KQ:** This generation of students seem to have been raised on U.S. exceptionalism. They take the nation for granted; they expect that the United States will remain forever powerful and democratic. As a consequence, they find it difficult to imagine how history might have unfolded differently. And they cannot conceive that the United States' reputation as the "city on a hill" and a global beacon of light is not entirely deserved or might be extinguished.

Another (and I think related) challenge is the general lack of interest among students in tracking down sources (and the sources of those sources). This is partly due to the digital age and their obsession with social media. But something else is happening. Students are quick to jump to interpretations about events without evidence. Moreover, at least in my corner of the country, in this moment of "post-truth America," students are profoundly disillusioned with the very concept of "historical truth." As one of my students wrote recently:

I used to think I knew what historical truth meant. I really did. "America is the greatest country ever,"—I thought that was a truth for quite some time. . . . But now I am sitting here behind my monitor, and I am just rather cross about the whole situation. I don't feel like I can do anything, school is making me upset, articles are opinion pieces, I no longer feel like I can adequately convey a message anymore without having to seriously neuter it. So when it comes to defining historical truth, I can't. It seems that people don't want truth, they want to be on the right side of history.

**JS:** Everywhere I've taught I have found that students appreciate the importance of this history. For the past 15

years I worked in Canada, and the students there certainly have an appreciation for the consequential role that US foreign policy plays on the world stage. Now that I am returning to teaching in the US, I am curious to see if American students today still grasp the significance of our field. I am very curious to see how well these classes fill, and how much of this history will be familiar to students already.

I think that the challenges I face in teaching this current generation of students are more general in nature, as opposed to being specific to the field. I find students today to be bright and engaged. Last semester I taught my foreign policy course for the first time in several years, and I found the students to be very perceptive in their analysis of primary documents. But many of them struggled to comprehend the secondary sources. Those who actually did the reading could give decent answers to factual questions, and in their answers they could pull from information they read in the essays. But they tended to struggle with more interpretive questions, especially ones that asked them to identify and evaluate the arguments of the various authors they read that week. If I made any headway in improving their comprehension of secondary sources it was only by placing them in small groups, each tasked with spotting the author's argument and tracing some of the evidentiary claims. Ten or twelve years ago I could assign hefty reading lists, and though certainly not all of the students would have read everything that was assigned, enough of them were able to glean the main points.

**4. Do you use film in your teaching of U.S. foreign relations? If so, what are your favorites and why? If not, what precludes you from doing so?**

**LC:** I recently taught a U.S. Nuclear History in Film class. Sixteen films in sixteen weeks. Students knew very little about nuclear weapons/power. They wrote particularly effectively about *Fail Safe*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Meltdown: Three Mile Island*, *War Games*, *Chernobyl: The Lost Tapes*, and, most powerfully, *The Day After*.

In a non-film course, I often use movies, especially documentaries. For example, in my U.S. and Vietnam class, I like to show *The Fog of War*, *Two Days in October*, and *The Movement and the "Madman"*.

**CF:** I have used film to teach history, but not diplomatic history specifically. My grad advisor's favorite films for diplomatic history were *Fort Apache* and *Casablanca*. Of course, *Casablanca* illustrates the complex national (and personal) relationships of the World War era and gives a strong nod to the future Cold War as well. *Fort Apache* was a metaphor, my advisor said, for the Cold War world. I think a course using all the James Bond 007 movies in sequence would be a great film class for examining global foreign relations (not just US, although the US is often a partner to MI6 and Bond, of course).

One drawback is the length of classes vs. that of films. I have offered a once-a-week class of films and history generally that's long enough to watch most films and engage afterwards to highlight points and messages. Assigning films to be watched outside of class is tough because everyone doesn't have equal access to them, and frankly, it seems much harder to get discussions going about almost anything in classes these days, including films. Lack of student participation in conversation about the films really takes the enjoyment out of using them. Otherwise, I would likely use them more.

**LG:** I like to show clips of films in the classroom. It presents

auditory and visual learners with a different way to be successful in my course, and it teaches students the skill of critical analysis. I encourage students to consider film an important type of primary source, meaning that they should consider its bias, audience, context, and purpose.

I enjoy showing clips of films about the Vietnam War for a few reasons. First, I highlight the evolution of U.S. films about the conflict. From *The Green Berets* to *The Deer Hunter*, filmmakers tended to reflect America's waning support for the war. In addition, I show portions of movies that deal with important subjects in the Vietnam War, such as *Full Metal Jacket's* depiction of the Johnson administration's Progress Campaign and *Apocalypse Now's* suggestion that the conflict was about Western imperialism.

**JH:** Although I use films extensively in my specialty courses, which I will discuss below, I rarely use films in teaching U.S. foreign relations surveys. This has to do, perhaps ironically, with my graduate training in teaching history through film. To put it bluntly, I do not believe in using film simply to illustrate a point that I could otherwise explain in lecture. I only want to introduce films if they can be critically interrogated as both primary as well as secondary sources. And this takes time—time that limits how much attention I can devote to other subjects. It can also require comparing multiple films against each other, as well as assigning readings about the films. I find that it simply takes too much time in the foreign relations survey course to teach film the way I want to, which is why I created a course at Texas Tech entitled U.S. Foreign Relations through Film—so that I could engage with films about foreign relations in the way I want to pedagogically.

**MEN:** In addition to the film clips that I use for my End of the Cold War lesson, I bring in other videos on occasion. I find it beneficial for students to hear different voices and get visuals of the people and places under consideration. For that reason, I generally favor documentaries, although I have used works of fiction on occasion, like the original *Manchurian Candidate* to illustrate fears of communism in the 1960s.

My favorite documentaries to use in my classes include *Why We Fight* (Jarecki) about the military-industrial complex in the early days of the War on Terror, as well as *Restrepo* (Hetherington/Junger) about a U.S. Army outpost in Afghanistan. Both films register deeply with students and tend to produce excellent discussions. I also like to use episodes from PBS's *Frontline* series, particularly in a related course I teach about the War on Terror. Some of the most useful installments for what I do include programs on "The Torture Question" (2005), "The Secret History of ISIS" (2016), and "Once Upon a Time in Iraq" (2020).

**KQ:** I used to assign fictionalized films such as *The Patriot*, *Hunt for Red October*, and *Flags of Our Fathers*. But I found that students didn't watch these films critically; they weren't concerned with assessing their historical accuracy and authenticity, despite my encouragement to do so!

More recently, I have turned to documentaries such as *Why We Fight*, *Fog of War*, and *No End in Sight*. Students seem better able to recognize that documentaries have biases, and they are more responsive to my invitations to challenge a film's arguments and evidence.

**JS:** Oh yes, I certainly do use film! In fact I teach a whole class on Hollywood's Cold War films. That course is essentially a class on American Cold War culture, and it uses feature films, most of them completely fictional, as windows into the cultural landscape of Cold War America. So the whole

class is aimed at introducing students to the ways that filmmakers and audiences understood and negotiated the shifting terrains of the Cold War struggle, and how film played a significant role in reflecting, interpreting, and even shaping American national identity in this era. I include many of the films you would expect to be in this class, like *Dr. Strangelove* and *The Manchurian Candidate*. I especially enjoy screening *Strangelove* because the vast majority of the students today have no familiarity with this film at all. Years ago many students were familiar with the iconic shots, especially Major Kong riding the missile, but these days the students have no idea that this is coming, and are truly shocked by the ending of the film. They also really find amusing the scene of President Muffley on the phone with Premier Kissev, and how it devolves into an argument over who is sorrier.

Probably because I teach a separate class on film and the Cold War, I do not use fictional films in my other foreign relations course. I do make use of documentaries in these classes, however. In my foreign relations survey, in addition to the "Cuba" episode from the Cold War series mentioned above, I have often shown the 1982 film *The Atomic Café*, which is still an engaging film that is hilariously funny in spots, but also effective in presenting the dark and dangerous aspects of the early Cold War. For my Vietnam Wars class, despite the recent Ken Burns series, I still find *Vietnam: A Television History* (the PBS documentary series from the early 1980s) to be the most compelling. There are several other documentaries that I screen parts of, but one that I show in its entirety in this class is another PBS American Experience film called *Two Days in October*. This film presents a stunning juxtaposition of battlefield and home front in October 1967, and the students are captivated by the oral histories with the former soldiers, students, and police.

**5. On what topic do you find that your students agree with you the most on the history of U.S. foreign relations? On which topic do you disagree the strongest with your students?**

**LC:** My students are particularly alarmed at the number of U.S. interventions, overt and covert, as I am. One way we often disagree is that they think the United States should step away from international obligations, treaties, and organizations like the United Nations.

**CF:** I have disappointingly little sense of whether my students agree or disagree with me on US foreign relations history to be honest. So few of them speak up that it's almost impossible to tell what they think. There has been some discussion and disagreement among students over the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, but that's between whether Israel is committing genocide, etc., not about agreeing with me or not. However, I would say generally, they do seem to agree, and begin to see the world a little differently during and after the course.

**LG:** It is difficult to determine if students agree with my narrative in a course, but students at NMJC tend to accept my overarching arguments about U.S. imperialism in Latin America. I discuss American economic and political imperialism in the Americas during my lectures about the Spanish-American War and the Cuban Missile Crisis. NMJC is a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and many of my students were raised abroad, where they witnessed American imperialism firsthand.

On the other hand, students tend to push back on my explanation about Western policy at the Munich Conference in 1938, when Westerners appeased Chancellor

Adolf Hitler. The conventional argument about Munich, of course, is that the West missed an opportunity to confront Hitler. In contrast, British, French, and American officials were not in a position to stand firm in 1938 with the Great Depression at home. They were also elected public officials in democracies, where voters were quite weary of war. It is not a popular argument, but I want students to grapple with a different interpretation of the Munich Conference and the onset of World War II.

**JH:** As mentioned previously, I have found that students agree with my perspective on U.S. foreign relations more today than they did when I began teaching, but one topic where I do provide a perspective most of them have not heard before is when I teach the Texas Revolution in the first half of the foreign relations survey. Almost all of them have been indoctrinated (if that is the right word) in Texas nationalism, not only through living in the state, but also by the public school curriculum that devotes an entire year of study (7<sup>th</sup> grade) to a patriotic history of Texas. Having not gone through this experience myself, I find myself in the odd position of sometimes knowing less than my students about the details of the history itself, while also providing an imperialist interpretation of the Texas Revolution that sounds deeply alien to most of them. Students tend to respond in very polarized ways to that lecture. Some eat it up, like encountering a wonderful new food for the first time; others have no time for my perspective whatsoever, which is fine.

I think the lecture where students agree most with my interpretation is with the American War in Vietnam. Most of them have been taught to think of Vietnam as the greatest disaster in the history of U.S. foreign policy, but few of them have a sense of the deep roots of that conflict. They seem to be grateful for gaining a greater understanding of how things went so wrong and why Vietnam was such a disaster.

**MEN:** For the most part, students agree that the United States has had an overbearing influence around the world over the last century or so. The most common point of contention, though, is whether that's been a good thing. Students tend to consider American influence to be benign or even beneficial to other places around the world. Personally, I am much more circumspect.

Yet I try not to get students to agree or disagree with my interpretations. Rather, I prefer to give them space to figure it out for themselves. I emphasize that while their arguments can certainly vary, they should nonetheless be grounded in specific evidence to support that position. If they ask me directly for my opinion, I'll give it to them so long as it's not an assignment question. I don't want to come across as too coy, and I want the explanations of my own positions to reflect the same evidence-supported framework that I ask of them. But I'd much rather students come to their own conclusions. My work is more geared toward helping them to get there.

**KQ:** My students and I are in close agreement with regard to expansion of presidential power and its negative impact on U.S. foreign policy. No matter where they might find themselves on the political spectrum, they all seem concerned that the power of the presidency interferes with the system of checks and balances in many ways especially with regard to decision-making and the implementation of U.S. foreign policies.

My students are far less likely to agree with me about the relationship between national security and civil liberties. For instance, when I make the argument in my favorite

lecture (!) that prioritizing national security has the potential to threaten civil liberties, such as those identified in our Bill of Rights, they aren't nearly as concerned as I am about that threat. I guess I'll have to keep giving the lecture!

**JS:** Interesting question. I think without being uncritical of FDR and his handling of foreign policy, I tend to give him pretty high marks, even in those moments when he is doing the most juggling and dissembling. I guess I am outing myself as a "Stolerite!" I think the students generally concur.

As for areas where we most disagree, well, good Fred Logevall student that I am, I tend to stress Johnson's unique culpability for the Vietnam War, but the students, perhaps by virtue of the structure of the course, still gravitate toward the idea that each link in the decision-making chain from Truman's choice to fund the French war through Johnson's choice to Americanize the war was of equal importance.

However, the biggest disagreement I've had with my students occurred just this past semester during the class discussion on the Nixon years. I started with an icebreaker activity where I asked the students to construct a "Nixinger" scorecard, listing the successes and failures of the Nixon and Kissinger foreign policy record. They listed all the expected items, placing the opening to China and détente on the success side, and the extending of the Vietnam war, the secret bombing of Cambodia, the intervention in Chile on the failure side, but then when I pressed them to give "Nixinger" a grade, I was shocked that most of them landed in the B+/A range. And I felt really old when they had no idea that "Nixinger" was a play on the practice of joining the names of celebrity couples. They'd never heard of Bennifer or Brangelina as being a thing!

## **6. What specialty courses in the history of U.S. foreign relations (e.g. Vietnam War, Global Cold War) do you most enjoy teaching and why?**

**LC:** I teach U.S.: 1914-1945, U.S. during the Cold War, U.S. Nuclear History in Film, U.S. and Cuba, and U.S. and Vietnam. I would teach an even wider range of courses if I had the time. I enjoy teaching them all, but the newest one, Nuclear History in Film, which I taught Fall 2023, was incredibly rewarding.

**CF:** In the last decade+ there has been little opportunity to teach much diplomatic history beyond an upper-level two semester diplomatic history sequence in our little 2-person department. In the past however, I did enjoy teaching a Vietnam War class because students who took it seemed generally interested in it, because they knew so little about it, and often have a family member who served. The most enjoyable classes are the ones that include the most engaged students. But the Vietnam War, in particular, brings so many different elements of Cold War US diplomacy into play that it is an especially good topic for teaching that complexity.

**LG:** I am a junior faculty member at a junior college, so I have not been able to teach specialty courses about U.S. foreign relations...yet. However, I am developing two new classes—U.S. History Since 1945 and U.S. History in the 1960s—that emphasize America's role in the world. In U.S. History Since 1945, I will focus on the global Cold War and American great power competition with Russia and the People's Republic of China. In U.S. History in the 1960s, I will examine America's war in Vietnam and its empire-building in the Third World.

**JH:** I teach two specialty courses on the history of U.S. foreign relations: The Cold War and U.S. Foreign Relations through Film. I have taught the Cold War course in several ways over my 20 years in the profession. For many years, I used a Westad-style approach to the history of the Global Cold War. But more recently, I have gone in the other direction entirely, teaching it as a history of the domestic culture of the Cold War, in which almost all the readings are fiction. In this current iteration of the course, I have assigned a variety of books, from creative nonfiction like John Hersey's *Hiroshima* and Kenzaburo Oe's *Hiroshima Notes*, to plays like Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, to classic works like *Catch-22*, *The Quiet American*, and *The Ugly American*, to less conventional choices such as E. L. Doctorow's *Book of Daniel*, Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*, and Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer*. Each time I have taught the course in this format, I have closed with the graphic novel *Watchmen*, which I would argue is the greatest work of fiction written about the American Cold War.

My other specialty course is U.S. Foreign Relations through Film, which is a course I created because I could not find a way to do justice to the teaching of film in the foreign relations survey courses. After an introductory methodological unit on how to view films as both primary and secondary sources (an approach I wrote about in the April 2016 issue of *Passport*), I proceed with units on World War I, World War II, the Cold War, Vietnam, and the War on Terror. I combine lectures on U.S. foreign relations with readings on the films we watch to provide the genesis for class discussions. I also assign Tim O'Brien's novel *The Things They Carried* to allow students to compare the fictional storytelling modes of books with films. Students have expressed particular appreciation for the methodological approach of the course, more so than the content, although they do enjoy the films as well. This is by far my most popular course. It nearly always fills to the cap.

**MEN:** For the last ten years, I've taught a popular course here about the War on Terror. Multiple sections of the class routinely fill each semester. Students seem to have the most interest in the topic because it encompasses their lived memories. Many of them have a vague sense of the conflict but appreciate going into more depth and complexity about it. Students' interest and enthusiasm for the topic is energizing.

Nevertheless, it is a challenging course to teach because of so many new developments. For instance, when I first started teaching the class, ISIS was hardly known. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 prompted significant revisions to my coverage of the U.S.-Afghan War. And as of 2024, by the FBI's own admission, the threat of terrorism has morphed—less about Muslim extremists abroad and more about right-wing white nationalists at home. My class has had to account for all these changes over the years so that it looks very different from when I first taught it.

The first iterations of the course, though, inspired my book project, *Chasing Bandits: America's Long War on Terror*, that is nearing completion. The study considers other twentieth-century episodes in which the United States pursued private foreign individuals we would now call "terrorists" to demonstrate that the War on Terror is not really new in U.S. history. Moreover, I argue that these challengers were useful in justifying broader American imperial designs. I wrote the book with undergraduates in mind and will look to use it in future designs of my course.

**KQ:** I teach a course on the domestic impact of the Cold War. The course starkly conveys how the objectives of

U.S. Cold War foreign policy undermined the protection and promotion of civil liberties at home. I enjoy teaching the course because so many different institutions (from the federal government to colleges and high schools) and attitudes (such as perceptions of immigrants, labor union activists, and civil rights activists as "agitators") were shaped by this tension between promoting democracy abroad and denying it to Americans at home.

