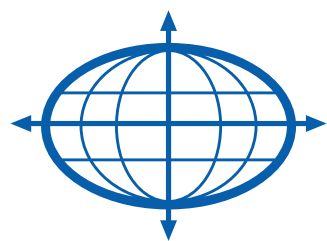


PASSPORT



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Seven Questions On...
The United States Did Not Go to War in Afghanistan
Writing About Reagan

...AND MORE

Passport

THE SOCIETY FOR HISTORIANS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS REVIEW



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Presidential Message

Laura Belmonte

As I look out on the mist rising from the meadow behind my home on a beautiful Blacksburg fall morning, I am filled with gratitude to all of you for granting me the singular honor of serving as SHAFR president. This organization is not only my most cherished professional network, but also a community of colleagues and friends who have enriched my life for three decades. Since its founding in 1967, SHAFR has been a vitally important outlet for cutting-edge scholarship on international history and a model of the collegiality and support that exemplify the academy at its best.



The pandemic has underscored the vital importance of SHAFR's myriad voices. Our scholars have helped to contextualize the sudden evacuation of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, the impact of COVID on foreign relations, and the ways that climate change is shaping conflict and migration. Unfortunately, the pandemic has also illuminated yawning inequalities in health care and workers' rights. Higher education has most definitely not been spared and SHAFR must redouble its efforts to address the academic jobs crisis and to provide critical resources to scholars whose home institutions have slashed research and travel budgets. At a time when academic freedom is under assault, SHAFR must also remain committed to defending those who teach in fields born of struggle and who demand a more just society.

As I begin my term, I must acknowledge the heroic efforts of many members over the last year. Andrew Preston and Amy Sayward led SHAFR with tremendous skill and dedication during a time of great uncertainty. Megan Black and Ryan Irwin did a masterful job of leading the program committee and orchestrating the 2021 annual meeting in an entirely virtual format. We reached wider audiences than ever before and made the conference economically accessible to

all. Indeed, the virtual conference was such a success that we will be preserving elements of it as part of our 2022 annual meeting in New Orleans. Former SHAFR President Richard Immerman stepped down as chair of the U.S. Department of State's Historical Advisory Committee on Diplomatic Documentation after a long and distinguished tenure. Kelly Shannon and the Conference Conduct Task Force and Reporting Team spent countless hours formulating policies designed to ensure that SHAFR remains a safe and welcoming space for all. Petra Goedde, Anne Foster, and Andy Johns remain incredibly gifted editors of our stellar publications, *Diplomatic History* and *Passport*.

With over fifty years of institutional success and a deep bench of leadership talent, SHAFR has an impressive history, robust resources, and an indomitable spirit. It is a privilege to lead such a remarkable community and I cannot wait to see you all, in person at long last, in New Orleans!

2021 SHAFR ELECTION RESULTS

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THANK YOU TO THE 417 SHAFR MEMBERS WHO VOTED IN THE ELECTION THIS YEAR.

A Roundtable on Amanda Demmer, *After Saigon's Fall: Refugees and U.S.-Vietnamese Relations, 1975-2000*

Sandra Scanlon, Gregory A. Daddis, Pierre Asselin, Kathryn C. Statler, David
Anderson, and Amanda C. Demmer

Introductory Essay, Roundtable Review on Amanda Demmer, *After Saigon's Fall: Refugees and US-Vietnamese Relations, 1975-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021)

Sandra Scanlon

It was hardly surprising that several of the contributors to this roundtable review of Amanda Demmer's *After Saigon's Fall* referenced the U.S. war in Afghanistan and the potential significance of her work in guiding our understanding of how American wars end. I am writing only a month or so later, and yet from a European standpoint at least, the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan has already faded from news cycles. That war, fought in stealth by comparison to public engagement with the U.S. war in Vietnam, will undoubtedly have national and international ramifications both predictable and as yet unknown. However traumatic the war was for some Americans, and certainly for the people of Afghanistan, it seems impossible to imagine that many Americans today will face the same social and cultural traumas bred by the Vietnam War. Claims that the United States has a moral commitment to protect Afghans and those fleeing Taliban rule may therefore lead to little in terms of policy. But that story has yet to play out.

Demmer's *After Saigon's Fall* puts the issue of post-conflict migration and refugee crises at the heart of analyzing the move toward normalizing relations between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Without denying the significant role of White House actors, she reinforces perspectives that emphasize the agency of Congress in policymaking during the 1970s and, in this case perhaps more importantly, the function of grassroots activists who championed "humanitarian" issues in the form of family reunification and U.S. acceptance of the war's refugees. Contact between Washington and Hanoi relating to the implementation of the resettlement proved as important, if not more so, than discussions over accounting for POW/MIAs in fomenting closer working relations between the post-conflict capitals. As a work of scholarship, *After Saigon's Fall* does several important things, not least of which is to address the issue of America's *unending* war in Vietnam from a new perspective. It challenges our understanding of the myriad ways in which wars continue to play out both domestically and internationally long after peace is supposedly declared.

Each of the reviewers praise Demmer's meticulous research and the breadth of her analysis, with Anderson justifiably noting that "her argument and conclusions resonate well beyond the Vietnam War itself." Demmer's work speaks to the story of how global refugee policies developed up to the early 21st century, and the function of this issue in U.S. policy developments more broadly. As Statler comments, the processes that Demmer analyses "played a significant role in putting human rights front and center as the moral *lingua franca* of 21st century international relations." The reviewers were united in commending the significance of Demmer's consideration of grassroots activism in putting what the U.S. termed "humanitarian" considerations in the driving seat in terms of policy toward the SRV. While previous scholarship has explored the domestic cultural relevance of the POW/MIA issue and has demonstrated its relevance in constraining U.S. policymakers' options relating to normalization, Demmer offers an alternative perspective on how policy was both formulated and how the negotiation/implementation of these policies influenced the practicalities of cooperation between Hanoi and Washington.

Anderson contends that Demmer is most original in her examination of the relevance of initiatives like Khuc Minh Tho's leadership of the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA) and Ginetta Sagan's creation of the Aurora Foundation, while Daddis notes that one of Demmer's most insightful arguments is that policymakers were unable to divide humanitarian considerations from political ones, in large part because of advocacy groups like the FVPPA. While each of the reviewers hint at the significance of these humanitarian considerations, Statler is most explicit in highlighting the ways that *After Saigon's Fall* reveals the efforts of the Reagan White House to use humanitarianism to fight communism and continue the war against Vietnam by non-military means. This is, therefore, a story that builds on earlier studies of the legacies of Vietnam, but one that significantly diversifies our understandings of how coming to terms with the war and its consequences played out in policy.

The question of a lack of breadth is also raised, with Asselin and Statler in particular noting Demmer's failure to engage with sources from Hanoi. As Demmer rightly affirms, her work focuses primarily on developments in United States policymaking, and any attempt to fully integrate the course and causes of Vietnamese decision making would have made for a much longer book. Asselin

sees Demmer's approach as part of a wider methodological issue among scholars of U.S. foreign relations, stemming in no small part from limited language skills, to diminish the relevance the other governments—specifically the Vietnamese—in determining the nature or course of relationships.

In the context of exploring *relations* between states, rather than the domestic sources of U.S. policies, this point is well made. Demmer has done much, as each reviewer resoundingly praises, to bring Vietnamese voices to the fore through her examination of grassroots activism among Vietnamese actors in the United States. As Daddis highlights, "though Demmer's attention remains fixed on American attitudes toward normalization, she demonstrates how South Vietnam persisted as a 'ghost nation' long after its international demise." Yet, Statler comments that the "SRV's reasoning ... remains obscured," and Asselin more pointedly notes "that this is not a book about US-Vietnamese relations; it is about US relations *vis-à-vis* Vietnam, about US-based actors' perspectives on US-SRVN relations." It is an important point, and these methodological questions will, I suspect, continue to stimulate much needed debate among our increasingly diverse and thankfully vibrant research community. Amanda Demmer's work, as the following reviews demonstrate, contributes a great deal indeed to these debates, our understanding of America's Vietnam War, and the global history of refugee crises.

Review of Amanda C. Demmer, *After Saigon's Fall: Refugee and US-Vietnamese Relations, 1975–2000*

Gregory A. Daddis

Back in 2019, the musical *Miss Saigon*, which made its Broadway debut nearly three decades earlier, toured the United States and came to the Hollywood Pantages Theatre in Los Angeles. My wife Susan and I took in a Sunday afternoon showing, our first time seeing a revival of the Tony-nominated production. It was a lavishly designed and robustly lighted performance, full of Vietnamese-style thatch huts, American helicopters, and a massive wrought-iron gate replicating the U.S. Embassy's barricades in downtown Saigon, circa 1975. Despite its dramatic staging, though, something clearly seemed off with the musical; it was dated and inelegant despite its colorful costumes and energetic choreography.

Weeks later, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen helped interpret the show for us in a searing *New York Times* editorial. As he has done in so many of his writings, Nguyen spotlighted the ways in which popular American culture too often draws "from a deep-seated well of derogatory images of Asians and Asian women." *Miss Saigon* proved no different. Nguyen declared that despite its problems, the musical endures because it allows the audience to feel a sense of privilege, embracing "the viewpoint of the powerful white male savior" who adopts a "mixed-race child," a "stand in for childlike Asia, in need of Western benevolent guidance."¹

Nguyen argued that *Miss Saigon* might not be so upsetting if "there were other stories about Asians or Vietnamese people that showed their diversity." Of course, he's right. Still, over the last few decades, an increasing number of writers have offered candid, nuanced insights into the Vietnamese American community, elevating narratives beyond surface-level depictions of Asians as "small, weak, effeminate people" requiring guidance from their American benefactors.

Recent authors have opened windows into these displaced communities, building off and advancing classic works like Le Ly Hayslip's *When Heaven and Earth Changed*

Places. Nguyen's *The Sympathizer* is perhaps the most famous of these works, though his nonfiction *Nothing Ever Dies* is an indispensable read for historians. Also indispensable are the works of Ocean Vuong and Andrew Pham, both gifted commentators on the Vietnamese wars that brought so many "refugees" to the United States. "Yes, there was a war," Vuong tells us. "Yes, we came from its epicenter." But neither he nor his mother, to whom he tells his story, were born from war. "I was wrong, Ma. We were born from beauty."²

All these novels, memoirs, and histories suggest what it might be like to be "stateless," to be untethered from one's home and family because of the demographic ripple effects of war. They also challenge us to accept Y n L  Espiritu's argument that depicting Vietnamese as the "newest Asian American 'model minority'" is a problematic oversimplification. Moreover, as Espiritu claims, the "production of the assimilated and grateful refugee . . . enables a potent narrative of America(ns) rescuing and caring for Vietnam's 'runaways,' which powerfully remakes the case for the rightness of the U.S. war in Vietnam."³

Works from passionate voices within the Vietnamese diaspora also submit, as does Mary Dudziak in *War Time*, that the boundaries between peace and war are often blurred in time and space.⁴ Wars don't neatly end with peace agreements or surrender ceremonies. Trauma can be passed along from one generation to the next, ensuring that war's legacies survive long after the guns fall silent.

Yet even perceptive works highlighting the Vietnamese diaspora's diversity are arguably incomplete, for they tend to downplay the organizational and institutional histories behind the personal stories. If war indeed is a political act, then political bargaining in the aftermath of the fighting certainly shapes how wars endure and ultimately conclude.

It is here that Amanda Demmer, an assistant professor of history at Virginia Tech, intervenes to provide depth to the historiographical landscape with an inspired addition to what we might call the "long American war in Vietnam." As Demmer brilliantly shows, the Southeast Asian conflict persisted well after the fall of Saigon in April 1975, its battlefields moving from South Vietnam's villages and jungles to displaced Vietnamese activists' kitchens in Falls Church, Virginia, and congressional offices in Washington, DC.

While Demmer focuses mostly on legislative bureaucracies and non-governmental organizations coming to terms with one of the largest war-induced exoduses in recent history, hers is hardly a stale monograph on "migration politics" (227). Rather, Demmer brings life to the decades-long "normalization" process between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). This is a story of family separation as much as it is one of international relations.

Indeed, what makes this such a compelling work is that in unraveling a tale of bureaucratic politics, Demmer illustrates, in superb fashion, how individuals matter; how their decisions, their advocacy, and in some instances their sheer determination can alter the path of history. By book's end, readers cannot come away unimpressed by the exploits of activists like Ginetta Sagan and Khuc Minh Tho, who fought for the rights of those Vietnamese most affected by a war that endured well beyond Saigon's fall.