**JS:** I teach two specialty courses connected to US foreign relations, "Hollywood's Cold War" and "The Vietnam Wars." I enjoy both, though for very different reasons. The film class allows me to expose students to several truly great movies that they otherwise would probably never see. Films like *On the Waterfront*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Three Days of the Condor*, and the aforementioned *Dr. Strangelove*. On the other hand, I feel compelled to include some titles due to their historical significance, and their usefulness to the course material, even if they are films that I truly dread watching. I am thinking especially of *My Son John* and *Red Dawn*. I have taught other "history & film" classes but I especially like the thematic cohesiveness of this class. What struck me most when putting it together for the first time was the way that gender became the overriding theme in the course. This was not intentional when selecting the films at all. Certainly some were chosen to highlight gender as a conceptual category in analyzing American Cold War culture, such as "momism" in *My Son John* and *The Manchurian Candidate*. But other films that I selected to highlight other aspects of Cold War culture, whether *Strangelove* and fears of nuclear Armageddon, *Ninotchka* and the appeal of capitalist consumerism, or *Red Dawn* and 1980s return of Cold War fears, all communicated their themes with a palpable emphasis on gender, specifically masculinity. I think that's really interesting.

As for my Vietnam course, it may be my favorite one to lecture in. This is because unlike any other course I teach, this one truly picks up the "story" from precisely where it left off in the previous lecture. I feel like this draws the students in more, and they ask more perceptive questions during the lectures which suggests perhaps a higher level of engagement in the subject matter. And I think that students still recognize the importance of the US war in Vietnam. They know it's a seminal moment in modern American history. It is also the class that I have revised the most. When I first taught it I gave rather cursory coverage to the French war, and I have to admit I didn't give adequate coverage to the Vietnamese side of the struggle in either war. It really was simply a class on the American experience in the Vietnam War, but though that remains a core part of the class, I am glad that I've internationalized it much more, and I believe the students are as well. It is also one of the most difficult classes I teach, especially because I use a fair bit of documentary film, much of which is very graphic. Rather than being desensitized after watching the same images of real people suffering and dying, I think it becomes harder and harder every time I teach the class. But I refuse to present the students with a sanitized history of the war.

**7. How can SHAFR do more to support the teaching of U.S. foreign relations—whether at the annual conference, in its publications, or otherwise?**

**LC:** This is a tough one, and something I have thought a great deal about. What might work at a research university may not fit for a state school or community college. I think access to syllabi from folks at all levels might be helpful. Also, perhaps sharing some recorded class sessions. Not just lectures, but engaging classes that include interesting ways to grapple with primary sources, or perhaps Reacting

to the Past examples.

**CF:** As far as what SHAFR can do, it should keep doing what it's been doing: have the teaching committee and panels on teaching at the annual conference, have articles in *Passport* about teaching, maintain the syllabus library, etc. The important thing is to keep offering these resources so they remain available to the new folks entering the field all the time.

If there was something to be done to make the general citizenry more aware of the importance of studying and learning from the history of foreign relations, I would suggest that, but it's hard to break through all the media noise these days—more than ever it seems—to make that point. Maybe if more people recognized the value of its lessons, more people would want to learn its history to find that wisdom (or folly). This might take the concerted action of all the history societies in the nation together to get citizens' attention, but should be worth the effort.

**LG:** I would like to see SHAFR devote additional focus at its annual conference to pedagogy. I would benefit from the opportunity to listen to established scholars talk about effective approaches in survey and upper-level history courses. I would also seek their counsel about balancing research, teaching, and family life, especially during the early phases of my academic career.

**JH:** As the cochair of the SHAFR teaching committee, I'll refrain from answering this question myself and simply look forward to reading the responses of others who participate in this forum.

**MEN:** Forums like this are certainly helpful. SHAFR conferences and publications are (understandably) mostly geared toward scholarship. But not all SHAFR members are at R1 or R2 institutions. For those of us at smaller, teaching-oriented schools who are not actively working on a scholarly book or article, it can feel like we don't have anything to contribute. I would encourage more panels and roundtables about the challenges of teaching and student engagement to help develop more and better ideas about effective learning.

**KQ:** So, here goes: I think we need to more explicit about our aim to seek out, identify, and describe historical truths not only in our scholarship but also in the way we teach history.

I know that sounds simplistic or even naive. But in this moment of political division and self-censorship, of "false news" and disinformation, of artificial intelligence and artificial facts, it is vital for scholars and educators, and for the institutions and associations where they ply their trade, to stand up for the idea that historical truth, while it may be elusive, is something worth pursuing.

One of George Orwell's most often quoted kernels of wisdom goes as follows: "During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." As it happens, Orwell didn't really say this. Although often attributed to Orwell, the observation is actually a corruption of a sentence written by Antonio Gramsci in the Italian weekly newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo* (*The New Order*) in 1919: "To tell the truth, to arrive together at the truth, is a communist and revolutionary act." But when a mistake is repeated often enough, it becomes accepted as the truth.

Of course, Orwell did write a lot about history and truth. Reflecting on the Spanish Civil War in 1943, Orwell recounted the ways in which propaganda and falsehoods in

Spanish newspapers began to push aside truthful accounts: "This kind of thing is frightening to me," he admitted,

because it often gives me the feeling that the very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. After all, the chances are that those lies, or at any rate similar lies, will pass into history. . . . Yet, after all, some kind of history will be written, and after those who actually remember the war are dead, it will be universally accepted. So for all practical purposes the lie will have become the truth.

I would like for SHAFR to do more to support the teaching of hard truths, to do whatever it can to continue to keep the lie from becoming the truth.

**JS:** Well I really appreciated that last year's SHAFR conference had a panel on teaching. I found the whole panel to be informative and stimulating, and I was especially influenced by Brian Etheridge's talk on role-playing pedagogy. I have long been intrigued by the idea of incorporating gaming into my teaching, and several times have considered trying one of the "Reacting to the Past" role-playing games in one of my courses. Invariably I would give it very serious consideration, and then chicken out. The published games are daunting in that it seems that to do them right you have to dedicate several weeks or more to the activity, and that has always been a deterrent. But at this SHAFR panel Etheridge discussed a shorter, single-session game on the Morgenthau Plan that he was developing, and later he very generously shared his materials with me to try out in my class last semester.

The game was a huge success! It was really the highlight of the class in terms of student engagement. The role-playing element encouraged some of the shyer students to step out of their shells a bit. Students were furnished with role sheets for each of the "players" in the game, such as Roosevelt, Morgenthau, Hull, Stimson, Welles, etc. Some of them really hammed it up! More importantly it gave them a window into the messiness of the policy and decision-making process, and into how political factors and personal rivalries can shape decision-making as much or even more than the nuts and bolts of the problem at hand. Etheridge also designed the game to be a lesson on the importance of having inclusive environments for decision-making.

I would love to see SHAFR encourage the further development of innovative pedagogy such as this, whether more historical role-playing games, or other types of engaging lesson plans that captivate student interest in our field.



# The CIA as a Force for Peace

Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones

The idea of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a force for peace will bring a wry smile to the face of many a reader. However, such skepticism about secret intelligence may be misplaced. Maximilian Ronge, head of Vienna's Evidenzbureau during World War I, suggested in his influential 1930 memoir *Kriegs-und Industrie-Spionage* that espionage could be a means of preventing war.<sup>1</sup> It is worth exploring the viability of that thesis in the particular case of the CIA.

At first glance, it seems that the agency, which has been involved in violent operations since the 1940s, is anything but a peace-making institution. One need hardly document the point. From the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 through the 1967 to 1972 Phoenix Program to eliminate communist cadres in South Vietnam to the more recent program of assassination by drone, the CIA's violent actions speak volumes about the hard-power purpose of the organization.

Yet is it important to question who gave the orders for such enterprises? In a handful of episodes, the CIA did act like a 'rogue elephant out of control.'<sup>2</sup> However, in a majority of cases, the agency acted on orders from above, issued by the President via his circuit-breaking subordinates and committees. Arguably, this meant that violence, when it occurred, was not a generic feature of secret intelligence but the outcome of sometimes misconceived orders from above.

Though it may be hard to believe, the CIA's creators were thinking of peace and preventing war. In the 1947 congressional debate, legislators spoke of the need to avoid a repeat of the surprise Pearl Harbor attack by gathering better intelligence. They did not say anything about deploying the agency as a watchdog against the Soviet Union. Over in the White House, President Harry Truman did not mention Pearl Harbor. Instead, he was thinking of nothing but the Soviet Union and its threats to U.S. security when he encouraged and supported the CIA proposal. In each case, though, peaceful intentions were at work: supporters of the agency wanted to avoid getting sucked into wars by surprise attacks and they recognized the importance of deterring enemies from starting serious trouble.

There were also circumstances, unmentioned in the 1947 debates, that opened opportunities for a new intelligence agency to contribute to a more peaceful world order. The United States had foresworn gunboat diplomacy at the Montevideo conference of 1933, creating a perceived need for the more peaceful, soft diplomacy for which the CIA was equipped. Second, the United Nations Charter of 1945 outlawed war as an instrument of state policy. It ushered in an era of undeclared wars, but also of secret operations and propaganda that stopped short of open fighting.

The relatively quiet demeanor of CIA analysts compared to the more flamboyant covert ops colleagues contributed to the obscurity of the agency's peaceful contributions. While researching my book on the history of the CIA and seeking ways to engage readers, I asked each of several senior analysts for colorful information that would enliven their personalities on the written page. I mostly drew blanks. Tom Fingar, chairman of the National Intelligence

Council under President George W. Bush, replied with the admonition, 'I try hard not to be colorful.'<sup>3</sup>

The CIA's history illustrates the point that failure to collect intelligence to prevent attacks can provoke more violent outcomes. When its analysts fail, or fail to prevail, disasters can occur. They range from the agency's failure to predict North Korea's attack on the South to the false 'weapons of mass destruction' assessment used to justify war against Iraq. In the recent past, the failure to anticipate the Hamas attack on southern Israel with its bloody aftermath serves as another example of the CIA's shortcomings. Such failures to prevent escalating violence, one might argue, have had far more deadly consequences than any covert action undertaken by the agency.

This shows what happens when you get your intelligence analysis wrong. The role of the analyst as peacekeeper is, clearly, significant.

The CIA's prehistory has some pointers to its role in promoting peace or resisting war. During World War I, for example, President Woodrow Wilson was strongly committed to the use of intelligence and drew on it heavily in his contribution to the architecture of post-war peace. He established The Inquiry, a national-emergency university of experts, to gather open-source intelligence and help shape the peace process. At the same time, his state department ran a more discreet operation designed to establish nation states with less disputatious boundaries.

Not everyone appreciated the importance of secret intelligence operations. In 1893, Senator George Frisbie Hoar secured passage of the 'Hoar amendment' prohibiting the use of secret agents for diplomatic purposes (he feared that Hawaii was being secretly annexed for use as a pseudo-slave colony). Today's supporters of democratic oversight would agree with Senator Hoar about the dangers of undercover operations. Yet influential actors have often ignored the Hoar amendment. By sending Emmanuel Voska to central Europe not just to spy but also to negotiate secretly, the Wilson administration used what the current director of the CIA, William J. Burns, approvingly calls 'back channel' diplomacy to establish the new state of Czechoslovakia in a way that would have distressed Hoar.<sup>4</sup> To oversee such enterprises, the Wilson administration set up a bureaucracy that became a kind of predecessor for the CIA. State department intelligence, by 1919 known as 'U-1' after the office of the undersecretary, was a significant presence at the Paris Peace negotiations.

During World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) sprang to prominence and established a reputation for derring-do operations. Its adventures inspired some of the CIA's advocates to push for a permanent version of the program, and it played a role in shaping many of the activities and ultimately the image of the CIA. At the same time, the OSS contained a Research and Analysis division, expertly led by the Harvard historian William Langer. There is little evidence that R&A impacted decision-making during the war, when military intelligence was of greater importance. After the war, though, OSS's R&A transmitted personnel and skills to the CIA, where Langer ultimately took charge of the Office of National Estimates.

In the 1950s, CIA experts used economic analysis to predict Soviet weaponry output at a time when it was exceedingly difficult to penetrate the wall of totalitarian secrecy with spies. The agency's technocrats then helped with the development of the U-2 plane that could overfly Soviet military areas at an altitude beyond the reach of ground-to-air missiles and take photographs. Nothing breeds fear and aggression more than ignorance. Gathering accurate information can often avert the urge to take swings in the dark. The knowledge transmitted by U-2s and their successors, the Corona spy satellites, made a vital contribution to the maintenance of peace in this way. The CIA pricked two fear-bubbles in the 1950s, the 'bomber gap' scare and the 'missile gap', by gathering intelligence that forestalled risky initiatives.

The CIA's role in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 is a case in point. Though there are varying interpretations of this crisis, few would question the proposition that the USSR's placement of nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba could have sparked an atomic war. The CIA's analysts were slow to identify the Soviet plan (CIA director John McCone's prediction of Moscow's actions was based on a personal hunch, not on analysis). But, with the help of U-2 overflights, the agency did identify what was happening on the ground in Cuba. The reconnaissance photographs helped President John F. Kennedy respond to the crisis in a measured manner that contributed to a peaceful solution.

The reputation of the CIA for reliable analysis of the Soviet threat was also a contributing factor in the negotiation of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty of 1972. Known afterwards as SALT I because it was the first of two rounds of talks, the treaty stabilized the number of intercontinental nuclear missiles held by the United States and the Soviet Union. At a critical juncture, the late Henry Kissinger had to convince the Senate that Moscow could be trusted to abide by the treaty. The CIA had concluded that the Soviets cheated on past agreements and could not be trusted. To achieve ratification, however, Kissinger told the Senate the opposite, that the CIA had a positive opinion of Soviet trustworthiness. Such was the reputation of the CIA analysts as knowledgeable and reliable, that a step toward peace was achieved by these devious means.

Later in the decade, the Senate, by now wary of Kissinger and the CIA, refused to ratify SALT II that restricted the use of poly-headed nuclear missiles (and was implemented anyway). This occurred after the famous Team A/Team B experiment. Team B was composed of security-cleared experts who would study the same data as the CIA's in-house Team A and form their independent conclusions as a check on the CIA's performance and decision-making. The experiment on the one hand reflected distrust of the CIA's analysts, and on the other, indicated faith in the idea that sound analysis was fundamental to national security and to peacekeeping.

Into the 1980s, President Reagan was determined to involve the Soviet Union in moves that would result in a more peaceful world. For instance, he aimed to achieve a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (START). He had to struggle, however, with his own lack of expertise in foreign affairs, and with opposition in governing circles. His wife Nancy encouraged him in his peace-seeking initiatives as did Secretary of State George Schultz, but he was otherwise mostly isolated.

CIA experts helped Reagan to overcome these difficulties. Declassified documents published in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series clearly indicate that Reagan received reassuring and continuing support from the CIA's rank-and-file analysts. The result? The Cold War ended, communism fell, the Berlin Wall toppled with it, and by 2001 there had been an eighty percent reduction in the nuclear arsenals of the US and (former) USSR. While much of this may have been due to the European people

and their fight for freedom, it would be churlish to deny that Reagan and his CIA's analysts played their part.

The peace keeping activities of the CIA extended beyond the Cold War. Today, we see CIA director Burns, the son of a general who advised Reagan on arms negotiations, shuttling between his counterparts in Moscow and Jerusalem. In the past, too, the agency played its part in trying to assuage the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, one of the relatively unheralded victims of the Hezbollah bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983 was the CIA's chief Middle East analyst, Robert Ames. More than a simple analyst, Ames had built a relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization's intelligence chief Ali Hassan Salameh, a back-channel connection that might have underpinned a peace initiative. In this case, the CIA officer's efforts came to naught. Israel's national intelligence agency, Mossad, assassinated Salameh in 1979, and Ames died four years later.

In the post-Cold War years, Islamic extremism and terrorism became urgent preoccupations for the nation, and for the CIA. The agency took the rap for the 9/11 and weapons of mass destruction fiascos that triggered wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. If the assumption remains that the CIA got it wrong, then one cannot doubt the premise that getting it right is important for peace. In each case there is, of course, disagreement about who and what was responsible for the estimative failings.

The punitive Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 diminished the authority of the CIA, but the agency continued to be a force for peace. The national intelligence estimate on Iran in 2007 is an example. At this time, the Bush administration was threatening war against Iran on the supposition that its Islamic theocracy was developing nuclear weapons that might threaten Israel and other U.S. allies. Tom Fingar's National Intelligence Council (NIC), a successor to the Office for National Intelligence, firmly closed the lid on that supposition. War was averted. Fingar, like his successors in post, acknowledges that despite the agency's 2004 demotion, the NIC still relies heavily on the CIA's spies and analysts.

The road to war is paved with misunderstandings. The CIA's analysts by no means possess an infallible crystal ball. Their agency has made well-documented mistakes and could have achieved more in its efforts to maintain peace. The intentions of the CIA as a force for peace, in other words, is often undermined by the actuality of the agency's history. Yet it is beyond a reasonable doubt that the CIA has discredited spurious threats or assumptions that might have escalated tensions to the point of conflict, and it has informed peace processes throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

#### Notes:

1. Maximilian Ronge, *Kriegs- und Industrie Spionage* (Leipzig: A.H. Payne, 1930), 5, 10, 364-5.
2. Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Challenging the Secret Government: The Post-Watergate Investigations of the CIA and FBI* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 87. For discussions of the issue of control of CIA operations, see Olmsted, *Challenging*, 87-96 and Loch K. Johnson, *A Season of Inquiry Revisited: The Church Committee Confronts America's Spy Agencies* (Lawrence: University press of Kansas, 2015), 53-7.
3. Author's e-interview with Fingar, 13 February 2021. The mentioned book is Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *A Question of Standing: The History of the CIA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).
4. William J. Burns, *The Back Channel: American Diplomacy in a Disordered World* (New York: Random House, 2019).

# SHAFR and Archival Research, From the Pandemic to the Present

*James Stocker*

*As the COVID-19 pandemic ends, several SHAFR initiatives are evolving to serve SHAFR members and the historical community more broadly.*

As many archives shut their doors in spring 2020, two SHAFR initiatives aimed to address the challenges this posed to researchers. First, the Task Force on Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic under Karine Walther and James Stocker created a Google Group that aimed to facilitate the sharing of archival photos, particularly for early career researchers. More than 440 individuals joined the group, helping dozens of researchers to exchange documents. Second, the Task Force on Freely Available Research Databases, led by Victoria Phillips, compiled an extensive list of online digital resources with freely accessible primary sources from archives around the world.

Last year, these two initiatives were merged into the Committee on Digital Resources and Archival Sharing. The records sharing Google Group, now renamed the Archival Research Discussion Group, is broadening its mission to serve as a forum for discussing archival research and facilitating research cooperation more broadly. Members can request or share information about particular archives. They can post requests for others to share any digital photos they may have from particular archival collections, as permitted by the archives' policies. The group can also be used to discuss best practices for archival research, find others to partner with on cooperative research endeavors, or ask for suggestions for paid researchers.

All SHAFR members are invited to join this group to keep up with the latest discussions on archival research. Members of the archives community, too, are invited to follow and participate in discussions. The group can be accessed at <https://groups.google.com/a/shafr.org/forum/#!forum/archival-docs/join>.

The Digital Resources page is moving to the beautifully redesigned SHAFR website at <https://members.shafr.org/research>. Committee members will work to ensure that this remains updated. If you have suggestions for online resources to add, please send them to the committee's email address at [cdras@shafr.org](mailto:cdras@shafr.org).

# He Said, He Said, Did Nicaraguan Dictator Say Dean Acheson Said?: Dominican-Based Files on Operation PBFORTUNE and Revisiting U.S.-Based Collections

Aaron Coy Moulton<sup>1</sup>

On July 21, 1952, Dominican ambassador in Nicaragua, Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, sent a cable from Managua to Ciudad Trujillo.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this message: Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza wished to send to Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo some rather important information regarding his recent trip to Washington, D.C. In the cable, Rodríguez Demorizi wrote:

*“Que en Washington el Secretario Acheson le expresó que era inútil todo respaldo a Arbens para liberarse de la influencia de Arévalo;*

*“Que si él Somoza se decidía a promover el derrocamiento de Arbens con la ayuda que usted bien conoce el Gobierno americano lo respaldaría;*

*“Que en posterior conferencia con Presidente Truman en presencia de Acheson y Subsecretario Miller, Truman le reiteró el ofrecimiento de respaldo a dicha acción y se extendió en interesantes consideraciones sobre el caso.”<sup>3</sup>*

Translated into English, the cable reads:

*“That in Washington, Secretary [of State Dean] Acheson expressed to Somoza that all attempts to free [Guatemalan president Jacobo] Arbenz of [former Guatemalan president Juan José] Arévalo’s influence were useless;*

*“That if he, Somoza, decided to promote the overthrow of Arbenz with the backing that you well know, the American government would support him;*

*“That in a later meeting with President Truman in the presence of Acheson and Assistant Secretary [of State Edward] Miller, Truman reiterated the offer of support for the said action and extended interesting considerations concerning the case.”<sup>4</sup>*

When I first stumbled upon this document in the “Secretaría de Estado de Relaciones Exteriores [Secretary of Foreign Relations]” collection at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Santo Domingo, I was taken aback. This July 1952 cable seemed a bit out of place. After all, I had requested materials on Trujillo’s international relations as part of my investigation into Operation PBSUCCESS, the infamous Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operation in which the U.S. government supported Guatemalan exile leader Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas and facilitated the military overthrow of Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz, all of which commenced in 1953 under the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. However, this cable summarized

conversations between Somoza and members of the Harry S. Truman administration, revealing that U.S. leaders and right-wing dictators considered supporting a coup in Guatemala before Eisenhower took office.

The July 1952 cable was not referencing Operation PBSUCCESS but its 1952 predecessor, the abortive Operation PBFORTUNE. That summer, Somoza approached U.S. officials regarding a conspiracy to aid Castillo Armas that led to planning for PBFORTUNE, the first U.S. government-backed covert operation aimed at overthrowing Arbenz’s government that was only halted when news of the plot leaked. Although historians already noted that Caribbean Basin figures participated in both operations, scholarship into the dictators’ actions and goals remained limited.<sup>5</sup> The prevailing historical account derived from the available source material, not the herculean efforts of scholars trying to recreate what had been a covert operation with a documentary record that had been purposefully skewed.<sup>6</sup> While rebuilding the structures of left-wing networks in the Caribbean Basin in the 1940s and 1950s, Charles Ameringer could never definitively prove his hunch regarding the existence of right-wing networks involved in plots to overthrow leaders across Latin America.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Piero Gleijeses, in writing his masterful *Shattered Hope*, suspected Trujillo played a deeper role in plots against Guatemala’s governments and reached out to Bernardo Vega, the Dominicanist historian who had access to select files from Trujillo’s dictatorship that had only been made available beginning in the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it was thanks to archivist Oscar Feliz and the staff at the AGN, whose immeasurable patience allowed me to request previously inaccessible materials, that I was fortuitously accessing an assortment of Dominican files proving Ameringer and Gleijeses’s decades-old hypotheses about these dictators. Due to other scholars’ foundational work and the mere happenstance of stumbling upon relevant files between Santo Domingo and London and the U.S. Midwest, I began to document how Caribbean Basin actors, British intelligence, and the United Fruit Company (UFCO) independently undermined Guatemala’s governments before shaping Operations PBFORTUNE and PBSUCCESS.<sup>9</sup> Less fortunately, with that July 1952 cable, I almost fell into a trap that can ensnare historians of foreign relations during the international Cold War: fetishizing new sources.

The SERREE files at the AGN have been a revelation into the conflicts dominating the greater Caribbean at the dawn of the Cold War. Growing out of the tumultuous first half of the twentieth century, the region’s peoples fought over their own ideals of democracy and dictatorship.<sup>10</sup> Those long opposed to Somoza, Trujillo, Honduran dictator Tiburcio Carías, and others tapped into the Second World War’s anti-fascist ideals to bolster their efforts.<sup>11</sup> In

response, these dictators summoned anti-communism to justify their suppression of democracy and repression of all opposition. As the SERREE files prove, they began to share intelligence and collaborate in order to maintain their respective positions of power.<sup>12</sup> Without the U.S. government's input, they conspired against Guatemala's democratic governments, undermined Venezuela's democratic governments, and intervened in Costa Rica's wars in 1948.<sup>13</sup>

Among the SERREE files, a handful provide brand new insights into the dynamics of Operation PBFORTUNE. Referencing his July 21 cable, Trujillo's ambassador Rodríguez Demorizi sent a descriptive telegram in mid-September following conversations with Somoza and Colombia's ambassador Eduardo Zuleta Ángel.<sup>14</sup> While reviewing the finances and logistics behind the forthcoming 1952 invasion of Guatemala to overthrow Arbenz's government, Rodríguez Demorizi complained that both the Dominican and Nicaraguan dictators seemed to be "carry[ing] the heaviest of the load" and that the "Yankee support could be broader than that offered." In a literature that has understandably revolved around the U.S. government's devastating policies toward Guatemala, the dictators and their officials saw themselves as the driving forces behind the counter-revolution and Operation PBFORTUNE, a perfect reflection of the past years' inter-American relations scholarship that has restored agency to Latin American dictators who were, as Max Paul Friedman summarized, more than "puppets" of the U.S. government.<sup>15</sup>

The two dictators and their representatives were not the only ones with such initiative. Following Rodríguez Demorizi's complaint about the conspiracy's finances, Zuleta Ángel offered a solution. First, Zuleta Ángel declared that additional "support [would] be obtained through the United Fruit Co[mpany]." One of the most influential U.S.-based transnational corporations, the UFCO had spent the better part of a decade denouncing Guatemala's government as communist, beginning with the passing of a labor code in the mid-1940s and continuing with the 1952 Agrarian Reform that seized some of the company's lands in the country.<sup>16</sup> Whereas scholars knew of the UFCO's participation in anti-Arbenz actions, such as offering their transport vessels and lands throughout the Caribbean Basin for the CIA's operations against Arbenz's government, here Zuleta Ángel believed the corporation would be eager to provide funds for the planned invasion, hinting at deeper relations between the company and the region's governments. Next, the Colombian ambassador explained that his government had sent the ambassador on this "political trip" to gauge "enemy activities in Guatemala and Costa Rica" The Colombian government was interested in this plan as part of its own national security policies targeting opponents in Central America. Joining Somoza and Trujillo, another Latin American government actively sought the removal of Arbenz's government and volunteered its support in what had started as Somoza's conspiracy but was quickly becoming the broader coalition action known as Operation PBFORTUNE.

Other Dominican files offer fascinating nuance into recently declassified U.S.-based materials on Operation PBFORTUNE. For example, one item that has received the attention of scholars is a CIA memorandum regarding a conversation in Tegucigalpa between the U.S. government's candidate to lead the invasion of Guatemala, Castillo Armas, and Trujillo's representative Félix Bernardino.<sup>17</sup> At the same time as the meeting between Somoza, Rodríguez Demorizi, and Zuleta Ángel, Castillo Armas and Bernardino were ironing out details surrounding the Dominican dictator's role in the planned invasion. According to the U.S.-based report, Bernardino stated that Trujillo's participation, including "arms, aircraft, men, and money," was contingent

on "four (4) Santo Dominicanos [Dominicans], at present residing in Guatemala, be[ing] killed a few days prior to D-Day." In response, Castillo Armas "stated he would be glad to carry out the executive action," since "his own plans included similar action and that special squads were being designated," but only after the invasion. Thanks to this report, historians understood Trujillo's reasons for supporting a coup in Guatemala: it would involve assassinating Dominican exiles long opposed to his regime. Furthermore, Castillo Armas was "confident that this matter [could] be resolved." In contrast, the corresponding Dominican file on the Castillo Armas-Bernardino meeting diverged a bit. When the Dominican official put forward "the proposition and conditions" for the four assassinations, Castillo Armas replied that he would not be able to deliver on the murders before the invasion. However, whereas the Guatemalan had assured U.S. officials he would be able to secure Trujillo's support, Bernardino came away from the conversation less than reassured. With Castillo Armas's refusal to immediately assassinate the four Dominicans, Bernardino determined there was no "final agreement." Actually, the Dominican official told his colleagues to wait for the Guatemalan's "response," suggesting that Trujillo's demands were less flexible than suggested in the U.S.-based file.<sup>18</sup> Based upon such files, it is likely that the countless atrocities committed in Guatemala following the 1954 coup were shaped by similar agreements Castillo Armas made to the various dictators who expected their generosity to be repaid with favors to eliminate opponents and threats from that country.<sup>19</sup>

Still, among all the Dominican files, the July 21 cable remained an anomaly. This item did not merely add to the historiography but challenged what had been a longstanding truth. From journalist Herbert Matthews who first divulged the existence of the plot to Richard Immerman's thorough examination of the CIA's operations in Guatemala, accounts have consistently presented Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson as a pivotal figure opposed to Operation PBFORTUNE.<sup>20</sup> Even the most scathing accounts, such as those exposed by Gleijeses, in which Richard Helms insisted that "Truman okayed a good many decisions for covert operations that in later years he said he knew nothing about," do not position Acheson, or even his subordinates who coordinated U.S. policy toward Latin America including Assistant Secretary of State Edward Miller, Jr., and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Mann, as supportive of Operation PBFORTUNE.<sup>21</sup> Most notably, Robert Beisner found Acheson, after the Bay of Pigs disaster, recounting how he and Truman halted "similar suggestions for Iran and Guatemala" in the early 1950s.<sup>22</sup> Despite all this well-established historiography, I was tempted to believe I had come upon a crucial revelation that would upend the literature on U.S. policy toward Guatemala.

Serendipitously, in what would become a saving grace, I reached out to my colleagues, my mentors, and the leading experts in the field who offered guidance in assessing these sources' utility.<sup>23</sup> Their cumulative advice: double-check all the U.S.-based materials on Operation PBFORTUNE to ensure the new document could be corroborated. I had almost turned all my attention solely toward my archival 'discoveries,' but these experienced scholars reminded me of the importance of a well-grounded research methodology. In accessing these Dominican files, I now had to delve even deeper into the historiography and U.S.-based materials.

Almost immediately, my colleagues' advice produced invaluable results. First, I scoured the existing historiography on Operation PBFORTUNE, the Truman Administration, and Somoza. In this process, I revisited William Kamman's succinct essay, "A Friendly Problem: Washington's Assessment of Anastasio Somoza García."<sup>24</sup>

Here, Kamman referenced an office memorandum, with the same date as the July 1952 cable that sparked my queries, recounting conversations on Guatemalan affairs between State Department officials in Managua and one of Truman's military aides. Returning to National Archives II at College Park, I found in the memorandum that the aide, Colonel Cornelius Mara, lambasted the State Department's policy toward Guatemala and lobbied the president on behalf of Somoza's plot. When asked about Truman's position on the matter, Mara vacillated between "non-committal" and having "said that President Truman believed Somoza could do it."<sup>25</sup> Upon receiving this information about the memorandum, Miller notified his superiors that "Colonel Mara's activities" could be "potentially dangerous," and those superiors then handwrote a memo for Acheson, notifying the Secretary of State of "Col. Mara's extravagant ideas in case the Pres. should speak to you about" the matter.<sup>26</sup> At this point, it appeared that the State Department was well aware that both Somoza and Truman's military aide were encouraging the conspiracy against Arbenz's government.

Continuing on, I took advantage of the digitized collection of CIA files on the Guatemalan intervention made available online, a resource unavailable to historians who had worked on this subject in the past years while doing far more with far less.<sup>27</sup> In one slightly sanitized memo, the author recounted how Mara joined Somoza in discussing U.S. policy toward Guatemala, culminating in Miller's becoming "angry at Mara" due to the aide's conversations and lobbying.<sup>28</sup> Much of this anger stemmed from Mara's vague memo to Truman, claiming, "A gentleman in whom you have confidence advises that the situation in Guatemala has reached such a stage that some positive action is necessary," and, "The State Department should decide on some stringent action and implement it in a sudden move."<sup>29</sup> Throughout Mara's lobbying efforts, Miller reiterated to State Department officials in Nicaragua and Washington that they "should know nothing about it." He "was very perturbed" that the "matter" was being discussed at all.<sup>30</sup> Thus, my reexamination of U.S.-based files was providing nuance to the chronology of Operation PBFORTUNE. Repeatedly, State Department officials, ranging from those in Nicaragua to Miller in Washington, were taken aback by Mara's bold efforts to encourage Somoza's request for the U.S. government's assistance to invade Guatemala. Even if these officials' frustrations were simply fears of the potential blowback if the U.S. government's involvement were made public, Truman's aide Mara now stood as the central U.S. official endorsing Somoza's conspiracy, lobbying Truman, deriding the State Department, and possibly encouraging the entire affair.<sup>31</sup> I now needed to research Truman's military aide to better understand the Nicaraguan dictator's actions.

This phase of the research, too, took me down a surprising path. Examining multiple NARA II collections, I found that Mara was not the only military aide interfering in U.S.-Latin American relations. Truman's other military aide, General Harry Vaughan, also played a role in supporting Somoza's scheme. First, Vaughan and Mara once recruited as their translator a Guatemalan reactionary who had participated in abortive plots against Guatemala's governments.<sup>32</sup> Second, Vaughan and Mara frequently associated with Caribbean Basin dictators who bestowed the aides with fancy receptions and military decorations.<sup>33</sup> Third, Vaughan had been the one who attempted to upgrade Somoza's May visit to Washington, D.C., into an official state visit despite protests from the State Department to keep the trip brief and unofficial.<sup>34</sup> Visiting the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor, I also found that Vaughan and Mara had associated with the antisemite Gerald L. K. Smith. In the late 1940s, Congress opened an investigation

into Vaughan's acceptance of gifts surrounding his approving some shipments of freezers that bypassed official procedures. Nothing truly unseemly was ever proven, but the journalist Drew Pearson reported on the investigation of Vaughan. Taking advantage of the moment, Smith reached out to Truman's military aide and offered Vaughan some pamphlets critical of Pearson. Perhaps taken in by Smith's flattery of the general as a "great patriot" and a "he-man character," Vaughan accepted the offer.<sup>35</sup> This culminated with at least one dinner including Smith and both of Truman's military aides.<sup>36</sup> Once peripheral figures in the historiography, the two military aides now occupied important positions in Operation PBFORTUNE as influential figures closely associated with disreputable anti-communist leaders throughout the Western Hemisphere. My additional research was certainly paying dividends but was not yet complete.

After gleaning these insights into Truman's military aides, I again turned to the CIA's records on Operation PBFORTUNE. Coinciding with Mara's and Somoza's lobbying, representatives of the State Department and the CIA met in mid-July to discuss Guatemala. Whereas members of the State Department never documented the meeting, those from the CIA, including Deputy Director Allen Dulles, recorded that the State Department wished for a change in Guatemala's government as long as the U.S. government's involvement remained hidden.<sup>37</sup> A few days later, a second meeting took place in which the CIA aimed to clarify the State Department's position. Here, Miller's colleague Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Mann referenced Mara's activities, including the controversial memorandum endorsing Somoza's conspiracy. To encourage the State Department's approval, Dulles described Mara's lobbying as an opportunity. Apparently, the U.S. government was in a difficult position. The conspiracy was going to commence, with or without Uncle Sam's participation. Without the U.S. government's support, all opposition to Guatemala's government would be crushed while the U.S. government would still be blamed. Therefore, Dulles argued that the U.S. government needed to provide assistance. More importantly, their respective departments could avoid any such blame thanks to Mara's and Somoza's activities. Because Truman's military aide and the Nicaraguan dictator had been talking openly about the conspiracy, Dulles "suggested that this again was evidence that if anything happened, there would be plenty of other persons to blame for it."<sup>38</sup> Although the State Department's official position was not documented, the CIA claimed to have received permission to move forward. Perhaps Dulles and the CIA overstepped their parameters, but at the very least, Miller appeared less resistant to the scheme to topple Guatemalan democracy.<sup>39</sup>

Further research shed new light into Miller's position. The second meeting between the State Department and the CIA took place the same day that the State Department documented Mara's lobbying and a couple of days before Miller informed his superiors about the lobbying. Furthermore, Miller ordered his staff to ensure all knew "that the State Department was not interested in sponsoring a 'covert' aggression on any American State." Still, Miller also "indicated . . . that he thought some support for Somoza might be coming from the Army," that is, Truman's military aides.<sup>40</sup> Much of the historiography had once revolved around the basic question of "Who knew what?" during Operation PBFORTUNE. Miller had been the one who initially told journalist Herbert Matthews about Operation PBFORTUNE, and years of scholarship aimed at recovering the history of its planning.<sup>41</sup> We now know that this flurry of activity, from the undocumented meetings to the memoranda, suggested that Miller had not truly opposed the conspiracy but simply sought to shield

his staff from Operation PBFORTUNE without halting the CIA's supposedly covert role.