Where Demmer excels is in highlighting the paradoxical notions of U.S. policy toward Vietnam after 1975, of perpetuating wartime hostilities while pursuing humanitarian aims. All the while, she emphasizes the tensions between and within advocacy groups navigating political decisions that were both paternalistic and

Wars don't neatly end with peace agreements or surrender ceremonies. Trauma can be passed along from one generation to the next, ensuring that war's legacies survive long after the guns fall silent.

confrontational. In many ways, *After Saigon's Fall* builds upon earlier works from Carl Bon Tempo and Edwin Martini to demonstrate how Americans' military loss in Vietnam incentivized those seeking to continue the war against Hanoi on other, less public fronts.⁵ These bellicose crusaders, however, were forced to contend with humanitarian and human rights activists seeking to alleviate the familial pains of a refugee crisis that lasted for decades.

Demmer adds to this historical perspective by arguing that U.S. officials in charge of migration programs ended up prioritizing three groups of South Vietnamese: "boat people" with family connections to the United States; former South Vietnamese officials and soldiers imprisoned in communist reeducation camps; and the nearly 50,000 Amerasian children who remained in Vietnam after Saigon's fall. Ultimately, more than one million Vietnamese would relocate to the United States, even while most Americans remained preoccupied with achieving a "full accounting" of the roughly 2,500 U.S. servicemen listed as POW/MIA. Perhaps we should not be surprised by this nationalistic emphasis, but Demmer explains why the remote, even fantastical, possibility of returning American prisoners of war remained so alluring far into the 1990s.

Given so many conflicting interests undergirding the U.S.-SRV normalization process, it would have been easy to lose readers in a swirling mass of regional and international policymakers, nongovernmental actors, advocacy groups, and family activists. While the author avoids this pitfall by organizing her book chronologically in three parts, early on it is apparent that she is not marching lockstep through history. Clear threads of humanitarianism, human rights, and foreign policy decision-making keep the story thematically tied together. And though Demmer's attention remains fixed on American attitudes toward normalization, she demonstrates how South Vietnam persisted as a "ghost nation" long after its international demise (5).

Part I details the harrowing days when South Vietnam ceased to exist as a state entity, though perhaps not, the author intimates, as a political entity. As both Americans and Vietnamese tried to make sense of Saigon's collapse, advocates already were thinking about issues related to migration and refugee statuses. Demmer is at once sympathetic to and critical of the Ford administration, which was attempting to plan for the evacuation of Americans and their South Vietnamese allies from Vietnam even as it faced an increasingly assertive Congress in Watergate's aftermath. She also places this episode within its proper Cold War context, noting how U.S. officials often defined "refugee as one fleeing communism" (25). Such constructions helped Americans justify their continuing commitments to those southern Vietnamese fleeing their homeland.

In fact, terminology is a key part of this story, and Demmer carefully explains the problems that arise when we conflate labels like "refugee" and "migrant" (even "dependent" was a contested term during evacuation calculations) and the legal implications of applying such labels imprecisely. We also see differences between "humanitarian" and "human rights." Even phrases like "normalization" were debated for decades. And, of course, concerns over U.S. "credibility" remained as persuasive as they had been when American policymakers first considered sending ground combat troops to support a tenuous ally back in the mid-1960s. Finally, perceptions of the United States' "loss" in Vietnam and ideas about how best to compensate for such a dissatisfying outcome linger just below the surface.

Demmer also highlights the many competing organizations disputing where the United States' "moral obligation" lay after Saigon's fall. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association

(FVPPA) and the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia came to different conclusions on the U.S. government's primary responsibilities. Demmer adds an international component to these debates by showing how the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and nations of first asylum like Thailand believed the United States should take responsibility for resolving the mass migration from Vietnam. Here the importance of human rights to President Jimmy Carter's foreign policy approach enters the story. Demmer argues, persuasively, that the new administration reframed U.S.-SRV relations in ways that influenced how subsequent commanders-in-chief would approach, if not define, normalization.

Washington legislators mattered too, especially as more U.S. military veterans began entering Congress and served alongside legislators like Senator Ted Kennedy—legislators who were advocating more broadly for human rights on an international scale. It is worth noting that former prisoners of war like Senator John S. McCain and Congressman "Pete" Peterson, the first U.S. ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, helped lead the charge for normalization while prudently offering their support to the National League of POW/MIA Families. The power of Congress is certainly on display in *After Saigon's Fall*, and one wonders if, given our increasingly imperial presidency, similar leverage will ever be wielded so deftly again in foreign policy debates.

This is not to say that the executive branch lacked influence over normalization and refugee policy decisions. Demmer explicitly shows how presidents made key decisions in these decades. Ford, Carter, and Reagan all shaped, in their own ways, U.S. policies toward Hanoi and commitments to former South Vietnamese allies and their families. Carter, for instance, had to balance his personal impulses on human rights with Cold War considerations like a deteriorating relationship with the Soviet Union and a Third Indochina War pitting Vietnam against Cambodia. The genocidal policies of the Khmer Rouge did little to alleviate Southeast Asian refugee problems. Still, Carter set an example on human rights standards that his successors ultimately would follow. As Demmer notes, "US policy makers insisted that Hanoi had to meet an expanding number of preconditions prior to the assumption of official ties" (92).

Not unexpectedly, Ronald Reagan looms large in part II, as Demmer moves her story into the 1980s. Yet entities outside of Washington could, and often did, proscribe White House actions as policymakers continued to focus on the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees. Advocacy groups supporting Amerasian children certainly were among these influential nongovernment agencies. So too were those families invested in a "full accounting" of American POW/MIAs. The myth of prisoners of war still alive in Southeast Asia proved a potent elixir, despite zero evidence of their existence. Demmer illustrates how POW/MIA accounting successfully competed for politicians' attention, even while they framed Vietnamese migration programs as "family-reunification based humanitarian initiatives" that allowed them to "score propaganda points in the short term" (127). The cultural pressures exerted by "Rambomania" in the mid-1980s make for entertaining yet exasperating reading.

It is important to note, however, that this is not simply an American-centric story. Demmer showcases organizations like the FVPPA, which set up bases of operation in Vietnamese communities like Fall Church, Virginia. Among the more insightful arguments in this work is that while policymakers sought to divide "humanitarian" considerations from "political" ones, the two merged thanks in no small part to advocacy groups like the FVPPA. Its president, Khúc Minh Tho, is a central player here. For over a decade she advocated on behalf of parents separated from their children. Demmer notes

the gendered ways in which narratives about the FVPPA unfolded, as supporters concentrated on Tho's identity as a woman, a "kitchen-table activist," as much as the cause she was championing. Of course, helping reunite mothers with their children was a low-risk enterprise for wary politicians concerned about how best to confront normalization with a communist country.

All these grassroots, nongovernmental initiatives not only unfolded alongside high-level talks between Washington and Hanoi, but in many ways helped to shape them. As Demmer presents it, humanitarian concerns became policy aims. By the final portions of *After Saigon's Fall*, it is easy to embrace the author's argument that "frequent contact and cooperation between Hanoi and Washington on humanitarian issues advanced the political relationship by establishing institutional, personal, and operational ties" (158). When President Bill Clinton announced the "normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam" on July 11, 1995, the proclamation might have been seen as a victory for "transnational advocacy" as much as it was for domestic Washington politics.

Yet despite the influence of these nongovernmental advocates, what is striking is how much power the defeated nation retained after America's war in Vietnam ended. Demmer implies that the United States was able to bend Hanoi to its will well beyond the mid-1970s, with far greater success than before the signing of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords. This is a story of Vietnamese compliance as much as it is one of U.S.-SRV cooperation. One gets a sense that, especially as the Cold War came to a close, Hanoi lost much of its ability to choose how best to proceed toward an official reconciliation with its former enemy. Demands from Washington—on facilitating family reunifications or on cooperation with the migration of reeducation camp detainees—arguably held sway because the United States retained tremendous global influence despite losing its war in Vietnam.

Individual human stories matter. But so too do bureaucratic and organizational ones. Demmer shines in tying these seemingly disparate threads together and, bringing to light the competing voices that were all seeking to determine the United States' moral obligations in an ugly war's aftermath. Perhaps this is the greatest strength of *After Saigon's Fall*.

Viet Thanh Nguyen's reaction to *Miss Saigon* suggests that elements of the long American war in Vietnam remain with us today: the racism, the sexism, the unquestioned assumptions of American superiority and righteousness. In many ways, Amanda Demmer is implying the same thing. She provides us with an excellent survey of what may not yet even be the "final stage" of the war in Vietnam, a war that continues to have an extraordinary impact on both Vietnamese and American lives.

Notes:

1. Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Close the Curtain on 'Miss Saigon,'" *New York Times*, 3 August 2019.
2. Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (New York, 2019), 231; Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman's Journey from War to Peace* (New York, 1989); Viet Thanh Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* (New York, 2015); Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Andrew X. Pham, *The Eaves of Heaven: A Life in Three Wars* (New York, 2008).
3. Yêñ Lê Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (Oakland, CA, 2014), 6, 7.
4. Mary L. Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (Oxford, UK, 2012).
5. Carl J. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War* (Princeton, 2008); Edwin A. Martini, *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975–2000* (Amherst, MA, 2007).

Learning From History That We Learn Nothing from History . . . And Some Other Thoughts¹

Pierre Asselin

After *Saigon's Fall: Refugees and US-Vietnamese Relations, 1975–2000* is a smart and compelling analysis of the process that culminated in the normalization of diplomatic relations between Hanoi and Washington two decades after the end of the so-called Vietnam War. As its author points out, this more recent history has been largely overlooked. After the Vietnamese communist victory and reunification of the country under Hanoi's sole aegis, Americans did their best to put the war—and Vietnam itself—behind them. Diplomatic historians, for their part, never moved past it. They remained fixated on elucidating its origins, evolution, and ending. Although the post-1975 period is rich in interactions between officials from the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRVN), as Amanda Demmer masterfully demonstrates, few historians have engaged it.²

"In more ways than one, then, the United States continued to fight the Vietnam War through non-military means" long after Saigon fell, Demmer maintains (214). That contention, on the surface of it, echoes the theme and substance of Edwin Martini's *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975–2000*.³ According to the latter, after 1975 the United States waged a nasty, unforgiving "war by other means" intended to weaken and humiliate SRVN authorities and thus avenge America's own weakening and humiliation at the hands of those authorities during the previous decade. Key players included members of Congress, the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, and the Prisoner of War [POW]/Missing-in-Action [MIA] lobby. This postwar war did not end until the U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council and other pro-business groups curtailed the lobby's nefarious influence, setting the stage for the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1995.

As it turns out, Demmer's analysis and conclusions differ vastly from Martini's. The real war was largely over the fate of refugees from Vietnam. It was spearheaded by U.S.-based non-governmental actors and congressional leaders, admittedly, but not those Martini identifies. Moral rather than punitive considerations shaped their actions. Lastly, despite some hostility, a great deal of cooperation and goodwill marked U.S.-SRVN relations after 1975.

After Saigon's Fall consists of three parts. The first considers U.S. policy between 1975 and 1980; the second explores preliminary steps toward normalization taken in the 1980s; and the last sheds light on U.S.-SRVN relations between 1989 and 2000. The central theme of the book is that non-executive actors in the United States shaped the course of U.S.-SRVN relations after 1975 and, in doing so, expedited the postwar reconciliation process between the two former adversaries.

These actors' activism, Demmer contends, "dictated much of the scope and pace of this larger process" (19). They were the primary driving force behind Washington's adoption of such policies and programs as the Orderly Departure Program (1979), the Amerasian Immigration Act (1982), the Amerasian Homecoming Act (1987), Humanitarian Operation (1989), the Comprehensive Plan of Action (1989), Resettlement Opportunities for Vietnamese Returnees (1996), and the McCain amendment (1996). Thus, although U.S.-SRVN relations appeared frozen through much of the 1980s, the two governments were actually establishing meaningful behind-the-scenes contacts to implement humanitarian policies and programs. By engaging in intensive, protracted, and productive bargaining, Hanoi and Washington were paving the way for normalization with "personal, institutional, and

governmental links" (128).

The core protagonist in Demmer's story is Khu Minh Tho, a Vietnamese refugee who founded the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA) shortly after her arrival in the United States. Her travails and her advocacy were critical in shaping the response of the U.S. government to Vietnamese refugees, including Amerasian children and reeducation camp detainees, seeking asylum and/or family reunification in the United States.

In more ways than one, Demmer relates the evolution of U.S.-SRVN relations after 1975 through the experiences of Tho and her organization. The latter two figure prominently in every chapter, lending credibility to the author's argument that non-governmental organizations proved most influential in conditioning the pertinent policies of the executive branch. In relating Tho's story as she does, Demmer rightly restores agency to southern Vietnamese who "have suffered erasure" (3) from history in both the United States and Vietnam. In that respect, her findings are consistent with Martini's. He concluded that the Vietnamese had been "erased or, at the very least, marginalized in American cultural memory" after 1975.⁴

In addition to the above, *After Saigon's Fall* offers revealing insights on postwar reeducation camps in the SRVN and the experiences of detainees; the composition and influence of the POW/MIA lobby in the United States; the matter of live POWs in Vietnam and what Demmer cleverly calls "Rambomania"; and some of the ramifications of Vietnam's prolonged occupation of Cambodia. The book also explains that although President Richard Nixon had secretly promised Hanoi \$2.5 billion in grant aid over five years in 1973, "the actual postwar transfer of funds ran the other direction" (214), as the United States never honored its promise, and Hanoi accepted responsibility for loans owed by the defunct Republic of Vietnam (RVN, or South Vietnam) to American citizens and companies.