In fact, a combination of U.S.- and Dominican-based files lends further credence to this possibility. The CIA always claimed that those whose "interests were materially involved" should be the ones to "pay the bill," and Somoza appeared to follow this line.<sup>42</sup> On this matter, he and Castillo Armas regularly informed U.S. officials about their discussions with their Dominican and Venezuelan allies.<sup>43</sup> However, these updates included the State Department officials whom Miller sought to keep ignorant of the plot. On top of this, Dominican Ambassador Luis Thomen approached Miller to state that "the Dominican Republic was ready and anxious to do everything incumbent upon it to engage in anti-communistic activities." In his report, Miller claimed to have told Thomen that "no understandings had been arrived at as to methods of combating communism" and then stressed the U.S. government's adherence to "a policy of complete non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries."<sup>44</sup> In his report, Thomen admitted that Miller emphasized his government's "absolutely non-interventionist" position but noted that "the situation of other countries is probably very distinct." If there were "a change of regime in Guatemala," the U.S. government "would offer recognition and support."<sup>45</sup> Based upon materials in multiple depositories, I was now following the trail of a State Department official who was keeping his people unaware of Operation PBFORTUNE to maintain an image of non-intervention that, at best, could be described as plausible deniability.

A lengthy item from the AGN's SERREE collection finally set this matter to rest. In early October, delegates from multiple governments in the Western Hemisphere traveled to Panama to participate in the inauguration of newly-elected president José Antonio Remón. As with the meetings with the CIA on Operation PBFORTUNE, Miller never documented his activities. Fortunately, Colombian Ambassador Eduardo Zuleta Ángel documented his encounters with Miller. The two were quite collegial, referring to one another as 'tocayo' due to their shared first names.<sup>46</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the two officials enjoyed some "drinks and drinking" while in Panama. With this liquid encouragement, an inebriated Miller confessed to Zuleta Ángel that "the State Department looked upon that concerted action with interest and sympathy and encouraged it." However, the next day, a sobered Miller admitted to Zuleta Ángel that he "did not even want any representative of a foreign government to inform any of [his people] about this matter," while stating that the State Department's official position of non-intervention "was not at all shared by the White House, at which one detects the tendency is to liquidate the current situation in Guatemala."<sup>47</sup> This account of his diplomacy in Panama resolved the questions surrounding Miller's role in encouraging Operation PBFORTUNE while preventing his staff's involvement.

Zuleta Ángel also solved the mystery of the July 1952 cable implicating Secretary of State Dean Acheson in the scheme. Throughout my research in the United States and the Dominican Republic, I could not find a single piece of evidence tying Acheson to the affair other than the sole cable. Instead, I had a better understanding of Miller's role as well as the contributions of Truman's military aides. This latter aspect was actually the answer to the cable's mystery, according to Zuleta Ángel. During those festivities in Panama, a Dominican official asked the Colombian ambassador about the July 1952 cable. Zuleta Ángel responded, "the words about action against Guatemala attributed to Acheson in a memorandum on conversations between Somoza and Acheson do not correspond to [Acheson] but to General Vaughan, Assistant to President Truman."<sup>48</sup> After all my research, it turned

out that the cable's writer had attempted to summarize a lengthy conversation with Somoza into a brief message, resulting in the misattribution.

Somoza had never implicated Acheson in the affair. Instead, Somoza accepted Vaughan's assurances as the official position of Truman. This made complete sense in light of the nature of the personalist nature of Caribbean Basin dictatorships. At the dawn of the Cold War, the U.S. government was becoming more professionalized and more bureaucratic as various departments and officials carved out their respective responsibilities in shaping and carrying out policy. In contrast, dictatorships rarely adhered to such official protocols, something I had encountered when researching how Somoza, Trujillo, and their allies had an array of subordinates, both diplomatic and military, who traveled the greater Caribbean to air-bomb capital cities, manage intelligence operations, and finance invasions against their opponents. Just as Somoza deployed his military aides as his messengers, Somoza likely accepted the Truman aide's word as the official position of the U.S. government.

Thanks to a responsible research methodology encouraged by experienced scholars, I had solved the mystery surrounding the July 1952 cable. Yes, it may have ultimately required my work in depositories from the Caribbean and Central America to England and the United States, but this labor produced solid, reliable results and prevented me from jumping to conclusions by relying on new, unverified evidence from a recently opened collection.

#### Notes:

1. This work was only possible thanks to those at the Archivo General de la Nación in Santo Domingo; Randy Sowell and everyone at the Truman Presidential Library; and David Fort, Amanda Weimer, and numerous others at the National Archives II who facilitated FOIA requests and more. This work was supported by a Phi Alpha Theta John Pine Memorial Scholarship, a Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Samuel Flagg Bemis Dissertation Research Grant, a Harry S. Truman Presidential Library Institute Dissertation Year Fellowship, a Congressional Research Grant from the Dirksen Congressional Center, a Stephen F. Austin State University Faculty Research Pilot Studies Grant, a Stephen F. Austin Department of History Faculty Travel Award, Stephen F. Austin State University College of Liberal and Applied Arts Professional Development Funds, and a Research/Creative Activity Award from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies at Stephen F. Austin State University.
2. From the 1930s until his assassination in 1961, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo mandated that the historical city and Dominican capital, Santo Domingo, be renamed "Ciudad Trujillo."
3. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi a Rafael Trujillo, Managua, 21 julio 1952, Expediente "Nicaragua, Sec. Calderón, 1948-1952," Caja 2903958, Colección Secretaría de Estado de Relaciones Exteriores, Fondo Presidencia, Archivo General de la Nación, Santo Domingo [hereafter SERREE].
4. My thanks to Scott Lloyd for double-checking my translations of multiple Dominican files.
5. On the historiography of Operation PBSUCCESS, see Stephen M. Streeter, "Interpreting the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: Realist, Revisionist, and Postrevisionist Perspectives," *The History Teacher* 34:1 (November 2000): 61-74.
6. On the controversies surrounding the source material on Operation PBSUCCESS, Stephen Rabe, "The U.S. Intervention in Guatemala: The Documentary Record," *Diplomatic History* 28:5 (November 2004): 785-790.
7. Charles Ameringer, *The Democratic Left in Exile: The Antidictatorial Struggle in the Caribbean, 1945-1959* (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1974).
8. Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 75, 230.
9. "Counterrevolutionary Friends: Caribbean Basin Dictators and Guatemalan Exiles against the Guatemalan Revolution, 1945-50," *The Americas* 76:1 (January 2019): 107-135; Aaron Coy Moulton, "We Are Meddling": *Anti-Colonialism and the British Cold War against the Guatemalan Revolution, 1944-1954*, *The International History Review*

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10. For the most recent overview of these conflicts, Allen Wells, *Latin America's Democratic Crusade: The Transnational Struggle against Dictatorship, 1920s-1960s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2023).
  11. Aaron Coy Moulton, "Building Their Own Cold War in Their Own Backyard: The Transnational, International Conflicts in the Greater Caribbean Basin, 1944-1954," *Cold War History* 15.2 (2015): 135-154; Aaron Coy Moulton, "Militant Roots: The Anti-Fascist Left in the Caribbean Basin, 1945-1954," *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 28:2 (2017): 14-29.
  12. Aaron Coy Moulton, "The Dictators' Domino Theory: A Caribbean Basin Anti-Communist Network, 1947-1952," *Intelligence and National Security* 34:7 (2019): 945-961.
  13. Aaron Coy Moulton, "The Counter-Revolution's Patron: Rafael Trujillo versus Venezuela's Acción Democrática Governments," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 54:1 (February 2022): 29-53; Aaron Coy Moulton, "The Dominican Dictator's Funds and Guns in Costa Rica's Wars of 1948," *Journal of Military History* 85:3 (July 2021): 713-733.
  14. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi a Rafael Trujillo, Managua, 10 septiembre 1952, Expediente "Nicaragua, Sec. Calderón, 1948-1952," Caja 2903958, SERREE.
  15. Max Paul Friedman, "Retiring the Puppets, Bringing Latin America Back In: Recent Scholarship on United States-Latin American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 27:5 (November 2003): 621-636. On inter-American relations scholarship, Stephen G. Rabe, "Marching Ahead (Forthrightly): The Historiography of Inter-American Relations," *Passport* 45:2 (September 2014): 25-31.
  16. See Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005).
  17. Document 18, "Memorandum From Jacob R. Seekford to the Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division, Central Intelligence Agency (King)," in Susan K. Holly and David S. Patterson, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954: Guatemala* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2003) [hereafter *Guatemala*].
  18. José A. Paniagua a Telésforo R. Calderón, Núm. 572, Tegucigalpa, 12 septiembre 1952, Expediente "1949-1953," Caja 2903825, SERREE.
  19. On the murders and assassinations after PBSUCCESS, see Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
  20. Herbert L. Matthews, *A World in Revolution: A Newspaperman's Memoir* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 262-264; Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982).
  21. Gleijeses, 366-367.
  22. Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in the Cold War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 584-585.
  23. I especially want to thank Jonathan Brown, Max Paul Friedman, Roberto García Ferreira, Richard Immerman, Kyle Longley, Alan McPherson, Stephen Rabe, Randy Sowell, Darren Swagerty, and Arturo Taracena for their suffering my countless questions, demonstrating the greatest patience, and providing invaluable guidance regarding these sources during my research.
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  25. John L. Ohmans to Thomas C. Mann, "Subject: Conversations with Colonel Neil Mara, Assistant Military Aide to the President," 21 July 1952, 717.00/7-2152, Box 3262, Decimal File 1950-1954 [hereafter DF1950], Record Group 59 [hereafter RG59], National Archives II, College Park, Maryland [hereafter NARAII].
  26. Edward G. Miller, Jr., to H. Freeman Matthews, 23 July 1952; H. Freeman Matthews to Dean Acheson, 25 July 1952, 717.00/7-2152, DF1950, RG59, NARAII.
  27. Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Romo and CIA Records Search Tool (CREST) Library, Central Intelligence Agency, online at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom> [hereafter CREST].
  28. "(Est Pub Date) Memo (Deleted) to JCK re: Guatemala 1954 Coup," Document 0000914985, CREST.
  29. Cornelius J. Mara to Harry Truman, "Memorandum for the President," 11 July 1952, Folder "G," Box 1435, Foreign Affairs File, Harry S. Truman Papers: President's Secretary's Files, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, Missouri.
  30. "(Est Pub Date) Memo (Deleted) to JCK re: Guatemala 1954 Coup," Document 0000914985, CREST.
  31. Nick Cullather comes to this conclusion in his CIA-commissioned and CIA-redacted history of Operation PBSUCCESS, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 31.
  32. Ernest V. Siracusa and Cornelius J. Mara, Memorandum of Conversation "Subject: Trip to Honduras of Generals Vaughan and Graham - information on Dr. Carlos Padilla," 5 January 1952, Folder "Trips: Vaughan and Graham to Hond. and Nic., 1951" [hereafter TVG], Box 4, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs/Office of Middle American Affairs, Subject Files, 1947-1956 [hereafter BIAA], RG59, NARAII.
  33. Ernest V. Siracusa, "Visit of Generals Vaughan and Graham and Party to Nicaragua," 30 January 1951, TVG, Box 4, BIAA, RG59, NARAII.
  34. Edward G. Miller, Jr., to Thomas C. Mann, et al., "General Somoza's Proposed Visit to the U.S.," 10 April 1952, Folder "Nicaragua," Box 8, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Edward G. Miller, Subject File, 1949-1953 [hereafter EGM], RG59, NARAII.
  35. Gerald L. K. Smith to Harry Vaughan, 23 October 1949, Folder "1949, V, miscellaneous," Box 29, Gerald L. K. Smith Papers, 1922-1976, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan [hereafter GLKSP].
  36. Gerald L. K. Smith to Harry Vaughan, Tulsa, 09 January 1951, Folder "1951, V, miscellaneous," Box 36; Gerald L. K. Smith to C. J. Mara, Tulsa, 11 January 1951, Folder "1951, M, miscellaneous," Box 35, GLKSP.
  37. "Guatemala (handwritten)," 10 July 1952, Doc. 0000915033, CREST; Document 21, "Memorandum From [name not declassified] of the Central Intelligence Agency to the Chief of the Western Hemisphere Division, Central Intelligence Agency (King)," Washington, 8 October 1952, *Guatemala*.
  38. Document 14, "Memorandum of Conference," Washington, 21 July 1952, *Guatemala*.
  39. On this point, see James Lockhart, "The Dulles Supremacy: Allen Dulles, the Clandestine Service, and PBFortune," in Christopher Moran, et al., eds., *Spy Chiefs: Volume 1: Intelligence Leaders in the United States and United Kingdom* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018): 91-112.
  40. Document 31, "Memorandum of Interview," Washington, 13 November 1952, *Guatemala*.
  41. Matthews, 262-264.
  42. Document 13, "Memorandum for the Record," Washington, 15 July 1952, *Guatemala*.
  43. Document 17 "Telegram From the CIA Station in [place not declassified] to the Central Intelligence Agency," [place not declassified], 12 September 1952, *Guatemala*.
  44. Luis Franco Thomen and Edward G. Miller, Jr., Memorandum of Conversation "Subject: Conversation Between President Somoza and General Trujillo re Anti-Communist Activities," 11 September 1952, Folder "Dominican Republic, 1949-1952," Box 6, EGM, RG59, NARAII.
  45. Luis F. Thomen a Telésforo R. Calderón, 3248, 12 septiembre 1952, Expediente "Nicaragua, Sec. Calderón," Caja 2903958, SERREE.
  46. See Folder "Colombia, 1950-51," Box 4, EGM, RG59, NARAII.
  47. "Memorandum: Conversaciones con el Dr. Eduardo Zuleta Ángel, en Panamá, del 2 al 5 de octubre 1952," Expediente "Panamá," Caja 2903958, SERREE.
  48. "Memorandum: Conversaciones con el Dr. Eduardo Zuleta Ángel, en Panamá, del 2 al 5 de octubre 1952," Expediente "Panamá," Caja 2903958, SERREE.



# Getting SHAFR Ready for a Future that Ain't What It Used to Be

Nicholas Evan Sarantakes

In the summer of 2023, scholars across the country watched in horror and sympathy as West Virginia University imploded. A steady reduction in state funding, a massive building program which was financed with debt rather than appropriations, and a decline in enrollment, forced the administration to shut down degree programs and terminate the employment of 16 percent of its faculty. The biggest culprit in the West Virginia crisis was the decline in enrollment, a factor that makes the disaster at WVU a harbinger of changes to come elsewhere. It is also a problem that SHAFR needs to consider as it plots its future.

In trying to explain the West Virginia debacle, many people have focused on proximate rather than underlying issues. Although WVU President E. Gordon Gee disputes this point, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that his administration mismanaged the situation. There was little research done into where West Virginia would find new students. The rationale for the construction program was “build it and they will come.” That approach failed. Given this background, the vote of no confidence in Gee’s leadership by the faculty senate made sense.<sup>1</sup> Other arguments that the cut in state funding created this crisis and an increase in appropriations could fix the problems confronting the school are accurate as far as they go. They, however, avoid the underlying issue of student numbers.

That issue is spreading. Iowa State University, Rutgers University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Nebraska, and Rutgers University are facing budget shortfalls far greater than those at West Virginia. Nebraska is facing a shortfall of roughly \$100 million and Penn State is looking at one of \$200 million. Decreasing enrollment is a factor at every school.<sup>2</sup>

The hard fact of the matter is the number of traditional college students is shrinking. There is a simple reason for this trend. Birth rates in the United States have been on a consistent decline since 2007.<sup>3</sup> These statistics are near perfect indicators for what is to come. Put another way, the number of traditional college-age undergraduates will shrink for the next sixteen years. Schools that depend on tuition from undergraduates are in for a rough two decades.

This development should hardly be surprising. We saw a converse phenomenon in the 1960s. As baby boomers entered college, scholars looking for work in higher education had it stunningly easy. George C. Herring, Jr., the author of *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, got a job at the University of Kentucky after running into a friend from graduate school at a conference who happened to teach at UK. Herring asked if Kentucky had openings in his field. The friend said he would check into the matter. Two months later, the chairman of the department called and asked Herring to mail him a copy of his CV. A job offer followed shortly thereafter. That was it. No other silliness like a job talk, a statement of teaching philosophy, or letters of recommendation. “Things were casual in those days,” Herring observed.<sup>4</sup>

We should expect to see the reverse happen as student numbers begin to shrink, which is indeed the case. For years, the biggest professional issue in the history

business was the overproduction of Ph.D.s and the under or unemployment of recent graduates. Now the situation has become much more dire. Smaller schools are shutting down degree programs and abolishing departments. The history department at Iowa State, for instance, had its budget reduced by a third. Faculty are being laid off. Just holding even is now a victory. Such a development is not in the interests of SHAFR and its members unless they want to see the field grow small and watch salaries move in a similar direction.

So, what is SHAFR to do about this situation? One answer might be nothing; it is a professional, scholarly organization with no administrative power. All it can do is watch and bemoan the fate of the field. That answer is on point—as far as it goes. There is nothing SHAFR can do to alter these trends. Absolutely nothing. That reply is not particularly pleasant and fortunately, if we use a wider aperture, there is a better response. SHAFR can influence expectations, and that is significant. It can help change what is deemed to be a successful professional career in the history business. SHAFR members need to start considering different career paths; in particular, those available in various agencies of the “U.S. Federal Government” as well as many other public and private institutions. This idea is not that absurd. It has already started to happen in other fields and organizations.

The Society of Military History offers a useful example. A comparative, statistical analysis of the 2023 conference programs for SHAFR and the SMH points to a future that diplomatic historians should consider. What follows is a rather simple statistical analysis of the institutional affiliation of individuals that appeared on the 2023 conference programs of either organization. All presenters were placed in one of four categories: U.S. colleges and universities, foreign colleges and universities, U.S. Federal Government, or other. Since this analysis counts individuals, names appearing on the program more than once—presenting at one session and then commenting at another—were counted only one time.

What do these numbers tell us? The first conclusion is that both organizations are primarily professional, scholarly associations. The totals for both college and university categories show that the two organizations are learned societies with members of the professoriate constituting 85 percent of SHAFR and two-thirds of the SMH. The real difference is in the number of people that are affiliated with an element of the U.S. Federal Government or those who fall into the “other” category. In percentages and absolute numbers, the figures are much higher for SMH. A full third of military historians fall into these categories.

Why are these figures important? They point in a direction that SHAFR members need to consider. In graduate school, most of us are conditioned to expect employment at an institution similar in nature to where we are earning our Ph.D., which is to say a research university, although many of us ended up at more teaching-intensive institutions, be it a liberal arts college, a small regional school, or a community college. For the next two decades, though, all those types of jobs are going to shrink in

number. That is not the case with careers in the “U.S. Federal Government” and “other” categories.

The good news is that there is a great deal of diversity in both of those categories. Historians employed by the U.S. government do many different types of work: they teach at service academies and professional military schools; are editors for various publications; research and write official histories; and are command historians responsible for compiling documents and writing narrative reports. The “other” category is also very eclectic, including people working at museums or doing historic preservation. Other positions include analysts at think tanks, editors for academic presses, literary agents, academic administrators and staff, editors at trade presses, archivists, and architectural historians.

How can this shift to U.S. government career paths begin making headway? Ultimately there are two tracks. First, those SHAFR members who are mentoring students and supervising Ph.D.s need to educate themselves on alternative careers. Their departments should reach out to alumni and PhDs in the area who have found employment in venues other than academia and invite them to give talks about their experiences. They also need to learn where these types of jobs are advertised and consider what type of dissertation topics students should tackle. A dissertation that only covers two-thirds of the topic and requires several additional years of research in foreign archives before it is worthy of publication might not be a realistic endeavor for someone working a nine-to five-job. Someone planning to go into museum work might want a broad topic rather than one that covers a niche issue.

Second, SHAFR needs to recognize that individuals who hold non-academic jobs are still serious scholars contributing to their fields. That is easy to say, not so easy to do. This means *Diplomatic History* has to be willing to use reviewers and consider authors who are employed outside of history departments. The program committee needs to be willing to include scholars from outside of

academia on the program in much greater numbers than is the current practice. The nomination committee should also look for individuals with employment in the “other” and “U.S. federal government” categories. SHAFR should also consider designating a vice president with developing faculty workshops that help professors learn how to guide their students into non-academic career paths. This VP can also monitor other efforts of the organization. Military history again offers a useful model. The SMH has had four of its twelve presidents come from these two groupings.<sup>5</sup>

SHAFR has demonstrated a positive approach when it comes to addressing issues of career management. It has conducted mock interview sessions, has offered one-on-one vitae evaluations, and has sponsored roundtables on alternative forms of employment at its annual meetings. Many of these sessions have been well attended. There is anecdotal evidence that people have profited from these undertakings. All these efforts bode well for diplomatic history as a field as it faces a future that ain’t what it used to be.

Notes:

1. Liam Knox, “Shrinking Pains at West Virginia University,” *Inside Higher Ed*, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/executive-leadership/2023/06/23/distraught-west-virginia-u-faculty-push-back>
2. Michael T. Nietzel, “Budget Woes Hit Several Big Ten Universities,” *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelt Nietzel/2023/03/18/budget-woes-hit-several-big-ten-universities/?sh=cbcc22e5f72d>
3. Melissa S. Kearney, Phillip B. Levine and Luke Pardue, “The Puzzle of Falling US Birth Rates since the Great Recession,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 36:1 (Winter 2022): 151-76.
4. George C. Herring, Jr., oral history, September 29, 2017, Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky, [https://nunncenter.net/ohms-spokedb/render.php?cachefile=2017oh581\\_af922\\_ohm.xml](https://nunncenter.net/ohms-spokedb/render.php?cachefile=2017oh581_af922_ohm.xml)
5. One president moved from a job with the federal government to a faculty position with a research university during his term.

### **In the next issue of *Passport*:**

- A roundtable on David Prentice, *Unwilling to Quit*
- A roundtable on Jessica Chapman, *Remaking the World*
  - 2024 SHAFR election information

*...and much more*

# SHA FR SPOTLIGHTS

I became interested in history after September 11<sup>th</sup>. I wanted to know the origins of the terrorist attacks, and the narrative that Al-Qaeda attacked the U.S. because “they hate our freedoms” didn’t make sense to me. That led me to the history of the Cold War. I had a great undergraduate mentor who supported my burgeoning interest in the field. Through independent study with him—reading many books, from Richard Hofstadter to Alfred Chandler to Thomas Knock—I started to develop an interest in graduate school. That led to me getting a Ph.D. History in 2014.

I am now the Co-Director of the Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy and Lecturer in History at Yale University. In terms of recent publications, I have a new book coming out with Van Jackson (*The Rivalry Peril: How Great-Power Competition Threatens Peace and Weakens Democracy*). I also enjoy public writing, and I’ve had the fortune to publish essays in several places, most recently in *Boston Review* and *Foreign Affairs*.

I live outside New Haven, CT with my wife and son.

## What are your favorite movies/TV shows of all time?

Movies: *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, *Night of the Living Dead* (original 1968 version), *Boyhood*, *Sideways*, *The Fog of War*, *Lady Bird*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Pulp Fiction*  
TV: *Seinfeld* (best show ever, without question).

## What was your most embarrassing/nerve-wracking/anxiety-producing professional moment?

So many—AHA interviews, my first conference presentation. But there is one that stands out.

I had a campus visit at a university in the Midwest and there was a large snowstorm the morning of the first day of my visit. The university cancelled classes, but they still went ahead with my interview. I remember showing up to campus in my rental car and it was just myself and the maintenance staff, shoveling snow, until the chair of the search committee finally arrived. But then it was just he and I in the building for an hour or so—he put me in a room by myself with the course catalog and information about the university—until faculty on the search committee started to trickle in after being forced to drive to campus in treacherous conditions. I sat in that room, panicking, thinking there was no conceivable way that I would get this job. Sure enough, I didn’t.

## You are exiled to a desert island and can only take five novels. What do you take and why?

*Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison. I read it when I was a sophomore in college. It was the first novel that changed me as a political person, that helped me think about class and race and their interrelationship in terms of questions of justice. I continue to return to it in one way or the other.

*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. It is *the* great American novel, in my opinion.

*Ulysses* by James Joyce. I read *Ulysses* when I was 18 and I know I misunderstood it. If I was stranded on a desert island, I’d have time to re-read it until, perhaps, I could make sense of it.

*The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion. I know this is not a novel, but it is the best book I’ve read on loss and finding your way through it. If I were stranded on a desert island, away from my family, I would want this book with me.

*In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust. I never made it through Proust’s oeuvre—I started *Swann’s Way* years ago but never finished it. I assume I would have time to read it if I were alone on a desert island.

## If you could have dinner with any three historical figures, who would they be and why?

Eugene V. Debs: I wrote my first history paper on Eugene V. Debs. I remain interested in his principled life, his commitment to a better world.

W.E.B. Du Bois: Du Bois lived and lived through the trajectory of the civil rights movement. He was such a complex figure and eclectic thinker. I’ve always been intrigued by historical figures who change their mind, who shift their thinking on issues in stark ways. I’d have many questions to ask him.

Karl Marx: I’d ask him what he thought of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. Maybe his answers would settle a debate or two.

## What would you do if you won the \$750 million Powerball?

Create lots of tenure-track jobs in the humanities in underfunded public universities. Donate more money to charities that are important to me—the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research; Integrated Refugee and Immigration Services (IRIS), based here in New Haven.

## You have been given an unlimited budget and a time machine to organize a music festival. What bands or solo acts do you invite?

The History of Rock and Roll in 15 acts: Robert Johnson, Howlin’ Wolf, Elmore James, Chuck Berry, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Elvis Costello, Nirvana, Soundgarden, Nine Inch Nails, The White Stripes, Radiohead, and Queens of the Stone Age.

I know I have left out a lot of bands—and some of these bands are still active—but these are the artists that have meant the most to me.

## What are five things on your bucket list?

I don’t have a bucket list. If I must have one, I guess it is simple: I want to see my son grow up and be happy; I want to travel to more places; I’d like to spend more time with friends; I want to grow old with my wife; I’d like the chance to write more books until I have run out of things to say.

## What would you be doing if you were not an academic?

A personal trainer, or something involved in exercise. I got into running half-marathons in my early 30s, and weightlifting and strength training after that. I wish someone told me earlier in life how long-distance running and weightlifting would make you feel, how it is the best cure for stress and lack of confidence.



Michael Brenes

I am Felicitas “Feli” Hartung, a doctoral candidate at the University of California in San Diego. I spent most of my childhood in naïve ignorance of the wonders that history has to offer. While my family shared stories about my grandmother’s flight in a handcart from the invading Russian army during WWII, it was not until my teen years that I realized the importance of her stories. Coincidentally, I married into a family that had fled East Germany due to the fear of (what would become known as) the ‘peaceful revolution’ ending in a bloody civil war. In retrospect, it is no surprise that I chose a dissertation topic that centers around the migration of nuclear scientists, their involvement in the Manhattan Project, and the moralization of nuclear science in the aftermath of the war.

I enjoy history as an interdisciplinary subject which allows me to explore questions related to science, psychology, and the study of war and peace. I have published an article on the intersection between the history of emotions and *Star Trek*, reviewed a wonderful book on small states in Cold War Europe, and recorded a podcast episode for OAH’s *Intervals* series on my first book project.

**What are your favorite movies/TV shows of all time?**

*Star Trek*: hard to tell, though, which of the series I admire most. It is a close call between the Original Series, Next Generation, Enterprise, and Deep Space Nine, which is almost all of them. I am more captivated by the prospect of humans encountering life in space and going where “no one has gone before,” than I am admiring a specific series.

The BBC series *Sherlock*: quite a masterpiece and a fantastic adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s work. I love detective stories – history often feels like detective work with lots of bloodshed, some villains, and the risk of being caught in a crossfire.

*Eureka*: a series that has probably as little basis in science as my understanding of nuclear physics. However, it reminds us of the endless possibilities for technological advancement while humorously cautioning us about the potential risks these new developments may pose.

**What was your most embarrassing/nerve-wracking/anxiety-producing professional moment?**

After a red-eye flight and a full day at the National Archives, I entered the cruise on the Potomac at last year’s SHAFR conference. While still trying to find my bearings and desperate to make a good impression, I knocked over a full glass of water, soaking the table and splashing the people I wanted to befriend.

**You are exiled to a desert island and can only take five novels. What do you take and why?**

I would trade the novels for two collected works and one (“the”) epic poem:

Homer’s *Odyssey* would help me keep my hopes up that I will one day return home. The book would have to come with a solar-powered record player that could play Symphony X’s adaptation of it.

The collected works by one of my favorite German authors, Georg Büchner. I particularly enjoy his play about the French Revolution *Dantons Tod* [*Danton’s Death*]. I learned about his work in high school and had the great pleasure of taking a course on him while I was trained to teach History, German, and Ethics at a German Gymnasium (not the kind you exercise in but the kind where students earn their college qualifications).

A collection of poems, preferably baroque sonnets which would keep me occupied like a big stack of sudoku puzzles: staring at the metaphors and stylistic elements until finally deciphering the meaning and recognizing the brilliancy in its composition.

**If you could have dinner with any three historical figures, who would they be and why?**

If I could meet three historical figures, I would choose two nuclear scientists and a person who is close to my heart: Leo Szilard, Hans Bethe, and my grandmother. Leo Szilard, the man who had the idea for a nuclear chain reaction that allowed humankind to harvest the energy of the atom, would certainly enjoy a good dinner with his friend Hans Bethe.

From Leo Szilard, I would like to know at which corner of Southampton Row and High Holborn in London he stood when he had the idea of the nuclear chain reaction. Aside from chatting with him about the responsibility he felt for the atomic bombings in Japan, I would also ask him why he never drained his bathtubs.

As a fellow German national, I’d be curious to learn more about Hans Bethe’s emigration from Nazi Germany. Bethe shared much of it in oral history interviews and his writings, but I would like to know how his experiences with Naziism informed his decision to work for the Manhattan Project.

Szilard and Bethe lived through a time period that decisively shaped my grandmother’s life. It was in the later days of World War II that members of the Russian army invaded the little village she lived in (now Polish territory). They fatally shot her father which prompted her mother to take her two daughters and fly hundreds of miles westwards. Although I conducted an oral history interview with my grandmother before she passed away, there are still so many questions unanswered.



Felicitas Hartung

**What would you do if you won the \$750 million Powerball?**

Cheer, retire, and call my financial investment planner. I would have them create two scholarship funds to support international students (who have substantially fewer grant opportunities they qualify for) and student parents.

**You have been given an unlimited budget and a time machine to organize a music festival. What bands or solo acts do you invite?**

I would send the symphonic metal band Symphony X back to 1945 and have them play “Set the World on Fire” at the Trinity Test site on the morning of July 16, 1945, when the very first atomic bomb was being tested: “Hell on flame and I curse you all! / There’s no turning back / Falling deep into the sweep / Collapsing black / Fly with me, forever higher! / And with these wings / We’ll set the world on fire!”

**What are five things on your bucket list?**

I am fortunate that I already had the chance to cross off many things on my list: living abroad, learning English, having a family... the next thing on the list is to find a job and settle down.

**What would you be doing if you were not an academic?**

...I would still like to write and read a lot. But I would probably be a teacher (since I was trained to become one).

I live in Connecticut with my wife (Anna), two daughters (Maya and Abby), and an assortment of cats. I was born and raised in Natchitoches, Louisiana, where I lived until I graduated high school and joined the US Marines in September 2002. Currently, I am in my final year of the PhD program at UConn and serving as a Humanities Institute Dissertation Fellow for 2023/2024. I got started in history through the military where I taught special operations history and organization at Marine Corps Special Operations Command's Assessment and Selection course. After eight years I left the Marines and went to college where I did well in history and enjoyed it, and so kept moving forward first into an MA, and then into a PhD program. Recent publications include a think piece in the January 2022 issue of *Passport* on the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the larger significance of that conflict in military-civilian relations. I also have an article under review with *Cold War History* on US-Soviet agricultural diplomacy in the 1970s and early 1980s.

### **What are your favorite movies/TV shows of all time?**

*The Simpsons, It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, Parts Unknown w/ Anthony Bourdain, and Parks and Recreation*

### **What was your most embarrassing/nerve-wracking/anxiety-producing professional moment?**

In academia, it is when things go wrong in public speaking. I have given presentations where I ran over, was allotted enough time, or the audience just was not receptive. There have also been times in teaching where I have gotten stuck on a piece of information, or some in-class activity just didn't work which resulted in "dead air" within the classroom environment.

Non-academia, Afghanistan 2008. Front right seat of the lead vehicle.

### **You are exiled to a desert island and can only take five novels. What do you take and why?**

J.R.R Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*: I am counting all three books as one just as Prof. Tolkien intended. Few works capture the grandiose and the everyday in such a fluid and enjoyable manner. This is a book that can be returned to often as it changes with you as you mature.

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Tehanu*: Any number of books by this author could appear on this list. This one stands out because of how it is set in a world of fantasy while maturely examining gender and power.

Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*: This may be a collection of short stories rather than a "novel" but these were the primary medium for this prolific author. These stories always go in interesting and unexpected directions. Borges was one of the great minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Elizabeth Cook, *Achilles*: This is a short work that is beautifully written in a poetic-style narrative. It is mostly a retelling of the life of Achilles based on Homer and other Ancient Greek sources. The final section though relates the English Romantic poet John Keats's meditations on this famous mythological figure. Side note: I discovered this book at the Camp Lejeune library (circa 2003) which shared a building with a Burger King at the time.

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*: Vonnegut is one of the sanest writers I've ever read. He dispenses with pride, bravado, and other trappings but embraces absurdity in stories that reveal deeper truths and emotions. A good companion on a desert island.

### **If you could have dinner with any three historical figures, who would they be and why?**

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (1828-1914) because he was a professor and a soldier, and is partly responsible for the Union success at the Battle of Gettysburg.  
Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) because of her contributions to philosophy and point of view for some of the most important events of the last century.  
Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) because he is one of the most fascinating monarchs in European history. Fluent in numerous languages including Arabic. A rare example of the medieval philosopher king.

### **What would you do if you won the \$750 million Powerball?**

Lots of donations. I keep reading that Lotto winners are cursed. The only way to break free is to give it all away to good causes.

### **You have been given an unlimited budget and a time machine to organize a music festival. What bands or solo acts do you invite?**

A best of 1990s grunge/alt-rock concert. Especially bands that lost key members like Nirvana, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, Sublime, and Stone Temple Pilots. Throw in Pearl Jam and a few others for good measure.

### **What are five things on your bucket list?**

- 1) Publish a book (academic or fiction)
- 2) Visit Machu Pichu
- 3) Run and finish a 100-mile ultra marathon
- 4) Build a piece of furniture
- 5) Earn a black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

### **What would you be doing if you were not an academic?**

I have pondered this question a great deal as I trudged my way through this PhD. I think going into Law would have fit my skill set although I have no idea if I would have actually enjoyed it in practice.



not

**David Evans**

I grew up in a small town in West Texas, about 80 miles away from the nearest Wal-Mart. For me, education was an opportunity to move beyond that small town and see and understand more of the world. As a first gen college student, history opened up the world to me in a way nothing else had, and I realized that history was about uncovering the human experience which I found fascinating. My current work helps me do that. I'm working on my manuscript on *Playboy* magazine's role in the Vietnam War. Since I've joined Professional Military Education, I've been able to expand my research in ways I never really imagined and have a forthcoming coauthored publication in *Aether* on toxic leadership as well as doing work in military ethics and leadership. I'm currently teaching a war and gender elective, and I learn just as much from the officers as I teach them. It's been an amazing experience and super rewarding. In my free time, I'm trying to pick up hobbies outside of academia – so I've learned to crochet, and I hang out with my dog, Pecos (who is the goodest of boys).