While building a persuasive case for the centrality of moral and humanitarian concerns, Demmer acknowledges that pragmatic considerations also shaped the thinking of U.S. decision-makers. That is, she recognizes the politicization and exploitation of the Vietnamese refugee crisis to validate President Ronald Reagan's claim that "the Vietnam War had been a 'noble cause' all along" (4), on the one hand, and the U.S.-led international effort to isolate and punish Vietnam for its occupation of Cambodia, on the other. To be sure, détente started to unravel just as the Vietnamese refugee crisis began. The same year Saigon fell to communist armies, European and North American governments signed the Helsinki Final Act. Shortly thereafter, U.S. and allied governments began using the civil rights portion of the agreement to discredit communist regimes and Marxism-Leninism generally on moral grounds.

The weaponization of human rights became a hallmark of Washington's foreign policy starting in the late 1970s. Against this backdrop, refugee outflows from Vietnam legitimated claims by U.S. policymakers about the "evils of communism" and the inability of Marxist-Leninist regimes to provide for their own people. The reign of terror by the genocidal Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War, and Vietnam's decade-long occupation of Cambodia were self-inflicted and arguably lethal blows to Asian communism, as Pierre Grosser has magisterially shown.⁵ All these events played into the hands of U.S. decision-makers, who helped make these circumstances a reality. In a brilliant conclusion, Demmer affirms that U.S. decision-makers and the non-executive actors who

"tirelessly advocated for POWs/MIAs, Amerasians, and reeducation camp detainees" ultimately "adopted the same causes for decidedly different reasons" (128).

The main shortcoming of *After Saigon's Fall* is Demmer's cursory consideration of Vietnamese communist agency and the factors that informed Hanoi's foreign policy in this period. Contrary to what the subtitle indicates, this is not a book about U.S.-Vietnamese relations; it is about U.S. relations vis-à-vis Vietnam, about U.S.-based actors' perspectives on U.S.-SRVN relations. Heavily accentuating those U.S.-based actors and their influence, the narrative variously marginalizes and trivializes Hanoi.

To illustrate, Demmer argues that Washington pushed the SRVN into the arms of the Soviet Union in 1978 by failing to respond to its "repeated goodwill gestures." Hanoi, she writes, "made it clear" earlier that year "that it was willing to pursue rapid normalization [with Washington] without precondition." Unfortunately, U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski's "Cold War logic carried the day," and, as a result, the SRVN joined the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (76-77).

From a position of carefully balanced neutrality between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hanoi started moving closer to Moscow back in 1968, after Beijing criticized its decision to enter into peace talks with Washington in Paris. The Sino-Vietnamese split shaped Hanoi's behavior to no insignificant degree thereafter. Its pursuit of closer alignment with Moscow, culminating in the signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November 1978, had more to do with that and other considerations than it did with the United States.

Recently, political scientist Kosal Path suggested that domestic concerns factored particularly prominently in the strategic thinking of Vietnamese communist policymakers for much of the first decade of the postwar/post-reunification era.⁶ Indeed, that decade was extremely challenging for the SRVN and its people. The so-called subsidy period (*thời kỳ bao cấp*, 1975-1986) was marked by food and commodity shortages as well as deeply flawed fiscal, economic, and other policies. Like some of their contemporaries in the Third World, including the PRC, Le Duan and his comrades had been ingenious in wartime but proved inept in peacetime. Hanoi had compelling reasons of its own to formally align with the Soviets in 1978.

It also had its reasons for pursuing normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States later. In the 1980s, the SRVN became an international pariah, owing mainly to its refusal to pull its troops out of Cambodia. It was left with no real, desperately needed benefactors except the Soviet Union, upon which it became heavily dependent in several respects. Many Vietnamese at the time in fact wondered why they had fought French, Japanese, and then American imperialism, at the cost of millions of lives, only to become a Soviet neo-colony.

Then communism imploded in Eastern Europe, followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At that point, Hanoi needed to normalize relations with the United States. At a minimum, it had to end the embargo and sanctions imposed on it by Washington since May 1975 and access American and allied capital and markets. The alternative was increased dependency on China, to which Hanoi turned after the Soviet Union disintegrated. But that was highly undesirable, given their shared history.

In fairness to Demmer, her neglect of Hanoi's agency has less to do with her diligence as a scholar—genuinely impressive—than the way we train historians of U.S.-Vietnam relations in this country. Doctoral advisers

The weaponization of human rights became a hallmark of Washington's foreign policy starting in the late 1970s. Against this backdrop, refugee outflows from Vietnam legitimated claims by U.S. policymakers about the "evils of communism" and the inability of Marxist-Leninist regimes to provide for their own people.

all too often fail to impress the critical importance of language skills upon their charges, doing them an immense disservice. Reading competency in English and Vietnamese is essential for studying and understanding the complexities and the symbiotic nature of U.S.-Vietnam relations during the global Cold War and beyond. Would we in the field of U.S. diplomatic history today abide scholars of U.S.-German relations who were incapable of engaging German-language sources?

The problem stems largely from the inexplicable prevalence of what I consider the Logevall School of Vietnam War Studies in the United States. In a piece published recently in the obscure *Texas National Security Review*, the Harvard professor and award-winning author of several works on the Vietnam War—who speaks not a word of Vietnamese that is not on a restaurant menu—and a colleague, Daniel Bessner, brazenly and unapologetically proclaimed that “the most important source material for explicating the formation and exercise of U.S. power (if not its effects) is located in presidential and other American archives.”⁷ For good measure, the two validated their argument against engaging Vietnamese and other foreign archives on the (condescending and elitist) grounds that the high cost of accessing foreign archives “reinforce[s] inequalities within the field” and favors “those at rich institutions” while “those at poor institutions suffer.”⁸

Until the early 1990s, one could be excused for heeding Logevall and Bessner’s counsel and engaging U.S.-Vietnamese relations using only Western documentary and other sources. But then two significant changes happened. First, Hanoi granted foreigners access to revealing portions of its governmental records, including those of the rival regime in Saigon (to say nothing of the other fascinating official and non-official sources available in Vietnam). Second, the government, universities, and other organizations in the United States started offering graduate students ample opportunities to study Vietnamese and the financial support to do so.⁹ Arguably, the most innovative, albeit not necessarily major-award-winning, English language scholarship on U.S.-Vietnam relations since then has been produced by U.S.-trained scholars who have mined archives in Vietnam relying on their own hard-learned Vietnamese language skills.¹⁰

Like many of her American peers wanting to make sense of U.S.-Vietnam relations during the global Cold War, Demmer cannot engage Vietnamese language materials because of language limitations. As a result, she unintentionally paints a one-sided picture of the relationship between Hanoi and the United States after 1975. No wonder, then, that her argument about U.S. obduracy precluding U.S.-SRVN normalization in 1978 resonates with the “missed opportunity” trope typical of U.S.-based scholarship on Vietnam, recycled by none other than Logevall himself in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book about the origins of American involvement in that country.¹¹ If only Washington had recognized Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist and not a communist . . . If only President Lyndon Johnson had agreed to negotiate with Hanoi earlier . . . If only President Nixon had not been a madman . . .

Logevall and like-minded proponents of the missed opportunity trope invariably attribute primary agency to Americans for the failure of Washington and Hanoi to get along after 1945. Most problematically, they presume that the Vietnamese communist mindset was consistently conciliatory even though (1) they have never researched that angle themselves, and (2) there is a growing body of English-language scholarship based on Vietnamese materials that attests to the ideological inflexibility and general intractability of Hanoi decision-makers.¹² This essentialization of a major Vietnamese actor occurs because Hanoi is rarely studied on its own terms, on the basis of its own historical records. It is perfectly acceptable for scholars

to study the Vietnam War and its legacies without engaging Vietnamese language sources. However, these scholars must have the humility to acknowledge the one-sided nature of their approach, if only to be fair to their readers and out of respect for those of us who study a different side.¹³

Notwithstanding these concerns, *After Saigon’s Fall* remains a consequential book and one of the most comprehensive accounts to date of the tumultuous American road to normalization of relations with the SRVN. Historians of the Vietnam War and the Cold War will find it informative as well as ideal for adoption in graduate seminars on a pertinent topic. It should also be on the bookshelves of U.S. decision-makers as a reminder of the old Churchillian adage – recycled from a George Santayana aphorism – that “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

Notes:

1. I thank Edward Miller for reading a draft of this article and futilely—but probably wisely—suggesting I go in a different direction.
2. Notable book-length studies addressing post-1975 U.S.-Vietnam relations include Lewis M. Stern, *Defense Relations Between the United States and Vietnam: The Process of Normalization, 1977–2003* (Jefferson, NC, 2005); Cécile Menétrey-Monchau, *American-Vietnamese Relations in the Wake of War: Diplomacy After the Capture of Saigon, 1975–1979* (Jefferson, NC, 2006); Edwin A. Martini, *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975–2000* (Amherst, MA, 2007); Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst, MA, 2009); Michael J. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009).
3. Martini, *Invisible Enemies*.
4. Martini, *Invisible Enemies*, 7.
5. Pierre Grosser, *L’Histoire du monde se fait en Asie: Une autre vision du XXe siècle* [World History Is Made in Asia: An Alternative Perspective on the 20th Century] (Paris, 2017).
6. Kosal Path, *Vietnam’s Strategic Thinking during the Third Indochina War* (Madison, WI, 2020).
7. Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, “Recentring the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations,” *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 53.
8. Bessner and Logevall, “Recentring the United States,” 45. Many Vietnam War studies scholars have studied Vietnamese and made a name for themselves in the field despite attending and then teaching at “poor” colleges and universities. Logevall pursued his doctoral studies at Yale and went on to teach at Cornell before landing at Harvard; I attended the University of Hawaii and went on to teach at Kapiolani Community College, Chaminade University, and Hawaii Pacific University before arriving at San Diego State University. Logevall is the product of rich institutions as much as I am the product of poor ones. I think neither I nor my scholarship has “suffered” too greatly owing to my humble *cheminement*.
9. The Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute (SEASSI) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison accepts and financially supports a good number of both master’s and doctoral students intent on learning Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian languages for research purposes. I thank Grace Cheng and Cody Billock for suggesting these and other salient points iterated in this section.
10. That includes Vietnamese Americans, many of whom know how to speak but not how to read and write Vietnamese.
11. Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America’s Vietnam* (New York, 2014).
12. See Lien-Hang Nguyen, *Hanoi’s War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2012); Pierre Asselin, *Hanoi’s Road to the Vietnam War, 1954–1965* (Berkeley, CA, 2014); Tuong Vu, *Vietnam’s Communist Revolution: The Power and Limits of Ideology* (Cambridge, UK, 2016); and Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (New York, 2016).
13. To Edwin Martini’s credit, the full title of his *Invisible Enemies* makes clear his approach is U.S.-centered.

Review of Amanda C. Demmer, *After Saigon's Fall: Refugees and U.S.-Vietnamese Relations, 1975–2000*

Kathryn C. Statler

Amanda Demmer presents us with an entirely new way of looking at U.S.-Vietnamese relations after 1975. She begins by pointing out that the iconic image of an American helping South Vietnamese into a helicopter on the rooftop of 22 Gia Long Street before Saigon's fall on April 30, 1975, can be reinterpreted. Instead of simply representing the tragic and dishonorable end of the U.S. military effort in Vietnam, this moment also symbolizes the beginning of a new saga. In one of the largest migrations of the late twentieth century, over one million South Vietnamese would eventually resettle in the United States, and during that migration the United States and Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) would slowly pursue a process of normalization.

Indeed, in 230 elegantly written and exceedingly well-researched pages, Demmer demonstrates how these two processes—migration and normalization—were intimately linked. She focuses on three groups of South Vietnamese: the “boat people” with family or wartime connections in the United States, those suffering in the re-education camps (many of whom were Army of the Republic of Vietnam [ARVN] soldiers), and the 30,000–50,000 Amerasian children left behind (6).¹ She also examines how, in grappling with these three groups, the United States and SRV governments eventually normalized relations, which she defines as developing formal economic relations, establishing formal diplomatic ties, and securing the ability to respond to bilateral and international issues without major incident (3). Finally, the author focuses on how members of Congress and nonstate actors such as the Citizens Commission on Indochinese Refugees (CCIR), the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA), and the Aurora Foundation played a critical role in shaping how U.S. policy evolved toward the refugees and the SRV.

To illuminate this evolution, Demmer divides the book into three distinct sections. Part I looks at U.S. policy from 1975 to 1980. Part II dives into the beginning of the normalization process in the 1980s. Part III focuses on U.S.-Vietnamese relations from 1989 to 2000. The book is a most welcome addition to what is still a relatively thin body of scholarship on the postwar period, and it is undoubtedly the definitive study on the complex, intertwined processes of U.S.-SRV normalization and South Vietnamese migration to the United States.²

In Part I, Demmer argues that the refugee crisis was instrumental in shaping U.S. foreign policy in the 1975–1980 period. President Gerald Ford ensured that the South Vietnamese were included in Saigon's evacuation during April 1975. Here, Demmer pushes back against much of the literature and the officials who have castigated U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Graham Martin, arguing that his planning was “more nuanced” than he has been given credit for and that he allowed covert evacuation attempts. The administration also “trickled out” Americans in Saigon to evacuate as many South Vietnamese as possible with them (41–42).³

After April 30, Ford insisted that the United States still had a moral obligation to help loyal South Vietnamese, and he campaigned to persuade Americans not to forget them. As a result of his efforts, Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 (49–50). Demmer also illuminates the key role that the CCIR, which had major ties to the government and to the humanitarian International Rescue Committee (IRC), played in galvanizing Congress to act on the refugee situation. They ultimately gave us the Refugee Act of 1980, which ensured that the White House and Congress would continue to

work together on refugee policy (71–93).

Demmer notes that during this period, the United States took a new step toward multilateralism by working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the 1979 Orderly Departure Program. She deftly demonstrates how presidential action, congressional impulses, and non-government actors facilitated South Vietnamese migration, but she makes it clear that between 1975 and 1979, the outcome of these efforts was uncertain, as it was undetermined whether the United States would step up and provide serious financial resources and resettlement programs in concert with the UNHCR. By 1980, however, the United States had expanded its commitment to the South Vietnamese. Yet it still heavily criticized the SRV for human rights violations—an irony, given the destructiveness of the U.S. war effort in Vietnam, that Demmer points out repeatedly.

Part II highlights the role of advocacy groups such as Khuc Minh Tho's FVPPA, which became one of the most powerful Vietnamese American NGOs in the country. The FVPPA pushed the U.S. government toward an ever-increasing commitment to resettling South Vietnamese refugees between 1980 and 1989. Demmer also pays close attention to Ginetta Sagan's Aurora Foundation, which shined a spotlight on SRV human rights abuses. Such non-governmental advocacy played a huge role in shaping public opinion during this period, as POW/MIA, Amerasian, and reeducation advocates “all engaged in information and image politics by mobilizing new evidence during the early 1980s that helped make their causes more visible and compelling” (101). These “kitchen table activists,” who were primarily women, had a profound influence on U.S.-SRV relations (108).

As a result of these advocacy groups, SRV and U.S. officials remained in almost constant communication over how to transport reeducation camp detainees, Amerasian children, and boat people to the United States. Although President Ronald Reagan followed his predecessors in economically isolating Vietnam and insisting that normalization could not occur while Vietnamese troops occupied Cambodia, he needed Vietnamese cooperation on refugee resettlement. Demmer details the ins and out of this ongoing dialogue in chapter 4. Eventually the two sides signed an accord on U.S. POW/MIA operations in Vietnam and reached a bilateral agreement on Amerasian processing and a joint resolution on re-education camp detainees (160).

Part III examines how the groundwork laid from 1975 to 1979 and from 1980 to 1989 would pay even greater dividends in the 1990s, ultimately leading to U.S.-SRV normalization and to the resettlement of over a million refugees in the United States. Organizations such as the FVPPA and Aurora Foundation followed up on previous successes and helped achieve a 1989 bilateral agreement, Humanitarian Operation (HO), which offered a path to resettlement outside regular channels for reeducation detainees. More than 167,000 people traveled through that program (176–81).

Ginetta Sagan continued to update her report on the SRV's violations of human rights, using interviews with refugees to highlight the problem. As the plight of refugees thus returned front and center to public awareness, more high-level meetings began occurring between U.S. and SRV officials, with Secretary of State James Baker and SRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach meeting for the first time in New York in 1990. After this meeting, the United States presented a “Roadmap to U.S.-SRV Normalization” in 1991, which focused on resolving the two major sticking points, the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia and the POW/MIA accounting. These obstacles vanished in 1992 with SRV troop removal from Cambodia and the George H.W. Bush administration's dismissal of the National

League of POW/MIA Families' unsupported claims that American POWs were still being held in Vietnam.⁴

President Bill Clinton was more low-key than Bush in dismissing the league, possibly because of his own ambiguous record during the Vietnam War, but he was supported by prominent Vietnam War veterans John McCain, John Kerry, and Pete Peterson, who all rejected the living POWs myth. By way of contrast, McCain was very responsive to the lobbying efforts of Vietnamese American NGOs. In 1996 he introduced the McCain amendment to re-establish the eligibility of unmarried adult children of former detainees for refugee status, thereby demonstrating once again the incredibly influential role of the FVPPA in helping shape U.S. government policy (222).

The strengths of this book are many. Demmer delivers on her promise to examine the ways in which Congress reasserted itself into U.S. foreign policy post-1975 (19). As she writes, "By passing resolutions that became institutionalized in US policy, forming influential committees, corresponding privately with Vietnamese leaders, sending delegations to Vietnam, making speeches, and fomenting domestic constituencies, legislators both accelerated US-Vietnamese ties and erected barriers to further normalization" (196). I would have enjoyed a bit more detail on congressional influence between 1975 and 1979, as there is less focus there than on the latter periods.

One of the most impressive aspects of the book is the way Demmer weaves together the actions of congressional members with the other major players in the process of normalization. Her focus on well-known UN, non-profit humanitarian, and human rights groups such as the UNHCR, CCIR, and National League of POW/MIA Families is complemented by her detailed recounting and analysis of Khuc Minh Tho's personal story about what led her to form the FVPPA and Ginetta Sagan's continued evolution in her views on human rights, which resulted in the Aurora Foundation. Khuc Minh Tho and Ginetta Sagan are clearly the heroines in this story.

Demmer's analysis of various groups' influence, whether congressional members, high-ranking North Vietnamese and American officials, presidents, or non-governmental groups provides us with a nuanced and complex picture of the process of normalization during each of the three periods she examines. She also delicately balances her analysis of U.S. policy toward Hanoi and South Vietnamese refugees, arguing that only by understanding this trilateral relationship can we understand the process of reconciliation (227). The result for South Vietnamese refugees included initiatives designed to support their resettlement from 1982, 1984, 1987, 1988, 1989, and 1996; and, for Hanoi, the normalizing of relations by 1995.

In addition, although the author spends a refreshing amount of time examining other perspectives, she is clear on the role of presidential action. She focuses perhaps most on Ronald Reagan, who concentrated on POW/MIA issues; but she also details Ford's determination to include South Vietnamese in the U.S. evacuation; points out the contradiction in Jimmy Carter's human rights rhetoric and his reluctance to admit Vietnamese refugees; remarks upon George H.W. Bush's shift away from a "full accounting"; and notes Clinton's openness to full economic and diplomatic relations. She also reminds us that Vietnam never ranked in the top five security issues after April 30, 1975 (230).

I would argue that of the five presidents discussed in the book, Ronald Reagan receives the most flattering appraisal, as his focus on the evils of communism led him to a progressive immigration policy not always in

keeping with the Republican Party platform. He signed the Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982 and also made an effort to take in more re-education camp detainees. As Demmer notes, Reagan's goals coincided with those of the FVPPA and Aurora Foundation (128).

Demmer also clearly outlines how the United States continued to fight the war through non-military means, instating economic embargos, refusing to make good on promised U.S. funds to rebuild Vietnam or to allow SRV entry into the United Nations, and insisting on \$208 million in postwar concessions from the SRV and a full account of missing Americans.⁵ But ultimately, she writes, "while the United States perpetuated hostilities with formal economic and diplomatic policies," the two nations collaborated "on humanitarian issues, especially migration programs," and those "became the primary means of postwar reconciliation" (232). She notes that the U.S. language on humanitarianism and human rights with respect to the South Vietnamese population, which helped lead to the normalization of U.S.-

SVR relations, played a significant role in putting human rights front and center as the moral *lingua franca* of twenty-first century international relations (233).

I have very few criticisms of Demmer's book. However, I would have welcomed additional details on the North Vietnamese perspective. Granted, such an undertaking would have made for a much longer book, but a deeper discussion of Prime Minister Pham Van Dong's or Foreign Minister Thach's thinking as they grappled with U.S. demands would

have created more balance in the analysis of the U.S.-SRV process of normalization. The SRV's reasoning remains obscure. Along similar lines, I would have enjoyed more detail on the role the myth of orphaned Amerasians played in prompting government action and on the shift from originally counting 244 POW/MIAs to the estimate of 2,500 that arose in the 1980s. Finally, and this is not a critique per se, it would have been very interesting to (briefly) compare what happened during the 1975 South Vietnamese refugee crisis with the U.S. assessment of its moral obligation during the 1954-55 North Vietnamese refugee crisis, along with congressional action and the role non-government actors played during that period.

Certainly, Demmer has reshaped my thinking on the process of U.S.-SRV normalization, as I too have mostly focused on the miraculous 1990s, with Bill Clinton's ending of the economic embargo, the appointment of former POW Pete Peterson as ambassador to Vietnam and Clinton's triumphant trip to Vietnam in 2000. As Demmer makes clear throughout the book, these events were the culmination of a long, nuanced process that began in 1975 and that came about only because of congressional and non-governmental actions, as well as a prolonged dialogue between the SRV and United States. I can think of no higher compliment than to say that the contents of this book will reshape how I teach the post-1975 period.

Finally, Demmer's book is intriguing in one other respect. It could serve as the template for how the United States will handle Afghanistan. In other words, perhaps we should not view August 30, 2021, when the last U.S. flight left Kabul, as an end point but rather as a beginning. Given current media reporting, White House pronouncements, and congressional investigations, it is not a stretch to posit that the United States will carry out its new forever war by using economic embargoes, tarring the Taliban-led government as major human rights violators, and then negotiating with that same government to resettle tens of thousands of Afghan citizens to the United States. As the French say, *on verra bien*. We will see.

Notes:

1. The boat people are those who took a naval route out of South Vietnam in the months and years following the fall of Saigon. For studies on the postwar South Vietnamese experience and memory of the war, see, for example, Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); and Long T. Bui, *Returns of War: South Vietnam and the Price of Refugee Memory* (New York, 2018).
2. For studies examining U.S.-SRV relations and U.S. reckoning with the war, see, for example, George Herring, "The War That Never Seems to Go Away," in *The War That Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War*, ed. David L. Anderson and John Ernst (Lexington, KY, 2014); Michael Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009); Christian Appy, *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (New York, 2016); Edwin Martini, *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975--2000* (Amherst, MA, 2007); and Robert Schulzinger, *A Time for Peace: The Legacy of the Vietnam War* (Oxford, UK, 2006).
3. See, for example, self-serving comments from former national security adviser and secretary of state Henry Kissinger and other U.S. officials in Rory Kennedy's documentary, *Last Days in Vietnam* (Moxie Firecracker Films, Brooklyn, NY, 2015), 98 mins., now available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpY7kkPAZc&t=1851s>. Martin is clearly made the scapegoat here; other government officials are allowed to continue to shirk responsibility forty years later.
4. See H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1995) for more on why the myth of live POWs proved so compelling.
5. Demmer acknowledges her reliance on Edwin Martini's *Invisible Enemies* here, especially his detailing of the U.S. continuation of the war through means other than military intervention.

It's Not Over Until It's Over

David L. Anderson

How and when do wars end? Politicians, journalists, and much of the public use historical analogies all the time but have only the most superficial understanding of this question. Most of us have seen the iconic pictures of the German surrender to General Dwight Eisenhower at Reims, the Japanese surrender to General Douglas MacArthur at Tokyo, and the U.S. military occupations that followed, but few wars end that way. The Korean War that began in 1950 has yet to formally end, and there is no iconic photo of the ceasefire signing at Panmunjom in 1954. The unaccomplished end of that war is represented now by a bizarrely divided building astride the demarcation line between the two Koreas.

On the cover of *After Saigon's Fall*, Amanda Demmer's astute contribution to the literature on the end of the Vietnam War, is the immediately recognizable photograph of a U.S. Marine Corps helicopter lifting evacuees off a Saigon rooftop in April 1975. This iconic photo, like those from the 1940s, marks the final hours of a war, as the last Americans and a few South Vietnamese allies made their exit from South Vietnam. Demmer's book is of unquestionable value now, as the world witnesses the end of what became America's longest war, the almost twenty-year conflict in Afghanistan.¹

The United States lost the Vietnam War but was not a defeated nation. World War II was a military and moral triumph for the United States against global fascism and militarism. The Korean War was a stalemate in a conflict purportedly about ideology, but more accurately about a global big-power rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States through a limited proxy war. After that war, and especially with the end of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, Washington chose several times to go to war, in each case claiming to defend U.S. national interests but with only a weak alignment of those interests with the local interests of peoples already engaged in violent struggles.