### **What are your favorite movies/TV shows of all time?**

In no particular order,

*We Were Soldiers* (this sparked my interest in the Vietnam War)

*MASH*

*Avatar: Last Airbender* (the cartoon series, clearly)

*Singin' in the Rain*

*Barbie* (newest add!)

And pretty much anything true crime.

### **What was your most embarrassing/nerve-wracking/anxiety-producing professional moment?**

I can think of two different types. One is a combination of two events. When I first met Dr. George Herring and Dr. Beth Bailey. Both were scholars I admired greatly and had incredible influences on me. Both times I tripped over myself and felt like I was meeting a celebrity. In fact, I'm not even sure I could say much to George except "you're the first book I read on Vietnam." Both were so incredibly kind and gracious, supported my research, and never made me feel silly for being a little star struck. Dr. Bailey has continued to be such a support in the field, and Dr. Herring's legacy lives on in so many young scholars. For anyone afraid to talk to a scholar they admire, just go for it. Don't be afraid or embarrassed, even if you do fan over them a bit.

The second happened at a SHAFR event. It was a mistake on my part as a first-time presenter, and it felt so embarrassing. I was sure that I had humiliated myself in front of so many established scholars, but SHAFR and the community were so kind and supportive. I realized then that it is okay to make mistakes and understood how important it is to find a good professional community to help support you as this profession can be difficult and taxing. Never be afraid to make a mistake. We all do it, and you never know what might come of it.

### **You are exiled to a desert island and can only take five novels. What do you take and why?**

My current obsession is Sarah J. Maas's *A Court of Thorn and Roses* series. Does the omnibus count as one novel? I like to read fiction and fantasy that is light and entertaining because so much of what we study is heavy, and my brain enjoys the break.

Anything by Neil Gaiman because Neil Gaiman.

*Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* because it is ridiculous and brilliant.

*World War Z* by Max Brooks. I find the way he wrote this incredible. The fictionalized oral history was so well done.

Does all of *Harry Potter* count – omnibuses? Because I could re-read this over and over and never tire of the story and the detail.

### **If you could have dinner with any three historical figures, who would they be and why?**

Mark Twain – His writing was insightful and sharp, and I want to have a conversation about he saw and understood the world.

Lynda Van Devanter, a nurse during the Vietnam War, she pushed for recognition of PTSD in nurses who returned. Her book, *Home Before Morning*, was a vulnerable insight into the impact of war on women.

### **What would you do if you won the \$750 million Powerball?**

**Amber Batura**

Pay off student loans. Get a financial planner. Get a house and help my family with some expenses.

I want to set up a scholarship in my hometown for promising students who need help getting to college. With this kind of money, I'd also set up endowments at my undergraduate and graduate programs to encourage scholarship and students in history. Then work with said financial planner to figure out how to make the money make money and help use it to potentially pay off student loans for others.

### **You have been given an unlimited budget and a time machine to organize a music festival. What bands or solo acts do you invite?**

Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra – though Kelly was an actor, I still loved his singing and performances in his movies, The Beatles, Marvin Gaye, Carole King, Aretha Franklin, Taylor Swift, Pink, The Chicks, Blink-182, Patti Lupone, Billy Joel, Elton John, Kelly Clarkson, Cynthia Erivo... the list would just go on and on.

### **What are five things on your bucket list?**

1. Ride in a Huey
2. Skydive
3. Do a World War II European tour (I've never been to Europe)
4. Learn Piano
5. Write a novel

### **What would you be doing if you were not an academic?**

I seriously contemplated a career in law enforcement and psychology, wanting to work toward criminal profiling. Maybe, in another life, I would have chosen that school and that degree path.



I am a Professor of Political Science and the Director of the International Affairs program at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. I received my Ph.D. in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia, but my undergraduate professors in history and political science at SUNY Geneseo, especially Bob Goeckel, had a strong impact on my interest in history and foreign affairs. I am the author of *The Gulf: The Bush Presidencies and the Middle East* (University Press of Kentucky Studies in Conflict, Diplomacy, and Peace, 2012) and *American Presidents and Israeli Settlements since 1967* (Routledge Studies in U.S. Foreign Policy, 2023). Currently, I am working on two projects: U.S. policy toward Lebanon from 1958-1990; and a project on American interventions during the cold war. I live in Georgetown, Kentucky with my wife, Carey, daughter, Sophia, and my son, Max, who is attending Brown University.

**What are your favorite movies/TV shows of all time (minimum of three, maximum of ten)?**

My favorite movie is *Dr. Strangelove*. (Dad joke alert!) It is definitely the bomb! I am also a fan of the *Star Trek* series. (Another Dad joke alert!) It's out of this world!

**What was your most embarrassing/nerve-wracking/anxiety-producing professional moment?**

I went to the wrong classroom and began class, only realizing it when my colleague came into the room and asked what I was doing.

**You are exiled to a desert island and can only take five novels. What do you take and why?**

I definitely would bring Sartre's *No Exit* - not a novel, but it would certainly remind me that being alone on a desert island isn't so bad. I'd also bring Gore Vidal's *Lincoln*, a poignant reminder that even our "most admired" leaders are flawed. I'd add Richard Russo's *Straight Man* to remind myself what I'm missing. And, lastly, *Mr. Boston Bartender Guide* because a person can dream, even in exile, and a Euell Gibbons cookbook.

**Michael Cairo**

**If you could have dinner with any three historical figures, who would they be and why?**

I imagine that most historical figures would be a let down unless I really lowered my expectations. I'd much rather have dinner with my family and enjoy our time together.

**What would you do if you won the \$750 million Powerball?**

Call a lawyer, change my phone number, and lock the doors.

**You have been given an unlimited budget and a time machine to organize a music festival. What bands or solo acts do you invite?**

I have eclectic music tastes, so to start: The Beatles, the Rat Pack, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Marvin Gaye, Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong, Al Green, the Metropolitan Opera...I'm sure I'll think of more later.

**What are five things on your bucket list?**

Probably the most important thing is to start a bucket list. Just thinking about this question makes me realize how uninspired I am. Let's just call it contentment.

**What would you be doing if you were not an academic?**

Worrying less about our country.

## SHAFR Fellowships and Awards

SHAFR is happy to recognize the achievements of the following members who received fellowships and awards at the beginning of this new year. We will also congratulate them in person at the June conference's Saturday luncheon ahead of the Stuart L. Bernath Lecture.



This year's Bernath Lecture committee (Adriane Lentz-Smith, Paul Chamberlin, and Thomas Field) has selected Professor **Elisabeth Leake** (*left*) of the Fletcher School, Tufts University, to receive the **2024 Stuart L. Bernath Lecture Prize**. An award-winning teacher and multidisciplinary bridge-builder, Professor Leake (Ph.D. University of Cambridge, 2013) is also a sophisticated scholar whose peers identify her as one of the most prominent voices writing the Cold War history of the postcolonial world. Deftly interweaving histories of empire, scholarship on borderlands studies, and South Asian studies, her recent book *Afghan Crucible: The Soviet Invasion and the Making of Modern Afghanistan* explores multiple perspectives to illuminate the Afghan war as both an intensely local and world-historical event. The book, which won SHAFR's Robert Ferrell book prize, builds on her earlier monograph on the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands and stands as an essential and exemplary work of international history. As her peers note, Professor Leake's scholarship has and will continue to provide a crucial framework for understanding how the transcendent process of decolonization interacted with the rise and persistence of the American Century.

The **William Appleman Williams Emerging Scholar Grant** Committee—chaired by Jay Sarkar and including Amanda Demmer and Dustin Walcher—has made two grants this year:

The committee especially appreciated the multilingual and multinational research undergirding the soon-to-be-published monograph of **Dr. Amanda Waterhouse** (*right*). Her research focuses on architecture and physical spaces to demonstrate the ways that U.S. power during the Cold War shaped the “minute aspects of everyday life.” The committee was also impressed by her project's innovative approach to studying U.S. foreign aid in Colombia, which generatively combines cultural, political, and spatial lenses to center architecture as a means of American power and preponderance abroad.



**Dr. Mattie Webb** (*left*) is also a recipient of a 2024 Williams Emerging Scholar Grant. Her important and innovative project centers labor in international and transnational histories of U.S.-South African relations against the backdrop of the anti-apartheid movement. Based on archives in the United States, United Kingdom, and South Africa as well as oral histories, the committee was impressed by how her project sheds light on global racial solidarities amongst labor at a crucial juncture in the twentieth century.

The **Michael J. Hogan Foreign Language Fellowship** committee (Lorenz Lüthi, Victor McFarland, and Heather Dichter) is pleased to announce that this year's winner is **Eleanor Eriko Tsuchiya Lenoe** (*right*) a Ph.D. student in the History Department of Rutgers University. She will spend a summer in Yokohama to perfect her Japanese language skills, particularly in terms of reading handwritten sources, to be followed up with research in the Tokyo Diplomatic Archives. Her dissertation addresses the close relations between American G.I.s and Japanese children, often orphans, near and on American occupation bases in postwar Japan. The committee was impressed by the breadth and ambition of the dissertation project, which will break new ground in our understanding of personal relations during post-WW II occupations.



This year's Graduate Student Grants and Fellowships Committee—chaired by Hiroshi Kitamura and including Catherine Forslund, Elisabeth Leake, Christopher Dietrich, and Margaret Gnoinska—announces a number of awards:



This year's **Stuart L. Bernath Dissertation Fellowship** recipient is **Carlotta Wright de la Cal** (*left*), a PhD candidate at the University of California-Berkeley, where she is working on a dissertation titled, “Transnational Indigeneity and Cross-Border Citizenship: The World of Railway Workers across the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1880-1945.” In her work, de la Cal offers an innovative study of railways as a history of cross-border investment, corporate influences on foreign relations, and indigenous agency, particularly examining the ways that Yaquis, an indigenous Mexican community, became involved in both contributing to and undermining railway construction. She excitingly brings together scholarship on borderlands, labor, and indigeneity into conversation with histories of U.S.-Mexican relations.



**Jeffrey Lamson** (*right*), a Ph.D. student at Northeastern University, is the recipient of this year's **Lawrence Gelfand-Armin Rappaport-Walter LaFeber Dissertation Fellowship**. It was established to honor several of SHAFR's important early leaders. Lamson is working under the direction of Gretchen Heefner. His dissertation is entitled "Engines of Authority: Patrol Cars as Modern Policing in the Urban United States and the World, 1930-1990." Looking at the development and transfer of the U.S. radio police car overseas, it creatively explores the formation of a "modern" public safety regime that encompassed North America, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Western Europe.



**Oliver Lazarus** (*left*) is the recipient of this year's **W. Stull Holt Dissertation Fellowship**. His dissertation offers an exciting study of the globalization of U.S. animal agriculture, "Domesticating Empire: American Empire and the Industrialization of Life." Working with Victor Seow at Harvard University, Lazarus traces the work of the Department of Agriculture in the twentieth century as it created a global infrastructure that supported government and corporate livestock interests, often at the cost of ignoring environmental concerns like greenhouse gases.

The Graduate Student Grants and Fellowships Committee also announced ten **Bemis Dissertation Research Grants** recipients:

**Shaffer Bonewell** is a Ph.D. student at Southern Methodist University working under the direction of Jeffrey A. Engel. "From the Yukon to Yucatan: George H. W. Bush, NAFTA, and America at the End of the Cold War" argues that despite the recent proliferation of work on the Bush presidency--and the ongoing importance of NAFTA and its successors, no scholar has thus far fully linked NAFTA with Bush's strategy at the end of the Cold War. By disregarding NAFTA, existing scholarship fails to assess the complete contours of President Bush's grand strategy and the liberal internationalist bent of America's rise to global primacy.



**Robert Ferguson** (*left*) is finishing his doctorate at the University of Georgia under the direction of Scott Reynolds Nelson. The project titled, "Demeter's Horizon: Cotton Farmers and American Foreign Relations in the Early Cold War, 1945-1954," analyzes how the U.S. government's desire to maintain popular New Deal cotton programs forced it to aggressively pursue cotton export markets in Korea and Japan between 1945 and 1954. Historians have long understood how geopolitics affects farmers but have scarcely studied how modern farmers affect geopolitics.

central argument that the United States helped to create and uphold the mandates system in ways that served to mold international norms surrounding colonialism to better suit U.S. interests and to adhere more closely to American ideas about how colonial areas ought to be run.

**Benjamin Gladstone** (*right*) is a Ph.D. student in history at University of Oxford in the UK and a student of Patricia Clavin. His dissertation, "The Mandates System and the End of Imperialism: An Analysis of the Implications of the Mandates System," puts forth the



**Janna Haider** (*left*) is a PhD candidate at the University of California-Santa Barbara, where she is working on a thesis titled, "Legal Temporalities of the Ghadar Party: Aspirations towards American Whiteness and Indian Independence." She brings together the study of South Asian anticolonialism, as it developed on the West Coast of the United States, with histories of U.S. and British foreign and domestic relations, paying particular attention to the paradoxes of revolutionary Ghadarites in demanding independence from empire while also laying claim to whiteness in the U.S. legal system.



**Minseok Jang** (*right*), a student of Kendra Smith-Howard at the University at Albany, offers a strikingly original intellectual contribution in his study of the antimonopoly politics against Standard Oil through the international political economy of kerosene. His dissertation, "Kerosene Antimonopoly: An Environmental and Global History of the Antitrust Movement against Standard Oil," analyzes discontent among a diverse "professional class" of smaller merchants, chemists, inspectors, and independent producers in the United States and the British Empire.



**Dante LaRiccia** (*right*), a student of David Engerman at Yale University, has proposed a fresh perspective with “Carbon Colonization: U.S. Empire in an Age of Oil.” With a focus on colonial governance, political economy, labor, and the changing environments of U.S. possessions from the Pacific to the Caribbean, his dissertation offers new insights into the creation of different types of petroleum societies in the American Empire as well as the intertwined histories of imperialism and petro-globalization.



**Sean Raming** (*left*) is a PhD candidate at the University of Notre Dame. His dissertation is entitled, “Organized Labor in the Military Industrial Complex.” He shows the unexpected, yet deep, connections between unionized labor and the military, which was a key source of contracts for union jobs. In this way, his dissertation highlights the material interests that often led organized labor to support U.S. Cold War interventions abroad.

**Sarah Sears** (*right*) is a Ph.D. student in History at the University of California, Berkeley. Her dissertation, entitled “Negotiating Nature: Diplomacy, Community, and Environment in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands,” uses the Chihuahua-Sonora borderlands as a window to understand the impact of U.S. colonization projects in northern Mexico and along the U.S.-Mexican border. In so doing, this interdisciplinary study will bring environmental history, border studies, and U.S. transnational history into dialogue.



**Ann Ngoc Tran** (*left*) is a Ph.D. student in the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Working under the direction of Adrian De Leon, her dissertation, entitled “Elliptical Passages: Vietnamese Histories from the Boat and Narratives of Non-Arrival,” examines the diverse and often difficult experiences of the Vietnamese “boat people.” By focusing on narratives of “non-arrival,” this bilingual study (relying on English- and Vietnamese-language sources) will cast important light on the consequences of U.S. military interventions in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

**Casey VanSise** (*right*) is a Ph.D. candidate in History at Temple University, working under the direction of Alan McPherson. VanSise’s dissertation, entitled “Rosa-golpistas: US Relations with Latin American Military Governments in the Global Cold War,” investigates Latin American military regimes that adopted progressive and even socialist-adjacent agendas. Through a study of rosa-golpistas (“pink coupists”) in Bolivia, Panama, and Peru, this bilingual study will reveal the tense political dynamics within the Western Hemisphere and their influence in shaping Reagan’s foreign policy.



**SHAFR Council Meeting Minutes**  
**January 19, 2024**  
**via Zoom, 11:30am-2:30pm (US Eastern)**

*Council members attending: Mitchell Lerner (chairing), Megan Black, Brooke Blower, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Gretchen Heefner, Mary Ann Heiss, Chris Hulshof, Sarah Miller-Davenport, Melani McAlister, Christopher McKnight Nichols, Vanessa Walker, and Kelsey Zavelo*

*Attending: Amy Sayward (ex officio), Faith Bagley, Carol Chin, Elizabeth Ferguson, Anne Foster, Petra Goedde*

### **Introductory Matters**

Mitchell Lerner started the meeting with a welcome and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Amy Sayward reviewed the votes that had been passed since the fall Council meeting (minutes from fall meetings); there being no revisions or reservations, they were affirmed. A vote of thanks for retiring Council, committee, task force, and editorial board members was moved by Melani McAlister, seconded by Christopher McKnight Nichols, and passed unanimously.

### **Conference Matters**

#### ***Upcoming conferences***

Carol Chin, chair of the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2024 conference in Toronto, joined the meeting. She described the recent campus venue shift (“some hiccups”) necessitated by university convocation and provided information about the new conference venue in the Bahen Centre for Information Technology, which has a variety of classroom sizes and an atrium well suited to serve as the exhibitor and registration space. It is also still conveniently located relative to the Faculty Club (where the luncheons will be held), the two conference hotels, the dorms, the Hart House Great Hall (where the opening plenary and welcome reception will be held), and Spadina House Museum (where the social event will be hosted). There was a short discussion about the conference hotel venues’ relative strengths and as well as the cost of the dorm housing and the nature of the social event. Council was pleased that Chin was able to pivot so effectively with the last-minute change of venue.

Sayward gave updates about the 2025 conference in Arlington. SHAFR’s Conference Coordinator, Kaete O’Connell, is working to identify a relatively cheap option for the social event, which might be combined with the welcome event. There was a discussion of Council’s previous decision to discontinue AV due to the extraordinary rise in costs from the 2019 to the 2023 conferences. The focus of the conversation was on how to accommodate those with hearing challenges and to ensure that presenters are prepared for the lack of AV: frequent communication is a must, SHAFR will likely purchase table-top podia, the accommodations portion of the registration form will likely include very specific information about this issue, and SHAFR might also investigate the possibility of portable microphone systems for one or more rooms in need of accommodation.

Sayward also updated Council on the 2026 in Columbus, Ohio. Working with the Local Arrangements Committee and the new budget, she had re-approached the campus conference center and was awaiting a new proposal that will hopefully fit within SHAFR’s budgetary guidelines.