Without reviewing all these conflicts, it should be noted

that the U.S. military intervention in the internal war in Vietnam was controversial from the beginning. The Persian Gulf War of 1990–91 marked a laudable American defense of an ally against overt aggression, but was cut short in part to avoid the domestic turmoil that the prolonged Vietnam War had created. The war in Afghanistan began as a focused effort to protect Americans from the international criminals who had wreaked havoc on Americans on September 11, 2001.

In what were some of the worst public policy decisions in American history, Washington under-resourced the operations in Afghanistan, decided to define the Al-Qaeda murderers as political actors rather than the vicious thugs they were, and then launched a war in Iraq on questionable grounds against a despicable tyrant who had little ability to threaten the United States directly. The details of these wars vary widely, but collectively they were American failures. Responsibility for their origins, conduct, and continuance was not limited to particular presidential administrations. Pundits and politicians who might be quick to draw parallels between the aftermath of the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the exit from Vietnam would do well to keep this caveat in mind.

It is a mark of the excellence of *After Saigon's Fall* that Demmer's argument and conclusions resonate well beyond the Vietnam War itself. The war transitioned in 1975 from military operations to political and social reorganization, as many conflicts do. Often the two sides in a war either become exhausted by the pain and cost, or the original rationales for fighting change or disappear and lead to revised cost/benefit calculations for the antagonists. In the case of Vietnam, internal American politics and reassessments of global strategy in Washington led the Nixon administration to end the American intervention and withdraw U.S. forces with a "decent interval," if possible, before Hanoi assumed full control of the country.

Under the hardened discipline of "paramount leader" Le Duan, the Politburo had proved willing to accept hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese casualties in order to outlast the powerful American military.² When the shooting stopped and one flag flew over all of Vietnam, the newly named Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) remained paranoid about much of its own population and faced the daunting task of rebuilding after years of high-technology warfare. The SRV also wanted "normalization," which in its view meant moving forward with the United States and other nations as a self-sustainable and self-governing state—but with economic assistance, which U.S. officials rejected as a demand for reparations (64).

Washington had its own wounds to heal. To salvage its pride, and despite having inflicted so much pain on Vietnam, it refused to help Hanoi. Instead, it avoided examining its own responsibility for the war and began what would be two decades of economic and political isolation of the SRV to punish it for winning. From the mid-1970s to the early 1980s, many Americans wanted no public discussion of the war at all. As Demmer so well puts it, "Normalization was a process, not a moment, and a highly contentious, often contradictory process at that" (19).

There are numerous contributions in the monograph to our understanding of the ongoing tension—indeed, it was war by other means—between Washington and Hanoi after 1975, but this volume notably moves the discussion from narrow studies of single issues, such as POW/MIA accountability, to an integrated analysis of the broad range of forces shaping the course toward normalization. Especially important is the author's focus on the role of what she labels "nonexecutive" actors (14).

Foreign policy analysis often centers on the executive branch because that is where final foreign policy decisions usually occur. Many general histories of the American war in Vietnam limit their accounts of the postwar years to

White House demands that Hanoi be held fully accountable for all U.S. prisoners and servicemen missing-in-action and that the SRV end its intervention in Cambodia.

Presidents from Ford to Clinton took identifiable positions on normalization for various strategic and political reasons, and Demmer also addresses those. She is most original, however, in her discussions of grassroots movements like Khuc Minh Tho's Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA) and Ginetta Sagan's Aurora Foundation. They and others lobbied effectively for "family reunification" on behalf of former South Vietnamese soldiers and officials in political reeducation camps, Amerasian children, and refugees and asylum seekers in camps and adrift. Their persistence kept humanitarian imperatives alive and eventually broke through the executive policy process (107).

Demmer underscores that it was women who facilitated the lobbying that put pressure on American officialdom, which was largely male. General accounts of this period also note the bipartisan congressional efforts of Vietnam veterans in the Senate—John Kerry, John McCain, and Pete Peterson—but Demmer expands the description of this work to include many additional legislators, as well as mid-level bureaucrats. The part of this complex account that is most enlightening is how human rights and humanitarianism became intertwined and were transformed into political power in ways that shaped policy at the time and foreshadowed the global refugee policies of the twenty-first century.

Demmer plows fruitful new ground with her use of FVPPA records and Aurora Foundation reports, and the contrast she draws between the respected status of these organizations by 1995 and the vastly diminished influence of the National League of POW/MIA Families is striking. The league benefited from the myth of living American prisoners (refuted many times by reputable studies) that began with Richard Nixon's exploitation of the anguish of the families of missing servicemen to fashion political cover for his decent interval exit tactic. Demmer cites to good effect Bruce Franklin's excellent research on the "purposely designed" myth and its accompanying "false hopes" (52).³

Ford and the presidents who followed him privately acknowledged the truth but would not publicly challenge the myth and risk political backlash. The perpetuation of the myth and the "Rambomania" (popular Hollywood fantasies of POW rescues) of the Reagan era in the 1980s that Demmer describes so well impeded but, as she reveals, did not prevent the necessary communication with Hanoi on prisoners and other issues that led finally to normalization (134).

Most Americans no longer remember the origins and various expressions of the myth, but Nixon's fabrication has become so embedded in American civic rites that the POW/MIA flag adopted by the league in 1972 now flies daily over all prominent federal buildings. Its display was required by a 2019 law cosponsored by the otherwise unlikely combination of Democratic senator Elizabeth Warren and Republican senator Tom Cotton.⁴ The law honors Americans of all wars who became prisoners or remain missing, but Demmer's insightful monograph reaffirms the important work historians have done to keep faith with facts.

Nixon's exploitation of the big lie about secret POWs was not the first example of intentional political prevarication and paranoid politics. The post-Civil War Lost Cause doctrine and 1950s McCarthyism are examples of such myth creation, and the practice reappeared to devastating effect after the 2020 presidential election. The POW myth became part of the revisionist impulse to argue that the war was not over and, in fact, could have been won. Preparing to search for POWs, fictional movie warrior John Rambo asks his commanding officer, "Sir, do we get to win this time?"⁵

By promoting the idea that Hanoi continued to violate human rights by secretly holding American prisoners and abusing Republic of Vietnam detainees in political reeducation camps, Reagan was able, as Demmer notes, "to rebrand the Vietnam War as a 'noble cause'" (138). She makes the perceptive observation that ironically, by the 1980s the leaders in Hanoi, once depicted by some antiwar Americans as romantic revolutionaries, were labeled war criminals; while South Vietnam's soldiers and officials, whom many had characterized as corrupt, were victims. The prolongation of the normalization process in all the ways Demmer describes contributed to an American "win thesis" that did not accept defeat in Vietnam and enabled so-called "better war" advocates to distort the Vietnam experience and to try and to fail again in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁶

As Demmer so expertly details, getting out of war is often more difficult than getting in, and the exit process creates its own legacy. She makes the important point that Hanoi wanted normalization for its own reasons and on its own terms. She cannot address that side of the process, however, because the SRV will not allow researchers to explore the Politburo decisions documented in its archives. *After Saigon's Fall* masterfully recounts the American struggle to put the war to rest and is for now the authoritative study of U.S.-SRV normalization.

Notes:

1. The editors of the *Washington Post* published her insights from this book as the American evacuation of Kabul was still in progress. See Amanda C. Demmer, "With Afghanistan's fall, the U.S. confronts a moral necessity it faced before," *Washington Post*, August 16, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/08/16/afghanistan-falls-us-confronts-moral-necessity-it-faced-before/>.
2. Pierre Asselin, *Vietnam's American War: A History* (Cambridge, UK, 2018), 109–10.
3. Critics of H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America: How and Why Belief in Live POWs Has Possessed a Nation* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1993), labeled it a heresy against the POW/MIA civic religion, but it is a solid scholarly indictment of the myth-makers and their subversive politics.
4. "National POW/MIA Flag Act Signed into Law," Senator Elizabeth Warren press release, November 8, 2019, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/national-pow/mia-flag-act-signed-into-law>.
5. *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, dir. by George Cosmatos (Culver City, CA: Tri-Star Pictures, 1985). For quotes see <https://screenrant.com/rambo-franchise-best-memorable-quotes/>.
6. David L. Anderson, *Vietnamization: Politics, Strategy, Legacy* (Lanham, MD, 2020), 133–34.

Author's Response

Amanda C. Demmer

It is incredibly gratifying to have scholars whose work I much admire offer reviews of my book. Thank you to the roundtable's participants for giving *After Saigon's Fall* such a close reading. That each reviewer offered such high praise is both extremely rewarding and humbling.

My primary goal in *After Saigon's Fall* was to demonstrate the centrality of migrants and migration programs to the U.S. approach to normalization. I argue that in the twenty years that formal relations remained suspended, the United States and Vietnam took tangible steps toward normalization by collaborating on what American officials called "humanitarian issues": migration programs and POW/MIA accounting. While the "full accounting" effort has been thoroughly and thoughtfully documented by Michael Allen and others, I sought to place that well-known aspect of U.S. policy alongside the less visible migration programs that were implemented not only in the late 1970s,

but in 1982, 1984, 1987, 1989, and 1996.¹

These programs facilitated the resettlement of over one million Vietnamese (in addition to hundreds of thousands of Laotians and Cambodians) in the two decades after 1975. While the United States acted unilaterally to parole 130,000 South Vietnamese into the country in the wake of Saigon's collapse, the vast majority of Vietnamese traveled through programs that required intensive multilateral and/or bilateral negotiations. These efforts, undertaken in consort with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Southeast Asian nations of first asylum, other resettlement nations, and Vietnam, led to multinational agreements on resettlement programs for the so-called "boat people" in 1979 and again in 1989. The UNHCR, Vietnam, and resettlement countries also created a path of emigration directly from Vietnam, the Orderly Departure Program (ODP).

American and Vietnamese officials also negotiated bilateral agreements. Washington and Hanoi implemented subprograms within the ODP for Amerasians and reeducation camp detainees and created a program that provided oceanic migrants who were repatriated to Vietnam with one more opportunity to apply for resettlement in the US. The frequent contact and, especially as time went on, the compromise and collaboration that these programs required became the basis upon which Washington and Hanoi pursued normalization.

I appreciate Greg Daddis's reflection that language is particularly important to my arguments in *After Saigon's Fall*. This is a key part of the book. I argue that U.S. officials adopted a very specific definition of "humanitarian" vis-à-vis Vietnam. American policymakers equated "humanitarian" in this context with issues that facilitated family reunification for Americans and South Vietnamese: migration programs and POW/MIA accounting. I show how even though we as scholars continue to differentiate between humanitarianism and human rights, the two concepts became linguistically, politically, and legally coupled in the late Cold War. I also posit that normalization is best understood as a highly contested process (not a moment when diplomatic relations are announced) during which war and peace often coexist. I demonstrate that debates about these concepts and others are crucial to understanding the particularities of U.S.-Vietnamese normalization and that their ramifications reverberated much more widely in U.S. politics and international relations in the late twentieth century. In many ways, then, *After Saigon's Fall* is about much more than the Vietnam War, as David Anderson observes.

As each of the reviewers explains, what I call "nonexecutive actors" form the crux of the book. I argue that alliances between U.S. officials (especially members of Congress) and nonstate actors help explain the surprising level of bipartisan support that underwrote migration programs for twenty years after 1975. Building on a thesis developed by critical refugee scholars, who emphasize that the South Vietnamese people persisted after the collapse of the South Vietnamese state, I suggest that the ties between the U.S. and South Vietnamese people also persisted—in all their asymmetrical complexity—beyond 1975.² I ultimately conclude that the only way to make sense of the profoundly contradictory policies that the United States adopted after the fall of Saigon is to understand that U.S. officials continued to treat the government in Hanoi and the South Vietnamese peoples as separate entities and implemented policies to address them both.

Both Pierre Asselin and Kathryn Statler seek additional information on Hanoi's perspective and motivations. My decision to foreground American actors and to rely on secondary sources when discussing Hanoi reflects my larger objectives.³ As I state in the fourth paragraph, "Uncovering the American approach to US-SRV normalization is the main task of this book" (3).

While pragmatic considerations like word count limitations factored into my choices, so too did the unexpected quantity and quality of the English-language sources available. In writing a book about (relatively) recent events, I initially worried that I might not find sufficient primary sources for a book-length project, but I ended with enough archival material to write several monographs. Many of the collections I consulted were unprocessed or had opened to researchers only a few years before I used them. In this combination of presidential, congressional, and nonstate archives I found nuanced stories—about both individuals and institutions, as Daddis notes—warranting full consideration in their own right. I look forward to reading a book that provides a detailed analysis of policymaking in Washington and Hanoi, a deep dive into the decades-long conversations that I call normalization.

My aspiration with *After Saigon's Fall* was to provide scaffolding that will help move the historiographic conversation in that direction by illuminating the U.S. side of the dialogue.

In calls for more information on this and other topics, the reviewers, who have each written multiple books on the Vietnam War, demonstrate that despite the field's prolific output, we still have much to learn about the war and its reverberations. It is an incredibly exciting time in the historiography of the Vietnam War

when the post-1975 period and refugee politics are receiving the scrutiny they deserve.⁴ I look forward to seeing where this exciting new wave of scholarship leads and am honored to be among its contributors.

Notes:

1. Michael J. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009); Edward A. Martini, *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975–2000* (Amherst, MA, 2007); H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1993).
2. Long T. Bui, *Returns of War: South Vietnam and the Price of Refugee Memory* (New York, NY, 2018); Phuong Tran Nguyen, *Becoming Refugee American: The Politics of Rescue in Little Saigon* (Urbana, IL, 2017); Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refugees* (Berkeley, CA, 2014).
3. One of the books Asselin references, political scientist Kosal Path's *Vietnam's Strategic Thinking during the Third Indochina War*, would have been an incredibly helpful resource in this regard, and I wish I had known about it when it was published last year. Also, while I did attend the language program Asselin mentions in his footnotes (the Southeast Asian Studies Summer institute [SEASSI]), it is fair to say that had I intended to do research in Vietnam, additional language study would have been necessary.
4. Jana Lipman, *In Camps: Vietnamese Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Repatriates* (Oakland, CA, 2020); Sam Vong, "'Assets of War': Strategic Displacements, Population Movements, and the Uses of Refugees during the Vietnam War," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2020): 75–100; Hang Thi Thu Le-Tormala, *Postwar Journeys: American and Vietnamese Transnational Peace Efforts Since 1975* (Lawrence, KS, 2021); Sabrina Thomas, *The Politics of Paternity and Responsibility for the Amerasians of Vietnam* (Lincoln, NE, 2021).

A Roundtable on Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy: Oil and Arab Nationalism in Iraq*

Nathan J. Citino, Gregory Brew, Mary Ann Heiss, W. Taylor Fain, Salim Yaqub, and
Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt

Roundtable Introduction

Nathan J. Citino

It's an honor to introduce this roundtable review of Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's excellent new book. My introduction tries to provide some historiographical context so that *Passport* readers can better appreciate its contribution. Fortunately for me, I can draw not only on the roundtable contributors' reviews but also on their published scholarship. Their work represents some of the most important in the U.S.-Middle East subfield, which has grown in size and sophistication over twenty years during which the U.S. pursued two failed, imperial wars in the region as part of a "global war on terror." Assessing *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy*, with these reviewers, offers an opportunity to reconsider major issues in this literature, as well as to think about its current state and prospects.

A basic way of approaching the literature is to distinguish between studies that emphasize cultural perceptions of the Middle East and those that feature economic and strategic interests. Those in the first category applied the cultural critique from Edward Said's *Orientalism*.¹ Just as Said described western portrayals of the Islamic East as an inferior Other, scholars analyzed the U.S. historical record to argue that many Americans had acted on the basis of similar assumptions. These scholars include Douglas Little, Melani McAlister, Matthew Jacobs, and Osama Khalil.² Studies in the second category run the gamut but include works on national security by Peter Hahn and oil diplomacy by David Painter.³ One might argue that studies of tangible interests are on the upswing, given the recent books by Christopher Dietrich and David Wight.⁴ Yet as many scholars including Said have pointed out, interests are by their very nature contested and ultimately inseparable from perceptions. Robert Vitalis showed how the Arabian American Oil Company borrowed myths from the North American frontier to defend its investment.⁵ Our contributors have made similar arguments. Mary Ann Heiss demonstrated the importance of gendered perceptions of Iranian prime minister Muhammad Mosaddeq during the conflict over his nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.⁶ Salim Yaqub noted the growth of a curious literary subgenre of dystopian novels involving Arabs at a time when Americans were panicked about oil prices and the "peace process" licensed Israeli occupation of Arab land.⁷ Wolfe-Hunnicuttt stakes his claim in this debate by analyzing both the battle to control Iraqi oil as a material interest and American perceptions of threats to that interest. Rather than focus on Orientalist stereotypes,

he describes how American cold warriors developed an especially paranoid approach to economic imperialism. He signals as much with his title, a hybrid allusion to Richard Hofstadter and William Appleman Williams.

The reviewers broadly praise Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's book for what Gregory Brew calls a "complicated triple-act" and Heiss describes as a "three prong approach." In other words, *The Paranoid Style* tells a complex history of Iraqi nationalism and resource sovereignty that involves the U.S. government, the Iraq Petroleum Company, and Iraqi officials. Yaqub describes it as "richly researched" in U.S. documents, oil company archives, and Arabic memoirs. As the contributors also note, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt disaggregates the three sides, analyzing the conflicts within each. For instance, Taylor Fain praises the author's skill in "navigating the labyrinth of Iraqi domestic politics" and introducing the technocrats who pursued oil nationalization, including Khair el-Din Haseeb, whom the author personally interviewed. Heiss describes Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's account of conflicts between the State Department's international oil diplomacy and the Interior Department's prioritizing of energy self-sufficiency as "one of the book's signal contributions to the literature." Contributors also admire the author's keen eye for entertaining vignettes such as the "poisoned handkerchief" plot involving the CIA scientist Sidney Gottlieb. As Brew concludes, *The Paranoid Style* is capable of holding undergraduates' attention even as it explains "how the Iraq of Saddam Hussein emerged as the *bête noire*" of American policy makers at the end of the 20th century.

Despite these strengths, the reviewers criticize what they regard as shortcomings. Brew notes that Wolfe-Hunnicuttt "occasionally tries to pack in more than his narrative can bear." Drawing on his own expertise in petroleum history, Brew also questions whether "petrodollar recycling" was as "well-established" by the early 1960s as the author claims and whether the major companies actually constituted a "cartel." Fain criticizes the "relative inattention to the British imperial context" in a book about a onetime British mandate and the lack of a "framework for understanding British post-imperial and Cold War policy in Iraq." For Heiss, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's account of intelligence and covert operations left her wanting "more detail than the book contains." She also did not find the "paranoia" theme "as consistently developed as it might have been." Yaqub challenges the author's claim that U.S. government officials perceived a threat to the American domestic racial order in Prime Minister 'Abd al-Karim Qasim's campaign to build a multiethnic, non-sectarian society in Iraq. Finding such references "gratuitous and distracting," Yaqub wishes that the author had developed arguments around race and

ethnicity “more carefully and precisely.”

Yaqub is surely correct that much more needs to be said about categories of identity such as race, ethnicity, and sect in the U.S. encounter with the Middle East. But by raising these issues, the book makes two important contributions. First, it transcends the “othering” associated with Orientalism by placing the U.S. and Iraq together in a shared historical moment, although separated by an enormous power disparity that enabled Americans to intervene in Iraqi politics. Both states were struggling at the same time with the modern predicament of reconciling equal citizenship with ethno-religious diversity.⁸ The author seeks to understand this aspect of U.S.-Iraqi relations through research in Arabic sources, an approach also found in essential work by Weldon C. Matthews.⁹ Second, rather than focusing only on American perceptions and policy formation, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt invites us to consider the implications of U.S. power for Middle Eastern societies. He demonstrates how American support for the pan-Arab Ba’thists who overthrew Qasim and their subsequent anticommunist purge undermined hopes for an Iraqi republic based on equality among Sunni and Shi’a, Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, and other groups. Both Fain and Heiss refer to the “Jakarta Method,” the title of Vincent Bevins’ searing indictment of U.S.-supported anticommunist violence that reached new levels of killing in Indonesia just a couple of years after the anti-Qasim coup in Baghdad. In both countries, the politics of anticommunism and ethnicity were intertwined.¹⁰ Following the forever wars and amid ongoing military operations, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt and others are focusing our attention on the devastation left by U.S. imperial interventions.

Notes:

1. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
2. Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), and *US versus Them: The United States, Radical Islam, and the Rise of the Green Threat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Matthew F. Jacobs, *Imagining the Middle East: The Building of an American Foreign Policy, 1918-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); and Osama Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
3. Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and David S. Painter, *Oil and the American Century: The Political Economy of U.S. Foreign Oil Policy, 1941-1954* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
4. Christopher R.W. Dietrich, *Oil Revolution: Anti-Colonial Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and David M. Wight, *Oil Money: Middle East Petrodollars and the Transformation of US Empire, 1967-1988* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).
5. Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
6. Mary Ann Heiss, “Real Men Don’t Wear Pajamas: Anglo-American Cultural Perceptions of Mohammed Mosaddeq and the Iranian Oil Nationalization Dispute,” in *Empire and Revolution: The United States and the Third World since 1945*, ed. Peter L. Hahn and Mary Ann Heiss (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), pp. 178-94.
7. Salim Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).
8. See Ussama Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 4-6.
9. See Weldon C. Matthews, “The Kennedy Administration and Arms Transfers to Ba’thist Iraq,” *Diplomatic History* 43 (June 2019): 469-92; “The Kennedy Administration, Counterinsurgency, and Iraq’s First Ba’thist Regime,” *International Journal of Middle*

East Studies 43 (November 2011): 635-53; and “The Kennedy Administration, the International Federation of Petroleum Workers, and Iraqi Labor under the Ba’thist Regime,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 17:1 (Winter 2015): 97-128.

10. Vincent Bevins, *The Jakarta Method: Washington’s Anticommunist Crusade & The Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2020).

The Postwar Petroleum Disorder

Gregory Brew

In the postwar petroleum order, the United States orchestrated the flow of oil from the Middle East to Western consumers by drawing on the corporate power of Western oil companies. That process forms the basis for how historians have understood the politics of oil in the Cold War.¹ But how orderly was that order?

As Nathan J. Citino notes, the relationships governing the movement of oil were never static. Rather, they were “continuously contested and subject to challenge,” as rival interests from within the oil industry or among oil-producing and oil-consuming states battled for supremacy.² Despite the facade of stability, the postwar petroleum order featured fierce battles over the terms of oil exploitation. Though American petroleum consumers appeared blissfully unaware of any problems until the shocks of the 1970s, disorder reigned across the global oil world, spurred on by the strategic concerns of Great Powers, the commercial interests of private corporations, the ideological impulses of politicians and policymakers, and the nationalist aspirations of oil-producing states.

Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt’s analysis of oil in U.S.-Iraqi relations reflects this disordered landscape. *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy* accomplishes a complicated triple act, displaying expertise in Iraqi politics, the international oil industry, and American foreign policymaking. It weaves all three subjects together to create a sweeping account of the 1960s, illustrating how the decade was nearly as transformative for global oil as the 1970s, as the dominance of the large companies gradually deteriorated amid rising resource nationalism.

This was especially true in Iraq. Despite the constant battle for supremacy within Iraqi politics after the fall of the Hashemite monarchy, as groups of rival Nasserists, Ba’thists, and communists vied for supremacy, Iraqis were unified over their desire to nationalize the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) and reclaim control over the nation’s most valuable natural resource. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt shows how Iraqi officials in several different governments overcame the stubbornness of the companies and the occasional, equivocal opposition of the United States government to successfully nationalize Iraq’s oil industry in 1972, establishing a model that would be replicated throughout the oil-producing world over the course of the subsequent decade.

The book’s cast of characters spans the worlds of U.S. foreign and covert policy, the oil industry, and the Iraqi political sphere, and sets up plenty of scope for interesting contrasts. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt emphasizes the tenacity of ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim, the leader of the 1958 revolution that ended the pro-British Hashemite regime and a figure who serves as a kind of tragic hero for Wolfe-Hunnicuttt’s narrative. Qasim was committed to multiethnic populism and strove to tie Iraq’s nationalization to a program of economic development and social reform, yet he was painted as a proto-communist by CIA agents and was ultimately toppled in a violent coup that Wolfe-Hunnicuttt suggests had American backing. The author also singles out key figures among Iraq’s intelligentsia who overcame Western stereotypes about the technical capacity of non-White peoples and laid the legal and political foundation

for the country's fight against the IPC and nationalization in 1972.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt contrasts the dogged determination of the nationalization effort with the confused, often chaotic process of American policymaking. The official view in Washington was frequently marked by what the author labels a "paranoid style," reflecting material interests and a deeply ingrained imperialist psychology. Included within the latter were beliefs about Iraqi backwardness and an obsessive concern for "securing" Middle East oil.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt suggests this paranoia stemmed in part from real psychosis and mental fracturing brought on by the stresses of the Cold War, and he draws on the examples of Secretary of Defense James Forrestal and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles for evidence. The result is a narrative of shifting political currents and ideologies, as American administrations churn out new policy prescriptions to grapple with Iraq, a country few in Washington appeared to understand.

In gripping prose punctuated by droll humor—as a writer, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt displays a keen sense of irony—the book reveals the contradictions and occasional absurdities marking U.S. Middle East policy.