#### ***Diversity at SHAFR Conferences***

Lerner then shared several concerns that SHAFR had received about the diversity language in the Call for Papers and noted that he had referred these complaints to two SHAFR Committees for their input (the Conference Committee and CARE—the Committee on Access, Representation, and Equity). These committees agreed that while the goals of the diversity statement were well-intentioned, there were some concerns about current policy, including the fact that this policy had never been discussed by Council. Both committees advised that SHAFR should make a diversity statement an optional part of a panel application for the conference. Council agreed with this recommendation, but several editorial suggestions were put forward. Lerner proposed to work on adjusting the language in light of Council discussion and bring it back to Council and to CARE, before a final Council vote.

Melani McAlister pointed to other ways that SHAFR can make itself more welcoming to a diverse membership—including updates to the website’s pictures—and that she would appreciate feedback on these areas as well from CARE. Kelsey Zavelo also said that she had heard concerns about diversity in the most recent set of SHAFR awards that were announced and asked if the prize committees had any guidance related to diversity in their charge. Sayward explained that there was no specific guidance on that issue currently and noted that such committees can only make choices based on the received pool. This led to discussion about how SHAFR might diversify the pool of applicants for these prizes. McAlister suggested that letters to presses about SHAFR’s broad definition of foreign relations might result in a more diverse pool of books for our book prizes. There was also a suggestion for posting announcements—especially about graduate student-focused awards—in adjoining professional organizations. CARE and the Graduate Committee might jointly discuss these and further steps.

#### ***Additional conference issues***

Sayward reported that there were no reported Code of Conduct violations for the year, so no further action was required. She did note that members of Council can potentially serve on the Appeals and Sanctions Committee, so they will receive an invitation to the CCRT (Code of Conduct Response Team) training later this year.

Lerner presented the next agenda item about the timing of the annual conference, which for several recent conferences had

been earlier than usual due to the availability of conference facilities. Council members expressed their strong preference for the later date, not only to facilitate broader participation but also to avoid conflicts with Father's Day and Juneteenth. There was general consensus that SHAFR will hold its conference later in June whenever that is possible.

### **Financial Matters**

Sayward reviewed the fiscal-year-end report, current fiscal-year budget, endowment report, and long-range financial report. Lerner highlighted the long-range financial report, which now showed a generally balanced budget thanks to the hard work of Council this past fall. In reviewing the fiscal-year-end report, Sayward reminded Council that SHAFR's fiscal year runs from November 1 to October 31 and stated that the deficit was largely due to the high AV costs at the past conference. She also pointed out that increase in the cost of SHAFR's membership has helped balance this year's budget. Asked about the assumption of 2% growth that was the basis for future projections of endowment growth (on the endowment report), Sayward said that Council (during her tenure) has always erred on the conservative side in regards to the endowment, which was also reflected in the previous 3% withdrawal rate that Council had increased to 4% in 2023-24 due to the new budget realities. McAlister, Nichols, and Lerner suggested that the Ways & Means Committee might report back to Council in June with a more detailed report on SHAFR's current investment and endowment policy.

Sayward reviewed her recommendation for no increase this year to the stipends for the IT Director, Conference Coordinator, and Executive Director. Lerner then offered a brief overview of his work on creating an endowed SHAFR Teaching Prize.

### **Committee Matters**

Zavelo and Chris Hulshof gave an oral report from the Graduate Student Committee. Zavelo thanked Shaun Armstead for all of her previous work and welcomed Hulshof as the new committee co-chair. They will be discussing how to refine some of the ideas from previous conferences on establishing a clear presence and fellowship for graduate students. Additionally, fostering graduate student communication—for example, through an email list—will be a priority. Hulshof thanked Zavelo for already making him welcome and commended SHAFR for having two graduate student representatives with voting rights, which was unique in his experience.

Lerner gave an update on the Executive Director Search Committee, which now consists of eight SHAFR members and is chaired by past president David Anderson. The committee reported that it had received a good number of applications and anticipated conducting interviews soon. Lerner has asked the committee to provide a ranked list of choices with supporting information, which will facilitate Council's decision. He stated that Council might have to hold an additional meeting—perhaps in March—to make its decision so as to avoid having candidates wait until June for a decision.

### **Discussion of Internationalization Task Force recommendations**

Lerner commended the Internationalization Task Force for its report and extensive set of recommendations. He thought the first question—and the one most appropriately considered by Council—was whether the task force should be restaffed, disbanded, or made a permanent committee. Brooke Blower iterated that it was not just important—but essential—for the field of foreign relations to integrate the voices of international scholars. Nichols suggested something along the lines of an implementation committee to keep these recommendations—and additional issues that may surface—in front of Council. It was also suggested that the new committee would benefit from having at least one U.S.-based member. Nichols moved to create an implementation committee, Hulshof seconded, and Council unanimously approved.

Council then considered the task force recommendation to include at least one non-U.S.-based member on the Nominating Committee and the Nominating Committee's response to this recommendation. There was discussion of whether there might be one or two additional members—if the latter, one might be based in Europe and one beyond Europe and the United States. There was also discussion of the challenge in defining "international," which was similar to the difficulty in defining "teaching-focused institution" when SHAFR created a Council seat with that definition. There were reservations based on the difficulties that a larger committee might pose in terms of efficiently completing the committee's charge and that other sub-groups within SHAFR might similarly seek to have a specific representative on the Nominating Committee. There was some discussion of whether it would be appropriate for Council to advise the Nominating Committee on its composition, given the traditional "wall" between the work of the two organs of SHAFR. However, since the Nominating Committee had suggested in its report the potential of such an expansion, this was not interference by Council in the work of the Nominating Committee. Some wondered if such a change was necessary, since future committees could (as past committees have done) select international nominees as they deemed appropriate. Additionally, singling out one group for specific representation might come at the expense of other organizational needs in the future. Lerner stated that he would work with the Nominating Committee and Executive Director to draft by-law amendment language that would then be voted on by Council either via email or at its next meeting.

Council continued to discuss other elements of the International Task Force's recommendations. Discussion of hosting a SHAFR conference outside of North America generated concerns about the affordability of such a conference, especially for graduate students and contingent faculty in North America. Several members of Council stated that they were surprised at the level of discontent expressed in the survey but were eager to move forward to address the concerns expressed. There was some discussion of having a SHAFR contingent at other international conferences, like HOTCUS (Historians of the Twentieth-Century United States).

Lerner stated that it would make sense to return these suggestions to the implementation committee for practical follow-up. Zavelo suggested that Council should take action on items that it could. Sayward asserted that a contact list or database can be created through Member Clicks and that some type of event at the Toronto conference (while keeping the conference budget in mind) could possibly be organized. Other members suggested that online conference elements would be easier

to manage than hybrid elements, based on SHAFR's experience with both an on-line and a hybrid conference in 2020 and 2021. Hulshof suggested that the recommendation on additional gradations of membership be taken up with some priority, as he believed that would attract significant new members outside of North America and Europe.

### **Publication matters**

Anne Foster (co-editor of *Diplomatic History*), Petra Goedde (co-editor of *Diplomatic History*), and Elizabeth Ferguson (representative of Oxford University Press--OUP) joined the meeting. Goedde presented some of the highlights from the editors' written report. Foster stated that the dip in submissions is tied to a structural problem across the History profession, as fewer positions exist that are focused on research and writing. Goedde was proud to report that the editorial team had worked successfully with some people whose first language was not English to increase international submissions. Goedde also thanked those rotating off the Editorial Board for their incredible service and welcomed its new members. She was also thankful to those members of Council and the SHAFR community at large for their time and efforts in reviewing article manuscripts and writing book reviews.

As part of a discussion of the "most-read articles" from *Diplomatic History*, the question came up of about which articles become open access, since that naturally increases readership. Goedde explained that the Presidential Address is open access and that other articles are made open-access for a short period, usually as part of an anniversary or other promotion from Oxford University Press, something that OUP has been "great" in facilitating. Ferguson explained that the "most-read" statistics are also influenced by class usage. Other articles are open-access with payment of a fee, which usually comes from a funder or an institution (especially in Europe and increasingly under "Read and Publish" agreements that include access to the journal and publication of a specific number of open-access articles for one institutional/consortia fee). In 2023, there were six articles published open-access in *Diplomatic History*. Ferguson, in response to a request from Goedde, stated that Oxford University Press will publish the Bernath Lecture open-access moving forward.

### **Additional committee matters**

Sayward gave background for the report from National Coalition for History (NCH) representative Tom Zeiler. In June, Council can revisit its fall decision to discontinue membership, given the more optimistic tone of Zeiler's report. SHAFR can cancel, retain membership at a lower rate, or restore full funding. The long-time lobbyist at NCH is also planning to retire, so that may affect how the organization develops moving forward.

Lerner highlighted the report from the Development Committee, which is very enthusiastic and has provided a list of action items. Lerner stated that he thought Council should approve them and then staff can move forward to figure out the appropriate mechanisms to achieve them, but he opened the floor for discussion. McAlister stated that SHAFR does not have a traditional culture of donating and suggested as a step in that direction ensuring that every council member has donated. Several members discussed the need to streamline the donation process and to facilitate monthly donations, which Sayward is working to implement. Others suggested that SHAFR can and should be more aggressive in fund-raising solicitations. Since the committee had specifically requested guidance on where to focus its efforts, Council focused on that issue. Consensus emerged to focus on general revenue funds, which would not restrict Council from allocating funds toward graduate students, but the reverse would not be the case. Lerner moved that Council empower him and Sayward to work with the committee to implement these recommendations, Brooke Blower seconded, and Council approved unanimously.

Sayward reviewed the report from the Committee on Women in SHAFR, which includes no new requests for funding. It already has a budget for its event at the upcoming conference, and Sayward is working with the Local Arrangements and Program committees on scheduling issues. She also averred that only minor updates had been made to the CCRT internal procedures, based on recommendations from the new ombudsperson. Sayward also pointed out that the money for new section editors for the next edition of *The SHAFR Guide* was already in this year's budget.

*The meeting adjourned at 2:50pm ET.*



## Professional Notes

**Jayita Sarkar** (University of Glasgow) received the 2024 Bernard S. Cohen Book Prize from the Association for Asian Studies for her book, *Ploughshares and Swords: India's Nuclear Program in the Global Cold War* (2023).

**Carl Watts** (Air University, Global College of Professional Military Education) received a Pioneer Award from the Federal Government Distance Learning Association, "In recognition of an individual for demonstrating initiative and leadership in the development and implementation of distance learning in the Federal Government."



## SHAFR Code of Conduct

SHAFR is committed to fostering an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Our organization's collective professional and intellectual pursuits can only be realized when we treat one another with dignity and respect. To this end, SHAFR prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, color, age, religion, disability, national origin, or immigration status. SHAFR also prohibits all forms of unwanted physical contact, including assault. The protections and prohibitions in this policy extend to any guests and members participating in SHAFR-sponsored events. All members and participants, including employees, contractors, vendors, volunteers, and guests, are expected to engage in professional and respectful behavior and to preserve common standards of professionalism.

The following policy pertains to all SHAFR activities, including events associated with SHAFR conferences and any SHAFR-related business occurring throughout the year. It encompasses interactions in person, by telephone, and by electronic communication, as well as behavior that occurs outside of official conference venues during SHAFR conferences.

**Sexual Harassment.** SHAFR has absolutely no tolerance for sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is behavior (speech or actions) in formal or informal settings that demeans, humiliates, or threatens an individual on the basis of their sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment can also take nonsexual forms and includes discriminatory remarks or actions based on an individual's sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal comment or physical conduct of a sexual nature, including situations in which the request or conduct involves any implied or expressed promise of professional reward for complying; or the request or conduct involves any implied or expressed threat of reprisal or denial of opportunity for refusing to comply; or the request or conduct results in what reasonably may be perceived as a hostile or intimidating environment. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature or consensual personal and social relationships without discriminatory effect. It refers to behavior that reasonably situated persons would regard as not welcome and as personally intimidating, hostile, or offensive. According to U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines, the victim of harassment can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct, not just the individual at whom the conduct is directed.

**Sexual Misconduct.** SHAFR has absolutely no tolerance for other forms of sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct is a broad term encompassing any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion, or manipulation. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same or different genders. Sexual misconduct may vary in its severity and consists of a range of behavior or attempted behavior. It can occur between strangers or acquaintances, including people involved in an intimate or sexual relationship. It includes but is not limited to: sexual assault (a continuum of conduct from forcible intercourse to nonphysical forms of pressure that compel individuals to engage in sexual activity against their will); sexual exploitation (taking nonconsensual, unjust, or abusive sexual advantage of another person); and sexual intimidation (threatening another person that you will commit a sex act against them or engaging in indecent exposure).

**Consent.** For the purposes of this policy, consent is a freely and affirmatively communicated willingness to participate in particular sexual activity or behavior, expressed either by words or clear, unambiguous actions. Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and, by definition, a person is incapable of consent if the person is unable to understand the facts, nature, extent, or implications of the situation and/or if the person is incapacitated, which includes incapacitation by extreme intoxication, drug use, mental disability, or being unconscious. Critically, the person initiating a particular sexual activity or behavior bears the responsibility of receiving consent. In examining the existence of consent under this policy, SHAFR will seek to determine, in view of the totality of the circumstances, whether a reasonable person would conclude that the recipient of the initiated sexual activity or behavior was (a) capable of consenting and (b) affirmatively communicated consent to the sexual activity or behavior at issue by words or clear, unambiguous actions.

*Harassment.* SHAFR has absolutely no tolerance for harassment. Harassment is behavior (speech or actions) in formal or informal settings that demeans, humiliates, or threatens an individual on the basis of their race or ethnicity, color, age, religion, disability, national origin, or immigration status. Harassment can include discriminatory remarks or actions based on an individual's race or ethnicity, color, age, religion, disability, national origin, or immigration status. Harassment refers to behavior that reasonably situated persons would regard as not welcome and as personally intimidating, hostile, or offensive. According to U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines, the victim of harassment can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct, not just the individual at whom the conduct is directed.

Retaliation against a complainant of sexual harassment or other forms of sexual misconduct a person who reports harassment, sexual misconduct, or other behavior that violates these policies is also a violation of these policies.

Members and other conference attendees should be aware that their home institution's policies (such as Title IX) may require them to report allegations of sexual harassment or other forms of sexual misconduct involving people affiliated with their institution. SHAFR reserves the right to respond truthfully to authorized inquiries received from a member's employer concerning allegations, proceedings, and outcomes under this policy.

This policy will be clearly and prominently displayed on the SHAFR website. All participants in the annual meeting and anyone obtaining or renewing a SHAFR membership will be required during the registration process formally to acknowledge the policy and their responsibility to abide by it.

## Complaints

SHAFR will designate a complaints team that will be available to receive complaints from, describe reporting procedures to, provide advice on resources to, and discuss issues with participants in any SHAFR-sanctioned activity who have experienced or witnessed violations of this policy. The team's contact information will be made available on the SHAFR website and in annual meeting registration materials. Neither the team nor any other SHAFR official can provide legal advice to those who make reports under this policy.

Members, staff, or guests who in good faith believe that they have been aggrieved by or witnessed conduct prohibited by this policy should contact the SHAFR complaints team. SHAFR will review each report and endeavor to respond proportionally and fairly. Responses may range from informal resolutions agreed to by the parties to investigations conducted by trained external investigators. SHAFR reserves the right to take interim steps during an event, such as removing the policy violator from the conference or a narrowly tailored "no contact" directive between the parties.

## Annual Report

The Executive Director will prepare an annual report of complaints or other evidence of policy violations (with no names used). The report will be circulated to the full Council at the January meeting and made available to the membership on request. The report may also identify how many reports were received, the forms of discrimination and misconduct alleged, how long the matter took to be resolved, and the outcome.

*Some text in this policy is adapted from documents produced by the American Historical Association, the Shakespeare Association of America, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the University of Iowa.*



## Recent Books of Interest

Aleinikoff, T. Alexander and Alexandra Délano Alonso. *New Narratives on the Peopling of America: Immigration, Race, and Dispossession.* (JHU, 2024).

Ameri, Anan and Holly Arida, eds. *Daily Life of Arab Americans in the 21st Century.* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Bellamy, Alex J. *Warmonger: Vladimir Putin's Imperial Wars.* (Columbia, 2024).

Benn, Carl. *The War of 1812.* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Benton, Lauren. *They Called It Peace: Worlds of Imperial Violence.* (Princeton, 2024).

Bolton, M. Kent. *The Rise of the American Security State: The National Security Act of 1947 and the Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy.* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Bonner, Christopher T. *Cold War Negritude: Form and Alignment in French Caribbean Literature.* (Oxford, 2024).

Campbell, Donald J. *America's Gun Wars: A Cultural History of Gun Control in the United States.* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Campbell, Duncan A. and Niels Eichhorn. *The Civil War in the Age of Nationalism.* (LSU Press, 2024).

Cogliano, Francis D. *A Revolutionary Friendship: Washington, Jefferson, and the American Republic.* (Harvard, 2024).

Conroy-Krutz, Emily. *Missionary Diplomacy: Religion and Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations.* (Cornell, 2024).

Copeland, Dale C. *A World Safe for Commerce: American Foreign Policy from the Revolution to the Rise of China.* (Princeton, 2024).

Davis, Thomas J. *History of African Americans: Exploring Diverse Roots.* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Deagan, Kathleen, ed. *Catholicism and Native Americans in Early North America: Parish, Church, and Mission*. (Notre Dame, 2024).

De Groot, Michael. *Disruption: The Global Economic Shocks of the 1970s and the End of the Cold War*. (Cornell, 2024).

De Lange, Erik. *Menacing Tides: Security, Piracy and Empire in the Nineteenth-Century Mediterranean*. (Cambridge, 2024).

Doolan, Yuri W. *The First Amerasians: Mixed Race Koreans from Camp towns to America*. (Oxford, 2024).

Dorsey, Marion Girard. *Holding Their Breath: How the Allies Confronted the Threat of Chemical Warfare in World War II*. (Cornell, 2024).

Fields, David P. and Mitchell B. Lerner. *Divided America, Divided Korea: The US and Korea During and After the Trump Years*. (Cambridge, 2024).