Americans viewed Iraq as an unstable country possessed of large oil reserves that needed to be "secured" through covert intervention or other means. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt joins other scholars in refuting oil scarcity ideology. He points out that oil was abundant in the 1960s and provided a firm basis for American energy security. "The danger" of energy scarcity "was entirely imagined," a product of corporate interest and policymakers' paranoia (83). The large oil companies and the Anglo-American governments worked to restrict the flow of oil to preserve prices and ensure profits. This system was also designed to ensure high revenues for oil-producing states, which would nationalize their industries unless placated. "The entirety of the oil order . . . was organized around the effort to prevent the emergence of a free market in oil," writes Wolfe-Hunnicuttt (184).

While imaginary scarcity occasionally drove policy, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt implies that the assumption of abundance actually worked to undermine the position of the United States and the major oil companies. When Iraq began to execute its nationalization program in the early 1970s, American officials predicted it would fail. They argued that the oil companies would isolate Iraq just as they had isolated Iran during the nationalization crisis of the Mosaddeq era in the early 1950s. "As it turned out, the CIA got it wrong," the author notes. By the late 1960s the supply-and-demand balance had tightened, consumer states were willing to buy nationalized oil, and the companies found themselves facing a wave of nationalizations in the aftermath of the 1973 oil shock (211).

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt illustrates how contradictions within U.S. policy stemmed from bifurcations within the oil industry and the U.S. government. Smaller oil companies that resented the larger companies' dominance and feared the influx of cheap Middle Eastern crude exerted influence over the Department of the Interior, which looked abroad for minerals and oil while protecting the interests of domestic companies through tariff walls and import quotas. Oil producers like Iran and Saudi Arabia exerted their own pressure on the U.S. government, which came to view the major companies as liabilities in the Cold War.

"The United States was sympathetic to the majors," writes Wolfe-Hunnicuttt, "but only to a degree" (82). This

is a crucial insight, as it helps to undermine the traditional view of the U.S. government as acting to support the larger companies. In reality, American officials were ambivalent toward the IPC, Aramco, and other companies operating in the Middle East. They often chose to pursue policies that benefited smaller domestic oil companies or oil-producing states like Saudi Arabia or Iran in the hopes of securing their continued support in the containment of communism.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt weaves his narrative through Iraqi politics, a changing international oil economy, and the shifting balance between rival factions in Washington. He finds room to explore curious historical episodes, such as the "poisoned handkerchief" plot of the early 1960s (59). His book provides a detailed examination of U.S. policy toward Iraq during a period that has received very little attention. Given the importance of Iraq to the U.S. Middle East policy of the 1980s and 1990s, to say nothing of its role in the "forever war" of the early twenty-first century,

Americans viewed Iraq as an unstable country possessed of large oil reserves that needed to be "secured" through covert intervention or other means. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt joins other scholars in refuting oil scarcity ideology. He points out that oil was abundant in the 1960s and provided a firm basis for American energy security. "The danger" of energy scarcity "was entirely imagined," a product of corporate interest and policymakers' paranoia.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's contribution is extremely timely and offers scholars of the period a great deal to consider. At the same time, his keen grasp of characterization and his engaging prose makes *The Paranoid Style* a suitable read for undergraduates and non-academic readers looking to gain insight into how the Iraq of Saddam Hussein emerged as the *bête noire* of the U.S. policymaking community in the final decades of the twentieth century.

Attempting to cover a broad swath of history while examining several distinct groups of actors—from oil executives to Iraqi nationalists, American diplomats, and CIA agents—Wolfe-Hunnicuttt occasionally tries to pack in more than his narrative can bear. Describing Qasim's commitment to multicultural populism—something the Ba'ath would abandon once in power—Wolfe-Hunnicuttt notes that his vision was at odds with the social order of the United States, where legal traditions "had been very explicit in defining the racial basis of US citizenship" (107).

Gendered analysis of U.S. policymakers like Lyndon B. Johnson offers a glimpse of how America officials would infantilize or feminize foreign leaders like Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam or the Ba'ath Party in Iraq (134). Religious beliefs within the oil industry, recently explored by Darren Dochuk, influenced policy during the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt suggests that millenarian beliefs encouraged support for Israel even as State Department Arabists and oil executives urged more support for Arab oil producers like Iraq and Saudi Arabia (170–74).³ He does not explore these concepts in detail, however, but leaves them as areas for future scholars to explore.

The author's claim that "petrodollar recycling," or the movement of Middle Eastern oil money through the U.S. economy through investment and arms sales, was by 1963 "well-established" (121) struck me as provocative. While arms sales offered some relief to the growing U.S. balance of payments problem, there remained considerable resistance in Washington during the 1960s to offering Middle East oil producers *carte blanche*. The shah of Iran, for instance, was dissatisfied with the policies of the Kennedy administration and spent much of the Johnson era threatening to purchase arms from the Soviet Union.⁴ Petrodollar recycling became an important element of U.S. relations with the Middle East—a subject David M. Wight has recently explored—yet it is important not to overstate its significance to the U.S. balance of payments in the 1960s.⁵

I would also push back against Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's characterization of the large oil companies as a "cartel," a term that implies consistent collusion to control prices and

production. While the companies certainly did collude, they also competed for markets, and their methods of cooperating were mostly indirect and implicit. "Oligopoly" suits the condition of the international oil economy, suggesting a community of actors intent on restraining production and preserving stable prices while permitting competition to occur elsewhere.⁶

These objections aside, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt has crafted an engaging account that makes a substantive contribution to the evolving history of the global oil order. It stands as an impressive work on U.S.-Iraqi relations, a factor in international relations that is crucial to the broader history of the twentieth century and the evolution of American empire. And it provides a provocative thesis, suggesting a Cold War landscape in which paranoia drove policy, added to the upheavals that influenced the postwar petroleum order, and set the stage for the oil revolution of the 1970s and the transformation of the global political economy.

Notes:

1. For an analysis of the postwar petroleum order, see David S. Painter, "Oil and the American Century," *Journal of American History* 99, no. 1 (June 2012): 24–39.
2. Nathan J. Citino, *From Arab Nationalism to OPEC: Eisenhower, King Saud, and the Making of U.S.-Saudi Relations*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN, 2010), 6.
3. Darren Dochuk, *Anointed with Oil: How Christianity and Crude Made Modern America* (New York, 2019).
4. Stephen McGlinchey, "Lyndon B. Johnson and Arms Credit Sales to Iran 1964–1968," *Middle East Journal* 67, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 229–47.
5. David M. Wight, *Oil Money: Middle East Petrodollars and the Transformation of US Empire, 1967–1988* (Ithaca, NY, 2021).
6. Theodore H. Moran, "Managing an Oligopoly of Would-Be Sovereigns: The Dynamics of Joint Control and Self-Control in the International Oil Industry Past, Present and Future," *International Organization* 41, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 576–607.

Review of Wolfe-Hunnicuttt, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy*

Mary Ann Heiss

Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's learned and timely *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy: Oil and Arab Nationalism in Iraq* takes a three-pronged approach to explaining the relatively understudied drive to nationalize the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). Weaving the perspectives of Iraqi leaders, oil industry executives, and U.S. foreign policymakers into a tightly argued and impeccably researched narrative, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt adds considerably to the literatures in a number of fields.

Of the three central actors in his drama, Iraq would seem to be the weakest, existing as it did as a former League of Nations mandate that achieved independent nationhood only in 1932. As Wolfe-Hunnicuttt makes clear, however, to see Iraq as powerless would be a mistake, as in the end it bested both the IPC and the U.S. government by successfully nationalizing its oil industry and eschewing alignment with the U.S.-dominated Cold War West. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's tale does not end happily, however, as the short-term gains of nationalization were ultimately overshadowed by political repression and societal militarization that deleteriously affected the lives of the Iraqi people.

The story in the foreground of Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's book is Iraq's decades-long drive to nationalize the IPC. Although Iraq was neither the first nor the last oil-producing

nation to seek control over its own natural resources, its nationalization campaign had more twists and turns and overcame more obstacles—domestic and international—than similar efforts elsewhere. On the domestic front, Iraqi nationalists faced deep sectarian divisions. Created to serve British purposes and explicitly nurtured by British policy before, during, and after the mandate period, those divisions complicated early efforts at national unity. Rather than establishing a pluralist secular democracy that treated all Iraqis equally, the British sought instead an Iraq comprised of "discrete and hermetically sealed tribes and sects" (22). Such a state would be easier to govern, because the various groups' differences would make joining together against a common enemy (read, British authority) difficult.

In this, the British were not wrong. Although nationalist voices did emerge by the 1930s and gained steam after World War II, they represented different—and often competing—perspectives: Communists, the Ba'ath, and the Iraqi Free Officers movement that emerged after the 1952 coup in Egypt brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power. The Eisenhower Doctrine, explicitly aimed at Iraq, pushed all three groups together in February 1957 in a unified National Front, a move that spelled bad news for the U.S.-leaning government of Nuri al-Said, which was overthrown in a coup by Iraqi Free Officers in July 1958. For Wolfe-Hunnicuttt, the Free Officers' coup was the major turning point in the drive for nationalization, although it would take fifteen more years and significant domestic upheaval before that goal could be achieved.

Ameliorating the nation's sectarian divisions was one goal of oil nationalization. And as Wolfe-Hunnicuttt makes clear, for a brief period the increased oil revenues that resulted from nationalization led to ramped-up domestic spending on healthcare, education, and other social services that dramatically increased the quality of life for the Iraqi people and went some distance toward bridging sectarian divisions. Unfortunately, however, that unity did not last. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the Ba'ath government initiated a brutal war against Iraqi Kurdistan, dramatically increased military spending, and turned Iraq into an authoritarian state. That nationalization did not lead to widespread, permanent societal improvements is one of the most depressing elements of Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's story.

From my perspective, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt is at his best when dealing with the Iraqi aspects of the nationalization story. His long-term perspective on Iraqi politics goes some distance toward facilitating an understanding of recent events and the nation's ongoing turmoil. It also serves as a useful reminder of the detrimental consequences of Western imperial interests on the targets of that imperialism.

In Iraq's case, the British deserve particular opprobrium for their deliberate efforts to nurture sectarian divisions in service to their own ends. But the single-minded U.S. emphasis on anticommunism and the covert action it spawned (more on those subjects below) also warrant scorn. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's insightful profiles of the succession of Iraqi leaders who fought unsuccessfully to extract better concession terms from the IPC on the road to actual nationalization should be singled out for praise, as should, most notably, his explication of the various petroleum laws that sought to chip away at the IPC's exclusive control over Iraqi oil. Those laws laid out Iraq's legitimate grievances against the IPC and articulated the contours of resource sovereignty.

But beyond his outstanding coverage of Iraqi domestic politics, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt also carefully lays out Iraq's leading role in trying to unite the oil-producing nations

of the Global South as a countervailing power to the international oil companies, a goal that was finally achieved in September 1960 with the formation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting States (OPEC). More than just a driving force behind the creation of OPEC, Iraq was among the earliest and loudest voices for using what came to be called the oil weapon in international politics, calling for boycotts of sales to Israel's allies and imploring other OPEC members to follow its lead in nationalizing their industries. By the 1970s, other states had in fact done that, making producer-state control of world oil the norm rather than the exception.

Although Wolfe-Hunnicuttt does not make the explicit claim for Iraqi influence on UN Resolution 1803, which affirmed "the right of postcolonial states to 'permanent sovereignty over [their] natural resources,' including the right to unilaterally abrogate contracts," it is clear from his treatment of Iraq's various petroleum laws that the ideas they articulated certainly shaped UN thinking on resource sovereignty (144). I wish he had been more explicit here and had provided the sources to support such a line of inquiry.

The second strand of Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's story focuses on the international oil industry, broadly conceived. At the forefront, of course, was the IPC, like other foreign oil concessions concerned first and foremost with maximizing its profits. The IPC differed from other oil concessions in its unique corporate structure. As Wolfe-Hunnicuttt ably demonstrates in one of the book's central arguments, the IPC's composition rendered it particularly susceptible to nationalist pressures. Because its constituent companies had different positions within the international oil industry—and thus, different corporate interests—they had different responses to the various Iraqi nationalization efforts. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's discussion of the way supply pressures pitted the short crude members, who were willing to make concessions to Iraq in order to protect their concessions, against the better supplied majors, who sought to prevent nationalization in their other concession areas by holding firm against Iraqi moves for greater control by limiting production (and thus reducing Iraq's oil revenues), is a welcome reminder that the oil industry should not be considered a unitary, single-voiced actor.

Along these lines, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt also adds considerably to our understanding of the position of the independent oil companies in the international system. Unlike their nationalist counterparts elsewhere, the Iraqis actively solicited the involvement of the independents throughout their circuitous route to nationalization, a strategy that allowed them to overcome the outsized power of the IPC and achieve gradual control of the nation's oil. The Iraqi leaders demonstrated considerable savvy by successfully courting the independents in service to their own goals. Their success also illustrated how much the international oil industry had changed since Iran's oil nationalization campaign in the 1950s, when such a course was not possible. The U.S. failure to anticipate such a move also demonstrates how out of touch Washington was with the realities of the international oil industry by the late 1960s and early 1970s.