Fixico, Donald L. *Bureau of Indian Affairs*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Gac, Scott. *Born in Blood: Violence and the Making of America*. (Cambridge, 2024).

Galmarini, Maria Cristina. *Ambassadors of Social Progress: A History of International Blind Activism in the Cold War*. (Cornell, 2024).

Golding, David and Christopher Cannon Jones, eds. *Missionary Interests: Protestant and Mormon Missions of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. (Cornell, 2024).

Han, Lori Cox, ed. *Hatred of America's Presidents: Personal Attacks on the White House from Washington to Trump*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Ingleson, Elizabeth O'Brien. *Made in China: When US-China Interests Converged to Transform Global Trade*. (Harvard, 2024).

Janney, Caroline E., Peter S. Carmichael, Aaron Sheehan-Dean, eds. *The War That Made America: Essays Inspired by the Scholarship of Gary W. Gallagher*. (UNC, 2024).

Jarquín, Mateo. *The Sandinista Revolution: A Global Latin American History*. (UNC, 2024).

Keyes, Geoffrey. *Patton's Tactician: The War Diary of Lieutenant General Geoffrey Keyes*. Edited by James W. Holsinger Jr. (Kentucky, 2024).

Khalil, Osamah F. *A World of Enemies: America's Wars at Home and Abroad from Kennedy to Biden*. (Harvard, 2024).

Kott, Sandrine. *A World More Equal: An Internationalist Perspective on the Cold War*. (Columbia, 2024).

Lake, David A. *Indirect Rule: The Making of US International Hierarchy*. (Cornell, 2024).

Lee, Jonathan H.X., ed. *Japanese Americans: The History and Culture of a People*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Li, Hongshan. *Fighting on the Cultural Front: U.S.-China Relations in the Cold War*. (Columbia, 2024).

Lippman, Thomas W. *Crude Oil, Crude Money: Aristotle Onassis, Saudi Arabia, and the CIA*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Liu, Glory M. *Adam Smith's America: How a Scottish Philosopher Became an Icon of American Capitalism*. (Princeton, 2024).

Luis, Diego Javier. *The First Asians in the Americas: A Transpacific History*. (Harvard, 2024).

Lyon, Lea. *The Double V Campaign: African Americans Fighting for Freedom at Home and Abroad*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2024).

Meléndez-Badillo, Jorell. *Puerto Rico: A National History*. (Princeton, 2024).

Minami, Kazushi. *People's Diplomacy: How Americans and Chinese Transformed US-China Relations During the Cold War*. (Cornell, 2024).

Montoya, Benjamin. *A Diplomatic History of US Immigration During the 20th Century: Policy, Law, and National Identity*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Nash, Alice and Christoph Strobel. *Daily Life of Native Americans from Post-Columbian Through Nineteenth Century America*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Nester, William. *World of War: A History of American Warfare from Jamestown to the War on Terror*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2024).

Newbury, Darren. *Cold War Photographic Diplomacy: The US Information Agency and Africa*. (Penn, 2024).

O'Hanlon, Michael. *Military History for the Modern Strategist: America's Major Wars Since 1861*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2024).

Patterson, Dennis and Jangsup Choi. *Strengthening South Korea-Japan Relations: East Asia's International Order and a Rising China*. (Kentucky, 2024).

Piffer, Tommaso. *The Big Three Allies and the European Resistance: Intelligence, Politics, and the Origins of the Cold War, 1939-1945*. (Oxford, 2024).

Prévost, Stéphanie and Bénédicte Deschamps. *Immigration and Exile Foreign-Language Press in the UK and in the US*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).

Ramos, Michael. *The After: A Veteran's Notes on Coming Home*. (UNC, 2024).

Roady, Peter. *The Contest Over National Security: FDR, Conservatives, and the Struggle to Claim the Most Powerful Phrase in American Politics*. (Harvard, 2024).

Saunders, Elizabeth N. *The Insiders' Game: How Elites Make War and Peace*. (Princeton, 2024).

Simon, Jeffrey D. *The Bulldog Detective: William J. Flynn and America's First War Against the Mafia, Spies, and Terrorists*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2024).



- Slotkin, Richard. *A Great Disorder: National Myth and the Battle for America*. (Harvard, 2024).
- Stoker, Donald. *Purpose and Power: U.S. Grand Strategy from the Revolutionary Era to the Present*. (Columbia, 2024).
- Stour, Mary A. *Native American Boarding Schools*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).
- Thomas, Martin. *The End of Empires and a World Remade: A Global History of Decolonization*. (Princeton, 2024).
- Thompson, Joseph M. *Cold War Country: How Nashville's Music Row and the Pentagon Created the Sound of American Patriotism*. (UNC, 2024).
- Vile, John R. *The American Flag: An Encyclopedia of the Stars and Stripes in U.S. History, Culture, and Law*. (Bloomsbury, 2024).
- Wagner, Steven. *Eisenhower for Our Time*. (Cornell, 2024).
- Wilson, Kathy. *Marshall's Greatest Captain: Lieutenant General Frank M. Andrews and Air Power in the World Wars*. (Kentucky, 2024).
- Zander, Cecily N. *The Army under Fire: The Politics of Antimilitarism in the Civil War Era*. (LSU, 2024).

# DISPATCHES

## W. Stull Holt Dissertation Fellowship Funding Report

My dissertation, “The Water’s Edge: Empire, Race, and the Global History of Oakland California, 1848-1980,” has drawn on archives and oral histories in Cuba, Hawai‘i, and across the continental United States. The W. Stull Holt Dissertation Fellowship from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations made possible a significant portion of this research. The fellowship funded research trips to Hawai‘i and Washington, DC, where I examined collections relevant to all five chapters of my dissertation at the Alexander & Baldwin Sugar Museum, the Hawaiian Mission Children Society Library, the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, the National Archives at College Park and Washington, DC, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. In Hawai‘i, I also interviewed and examined the private papers of the descendant of a midcentury skipper for the Matson shipping company, whose numerous trans-Pacific voyages from Oakland illustrate the city’s growing importance to commercial and military logistics. The Hawai‘i trip also allowed me to complete the research for an article that has been accepted for publication and is forthcoming in the *Journal of American Ethnic History*. The article shows how fishing villages founded by Chinese migrants on the urbanizing edges of the San Francisco Bay embodied social and environmental conflicts roiling the emergent Pacific empire of the post-Civil War United States. Housed in the Hawaiian Mission Children Society Library in Honolulu, the letters of Samuel T. Alexander, who managed one of the largest sugar plantations in late-nineteenth-century Maui from his Oakland home, document the dependence of American planters on Chinese contract laborers as well as the seafood harvested by Chinese migrants in the endangered tidelands of Greater Oakland. These trans-Pacific circuits of people, nature, and capital undergirded Oakland’s urban development following the U.S. conquest of California. Such linkages help explain why the city became the largest military supply depot in the Pacific by the dawn of the cold war. As the Army’s primary maritime terminal on the West Coast, the Oakland harbor served as a vital transportation hub for personnel and cargo destined for U.S. wars in Korea and Vietnam and a sprawling archipelago of bases in the Pacific. Oakland’s status as a critical chokepoint for military logistics made the labor strikes and radical politics of the multiracial longshore union that worked its docks a matter of national security. The records of the Military Traffic Management Command at the National Archives open a window into the persistent anxieties of military officials at the alleged subversion of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). One report from 1971, filed days before the start of a strike by ILWU dockworkers on the West Coast and Hawai‘i, reveals the presence of “a highly placed ILWU source” funneling intelligence to the Army about the union’s internal deliberations. The diverse array of research materials I collected on two SHAFR-funded trips have proved indispensable to my dissertation and my broader effort to globalize the story of a city often reduced to the site of a domestic urban crisis. Such materials have substantiated my argument that Oakland’s waterfront both bridged the continental and overseas expansion of an ascendant world power and came to serve as a proving ground for alternative forms of globalization.

Andrew Klein  
 PhD Candidate  
 University of California, Los Angeles

# The Last Word: SHAFR and Internationalization

*Brian Cuddy and Sean Fear*

We recently completed our term as co-chairs of SHAFR's Task Force on Internationalization and we are writing to provide updates to SHAFR's membership on the work of the Task Force and, in particular, on the views of non-U.S.-based members surveyed by the Task Force.

As has often been noted, our field has a twin mandate, its attention fixed at once on both the United States and the wider world. This dual focus at times gives rise to tension over the essence of what we research and teach. Most readers of *Passport* will be familiar with debates over the purpose, the direction, and even the names of our organisation, its journal, and the field in which we work. (See Ryan Irwin's "Requiem for a Field" in the September 2023 issue of *Passport* for the most recent survey of questions that have defined and divided our field.) The Task Force deliberately did not engage with these debates. As interesting and generative as the tension inherent in our field can be, our mission was not so much intellectual as social: to better understand and to amplify the views and interests of SHAFR's international membership within the organisation.

The Task Force originated with an early 2020 petition co-ordinated by Barbara Keys, "A Call for the Genuine Internationalization of SHAFR." The petition made several requests "intended to address the under-representation of the concerns and interests of non-U.S.-based members in SHAFR and more broadly to ensure that SHAFR more effectively grows and adapts to changing conditions in the 21st century." These requests included proposed by-law amendments to hold at least one conference every decade outside North America, and to include at least one non-U.S.-based member on Council (SHAFR's governing body). The petition's final request was to "ask SHAFR's President to establish a Task Force on Internationalization and to consider surveying SHAFR's non-North America-based members about their concerns."

Council considered these requests in 2020 in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and so postponed a decision on hosting annual meetings outside the United States. But it did endorse the petition's proposal to include at least one non-U.S.-based member on Council, and it accepted the request to establish a Task Force. SHAFR's then-president Kristin Hoganson invited us to co-chair the Task Force, and took the lead in assembling a wonderful group of scholars to serve as Task Force members: Jessica Gienow-Hecht (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany); Gökser Gökçay (Üsküdar Üniversitesi, Turkey); Hideaki Kami (University of Tokyo, Japan); Carlo Patti (Universidade Federal de Goiás, Brazil); Vanni Pettinà (El Colegio de México, Mexico); Doug Rossinow (Metropolitan State University, United States); Jayita Sarkar (University of Glasgow, United Kingdom); and Taomo Zhou (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore). We are grateful to these colleagues for serving on the Task Force with us and for contributing their expertise, insight, and dedication to our field.

The Task Force understood the idea of "internationalization" loosely and broadly. SHAFR's international membership includes members based outside the United States (including U.S. citizens based overseas), but also members based in the United States who might not identify solely or at all as American. There is also, of course, a significant share of SHAFR's membership whose scholarly interests include countries and regions outside of the United States. While the Task Force was originally set up

to ensure the views of members based outside the United States were heard, we worked wherever possible with all the different international elements of SHAFR in mind.

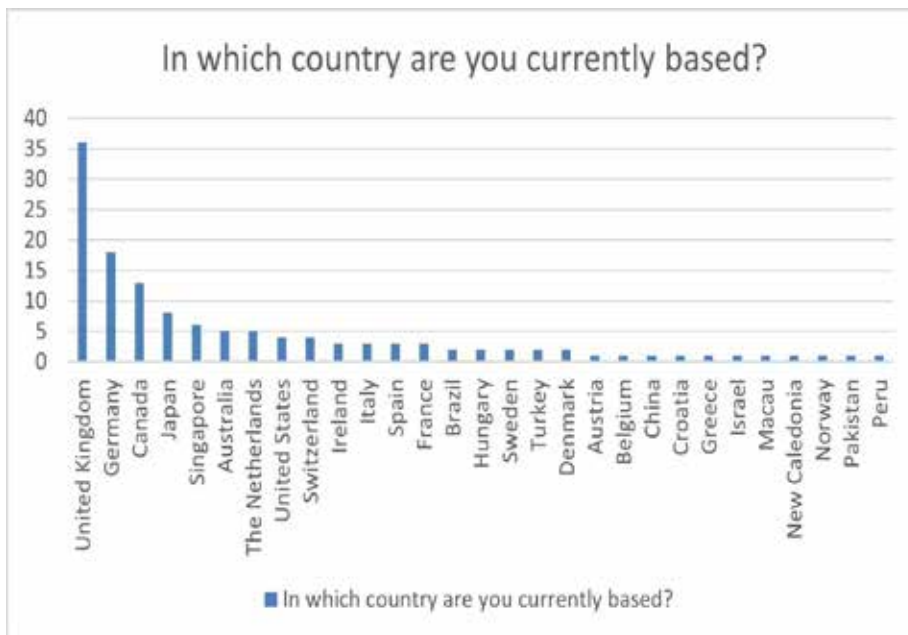
One of our principal tasks was to survey current and potential international SHAFR members. We were delighted by the level of engagement with our survey, which received over 140 responses from 29 countries.

The survey reinforced the diversity of views on SHAFR as an organisation with a global membership. When asked "What does internationalization mean for you?" survey respondents replied with a variety of answers. For some, "internationalization" is primarily an intellectual commitment, which could include "intellectual diversity [and] different historiographical worlds colliding against one another creating new knowledge otherwise impossible"; "engagement with different non-U.S. perspectives on how history is made, perspectives that do not speak to U.S.-focused issues, methods, or ways to study diplomatic history"; or, for instance, "Being part of a global community of scholars whose work focuses on international history and the history of U.S. foreign relations but whose perspectives genuinely reflect as broad a cultural and intellectual diversity as possible."

Others, however, emphasised the need for tangible changes to facilitate greater international outreach and a stronger sense of belonging among members based overseas. For one respondent, this meant "An appreciation that U.S. foreign relations history is of interest not just to Americans, and an attempt to make non-Americans feel welcome in the organisation." Others called for action to ensure that internationalization represents "more than a buzzword." "SHAFR has spoken of internationalising for years (if not decades)," they continued, "but has not implemented a sustained plan." High on the list of concrete suggestions to improve SHAFR's international representation were greater sensitivity to the increasing cost of travel to the annual conference, organising SHAFR events in non-North American locations, and pro-active efforts to recruit overseas scholars whose research is relevant to the international history field.

Perhaps the most consistent suggestion for increasing SHAFR's international profile and representation was seeing greater international representation on SHAFR's key governing bodies. Respondents called, for instance, for "greater involvement in SHAFR committees and leadership from scholars based outside North America"; for increased "diversity of SHAFR board members for the organisation, the journal [*Diplomatic History*], and *Passport*"; and for "having scholars who are not based in the United States serving on Council, particularly as President, having editors for *Diplomatic History* that are not based in the United States, and holding the annual conference outside of North America." To that end, in its interim report (December 2021), the Task Force recommended mandatory international representation on the annual meeting's program committee, which Council accepted. In our final report (December 2023), we further identified Council and the nominating committee as bodies that would benefit from greater and more consistent international representation. A designated non-U.S.-based member on the nominating committee could be given a mandate to include international representation in SHAFR's leadership ranks.

Given the annual meeting's centrality to our organisation, it is no surprise that survey respondents wanted to see some changes to



the way it works. SHAFR’s international members shared a broad range of constructive proposals, including “Online networking events and article/book manuscript workshops”; and some sort of provision for hybrid conference engagement given that (as several respondents noted) “mid-June is in the middle of the semester in some countries.” A recurring theme was the desirability of experimenting with regional “sub-networks” within the broader international SHAFR umbrella, with dozens of suggestions for such initiatives, including: “Further strengthening of regional networks”; “Sub-networks by region (such as Northeast Asia)”; “regional chapters and meetings”; and “a series of regional (outside the U.S.) seminars/mini conferences.”

Thus, to expand SHAFR’s international membership and to strengthen its sense of community and inclusion outside of the annual meeting, our final report proposed that Council explore the establishment of regional networks modelled on the successful SHAFR United Kingdom and Ireland discussion group, which since September 2020 has met informally via Zoom several times per semester to discuss members’ works in progress. Our survey indicated that such regionally focused networks (possibly in conjunction with smaller regional in-person events) would be much appreciated by SHAFR’s international membership. In response to the question “Would you be interested in joining a network in your region of fellow SHAFR members and scholars?” 90 percent of respondents answered “yes.” This enthusiasm extended not only to participating in such networks, but also in helping to organise them. In response to the question “If you answered yes, would you be interested in helping to organise a regional network in your region/area of expertise?” 69 percent of respondents answered “yes.” While ticking a box on a survey

form does not always translate into action, the high number of prospective participants and volunteers suggests that two or three additional regional networks could be sustained, including one in the Asia-Pacific region. We recommended that Council consider establishing such networks.

Perhaps surprisingly given widespread international inflation and mounting cost-of-living difficulties, only 15% of respondents cited cost as a prohibitive factor in seeking or retaining SHAFR membership. However, our final report noted, while the overall number of survey respondents who cited cost as a significant consideration was proportionally low, most respondents are based in high-income countries. Cost remains a significant challenge for members based in lower-income countries especially given the recent relative strengthening of the U.S. dollar against dozens of international currencies. And it was the leading prohibitive factor (29% of respondents) identified by non-members for not joining. We proposed therefore that SHAFR adapt a more detailed membership fee structure, with dues varied

along a greater range of income bands, drawing on the example of other international academic societies such as the Association for Asian Studies (AAS).

Other points from our final report to Council included recommending a networking and social event for international members at the annual conference to strengthen the sense of global community; commending and encouraging ongoing efforts by the *Diplomatic History* team to provide editorial support to prospective authors for whom English is not a first language; and suggesting a regular feature on international members in *Passport* to increase the profile of individual overseas members, raise awareness of the extent of internationalization within SHAFR to date, and foster a sense of welcoming and inclusion to international members.

Reflecting on several years of service as co-chairs of the Internationalization Task Force, we are struck most of all by the passion and enthusiasm of SHAFR members for further developing our international representation and engagement, reflected in the dedication of our fellow Task Force members and in the volume and depth of consideration of international members’ survey responses. The strength of feeling in support of greater internationalization of SHAFR is clear. We encourage all SHAFR members to share your suggestions on internationalization with SHAFR’s leadership and to promote SHAFR to likeminded overseas-based colleagues. We ask international members in particular to consider participating in, if not leading, any new initiatives which may emerge from the Task Force, including regional networks and greater opportunities for overseas-based members to serve on SHAFR committees and Council.

*PASSPORT*

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