U.S. policy constitutes Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's third broad thread. Here, the overriding Cold War goal of ensuring that Iraq did not fall to communism colored virtually every decision and policy statement. And in service to that goal, U.S. policymakers were prepared to utilize a wide array of tools and approaches, from foreign aid and military assistance to covert action and what Wolfe-Hunnicuttt dubs the Jakarta Method, "the systematic mass murder of suspected Communists" (112).

When it came to Iraq, the "cult of covert action" came

to dominate U.S. policy, at the cost of such purported national values as support for the democratic political process (38). In the mid-1960s, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt avers, U.S. officials came to believe "that American interests would be best served by a permanent benevolent dictatorship in Iraq similar to the one that prevailed in Iran" (169). Such sentiments revealed how completely anti-communism had taken hold of U.S. thinking—and how little U.S. officials cared about the effects of a "benevolent dictatorship" on those forced to live under it. The disconnect between U.S. rhetoric about supporting democracy and the hollowness of that support in Iraq is a recurring theme throughout the book that also helps to link Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's case study with similar developments elsewhere.

If U.S. policymakers were united in the goal of preventing Soviet control of Iraq—and its oil—they were less unified when it came to broader petroleum issues.

If U.S. policymakers were united in the goal of preventing Soviet control of Iraq—and its oil—they were less unified when it came to broader petroleum issues.

The central issue was conflict over whether the major oil companies should be considered "quasi-public utilities providing a public good" (71). In what is surely one of the book's signal contributions to the literature, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt explores the conflict between the State Department, which bought into the idea of using the majors as tools of official U.S. foreign policy, and the Interior Department, which

was more interested in developing the nation's domestic oil resources. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's discussion of how the State-Interior conflict came into play during Iraq's long campaign to nationalize the IPC serves as a useful reminder of the intersection between foreign and domestic policy when it came to oil.

As intriguing as Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's handling of the U.S. side of the IPC nationalization story is, I wish two specific elements had been better developed. One is the general subject of intelligence and covert operations, which he paints with the broadest of brushes. I have no doubt that source limitations caused his coverage of initiatives like Project Clean Up to be much thinner than most readers—this one included—would like. Perhaps it is unfair to criticize thin coverage that certainly results from source limitations. But it is still maddening to want more detail than the book contains.

The other underdeveloped element of the U.S. side of the IPC nationalization story is Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's claim for the role of paranoia about Soviet intentions and capabilities in shaping U.S. policy. I certainly have no quibble with the overall assertion, as U.S. policy in Iraq and elsewhere consistently seemed to be framed by worst-case scenarios that pushed U.S. policymakers toward covert action in situations they had not initiated and could not control. But I did not see this idea as consistently developed as it might have been, particularly since Wolfe-Hunnicuttt sees it as so central to the tale of Iraq's oil nationalization drive that it constitutes his book's title. I would also liked to have seen at least some direct reference to Richard Hofstadter's long-ago invocation of a paranoid style in American politics.¹ To my mind, there are obvious similarities between the two paranoias that Wolfe-Hunnicuttt could have explored with great profit.

Without question, this is an important and valuable book that will appeal to readers in a wide variety of fields. Those interested in the oil industry will find Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's explication of the varied responses to Iraq's long drive for nationalization enlightening, particularly his insights into the power of the independents. Those interested in Iraqi history will appreciate the careful way he traces the circuitous route to successful nationalization and the leading role Iraq came to play in the drive for international resource sovereignty. And those interested in U.S. foreign relations will find great value in his nuanced treatment of

Washington's response to the Iraqi nationalization efforts.

Producing a book that successfully knits three disparate strands of a story together is no mean feat. Yet that is exactly what Wolfe-Hunnicuttt has done. This is a book well worth the time invested in reading it. It definitely deserves a very wide readership.

Note:

1. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York, 1965). The title essay was published in *Harper's* in November, 1964.

Oil, Nationalism, and the Complexities of American Policy towards Iraq

W. Taylor Fain

There has been a recent boom in the publication of Middle East oil studies that seek to reframe the subject. These studies focus not primarily on the interests and activities of Western governments and petroleum companies but instead on the aspirations of local state builders and post-colonial elites seeking to wrest control of their natural resources and political fortunes from exploitative foreign actors. Christopher Dietrich's *Oil Revolutions: Anticolonial Elites, Sovereign Rights, and the Economic Culture of Decolonization* (2017), Victor McFarland's *Oil Powers: A History of the U.S.-Saudi Alliance* (2020), and David Wight's *Oil Money: Middle East Petrodollars and the Transformation of U.S. Empire, 1967-1988* (2021) are representative of this current trend in the historiography. Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt joins this growing company with his important new study, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy: Oil and Arab Nationalism in Iraq*.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's book is as ambitious as it is engaging. It aims not merely to fill an important gap in the literature concerning U.S.-Iraqi diplomacy and the history of oil nationalization in the Middle East. It also attempts to explicate the complexities of Iraqi domestic and revolutionary politics; describe the emergence of an ambitious "state-building class" in Baghdad; disentangle the relationships between U.S. government agencies and the major, independent, and domestic oil firms; and expose the efforts of U.S. intelligence operatives to quash Iraqi projects to establish sovereignty over their natural resources. The efforts of Iraqis to harness their petroleum wealth in the service of their domestic and economic agendas against the backdrop of Britain's imperial dissolution and the Cold War provide Wolfe-Hunnicuttt with an expansive canvas.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt first delves into the origins of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), the consortium of Western oil companies that established an exclusive concession in Iraq in 1928, in order to explore the fractured and increasingly fragile nature of British economic and imperial assets in the nation. This fragility, he demonstrates, presented the Iraqis with opportunities to make increasingly assertive demands for control of their own natural resources. Against the backdrop of the Hashemite monarchy's establishment, the 1941 rebellion against British domination by Rashid 'Ali al-Kaylani, and the efforts of the Western nations to incorporate Iraqi oil and military assets into their larger Cold War architecture of containment, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt describes the emergence of an educated and highly motivated Iraqi "state-building class" eager to chart a new course for their

nation and to establish a multi-ethnic, democratic, secular system.

Central to Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's analysis is the 1958 Iraqi revolution launched by pro-Nasser "Free Officers" that overthrew the government of King Faysal II and his pro-Western prime minister, Nuri al-Said. Led by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, the revolution was, according to Wolfe-Hunnicuttt, a watershed event in Iraq's history that offered the nation an opportunity to establish a secular pluralistic government. Malcolm Kerr, the historian of the "Arab Cold War," described Qasim as presiding over a "strange regime that drifted in a twilight zone between Communism and a shapeless anarchic radicalism, resting on no visible organized support." That Qasim emerges from the book's pages as a heroic and visionary figure is one of its signal contributions, but one that is not altogether persuasive, given his mercurial and violent character.

The 1958 revolution permits Wolfe-Hunnicuttt to develop another of his key themes, the emergence in U.S. policymaking circles of a "paranoid style of diplomacy," rooted in a "crackpot realism" and supported by a "cult of covert action." With a tip of the hat to Richard Hofstadter's seminal 1964 essay "The Paranoid Style in American

It also attempts to explicate the complexities of Iraqi domestic and revolutionary politics; describe the emergence of an ambitious "state-building class" in Baghdad; disentangle the relationships between U.S. government agencies and the major, independent, and domestic oil firms; and expose the efforts of U.S. intelligence operatives to quash Iraqi projects to establish sovereignty over their natural resources. The efforts of Iraqis to harness their petroleum wealth in the service of their domestic and economic agendas against the backdrop of Britain's imperial dissolution and the Cold War provide Wolfe-Hunnicuttt with an expansive canvas.

Politics" and C. Wright Mills's 1958 critique of the U.S. intervention in Lebanon, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt dives deeply into the history of the United States' preoccupation with securing strategic commodities, its Cold War paranoia, and the complexities of the cooperative relationship between the U.S. government and the major oil companies doing business in the Middle East.

Concentrating on the revolution also enables the author to explore at length the evolution of the post-World War II U.S. intelligence agencies, from focusing on information collection and analysis to developing robust—and lethal—covert capabilities. The willingness of successive presidential administrations to employ these capabilities in the service of political subversion, assassination, and regime change in the Arab world provides a major through line in Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's story. The increasingly reckless and counterproductive fashion in which the United States employed its covert tools of policy, he argues, contributed to a U.S. pattern of "killing hope" in the developing world during the Cold War.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt develops especially well the story of the United States' support for the February 1963 Ba'hist coup that toppled Qasim's regime. He suggests that the campaign of extermination against Iraqi Communists in the following months may have been facilitated by the CIA, as it fits into the larger pattern of the so-called "Jakarta Method," which entailed helping local clients ruthlessly eliminate communist opponents. The documentary record does not establish incontrovertibly that the United States was a party to either the coup or the post-coup purge, but Wolfe-Hunnicuttt believes in reading against the grain of the extant record and being sensitive to its silences. "Diplomatic history," he avers, "like jazz, is often about the notes that are not played." In sum, "American Grandiose Strategy" in the Middle East, he concludes, was both inhumane and counterproductive.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt is particularly adept at evaluating the complicated relationships that evolved among the oil companies and the U.S. government as they pursued their interests in Iraq. Revising the corporatist model that depicts oil companies as informal instruments of U.S. policy and

challenging the “oil scarcity myth,” he adopts a framework that shows the government often acted as the servant of the major oil companies in the Middle East and tried to solve the problems caused by a superabundance of cheap regional petroleum.

While the State Department worked assiduously to aid the majors, including IPC members Exxon and Mobil, it found itself battling the efforts of the Interior Department to promote the interests of domestic producers in the United States. The “Prophets of American Energy Independence” and their patrons in the federal bureaucracy battled fiercely against the interests of the majors and the influx of cheap foreign oil. Similarly, the smaller “independent international” oil companies worked to end the dominance of the majors in the Middle East, and Iraqi oil administrators were eager to help them. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt demonstrates how firms such as Sinclair, Phillips, Pauley, Continental, and Union fought to gain a toehold in Iraq. Meanwhile, Enrico Mattei’s Italian *Ente Nazionale Idocarburi* (ENI) challenged the majors in the Middle East, and France’s *Compagnie Française des Pétroles* (CFP) acted as the tip of the Gaullist spear to contest the Anglo-American petroleum order in the region.

Wolfe-Hunnicuttt is similarly skillful in navigating the labyrinth of Iraqi domestic politics as he evaluates the steps Iraqis took to assert greater control over their petroleum resources and to expropriate Western oil interests. The complex and ever-shifting dynamics between Communists, Nasiriyun, Ba’thists, and their various allies can be perplexing, but he guides the reader through them with a firm command of the subject. The dangerous world of Western-directed subversion and revolutionary intrigue becomes manifest in Wolfe-Hunnicuttt’s succinct treatment of dramatic episodes such as “Project Clean Up,” “the mystery of the poisoned handkerchief,” the “Penrose Affair,” and “The Conspiracy of Robert Anderson.” He also adroitly limns the emergence of the Western-educated technocratic class that played a key role in pursuing Iraq’s natural resource sovereignty and laying the groundwork for the eventual nationalization of the IPC in the early 1970’s. Figures such as ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Wattari, Adib al-Jadir, and, especially, Khair el-Din Haseeb leap from his pages as sympathetic figures who struggled to guide Iraq towards a prosperous, independent, and (perhaps) democratic future. They take their place among the transnational post-colonial oil elites described vividly in Chris Dietrich’s *Oil Revolution*.

The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy gives us evocatively rendered personalities throughout. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt never loses sight of the human dimension of his story, but he is equally attentive to its analytical dimension and uses his characters to illustrate his arguments clearly and precisely. The work is thoroughly grounded in the primary source record, especially the U.S. archives, and it makes particularly good use of the official IPC histories, which are indispensable to the story.

If there is a fault with the book, it is its relative inattention to the British imperial context and its failure to establish a solid framework for understanding British post-imperial and Cold War policy in Iraq. This framework is not missing entirely, but it is not as well developed as Wolfe-Hunnicuttt’s analysis of Iraqi and U.S. political and economic relations. It would have been helpful, for example, to have assessed British-U.S. communications in the wake of the 1958 revolution, as the Macmillan government evaluated the security of Kuwaiti oil and Britain’s shrinking stature in the Persian Gulf region. Shortly after the July revolution,

Macmillan suggested to Eisenhower that the turmoil in Iraq jeopardized the flow of petroleum to Western Europe and might “destroy the oil fields and pipelines and all the rest of it and will blaze right through.” Consequently, he declared, the United States and Britain should contemplate “a much larger operation” than that planned for the occupations of Lebanon and Jordan. They must be ready to launch a “big operation running all the way through Syria and Iraq” and to “carry this thing on to the Persian Gulf.”

Likewise, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt might have explored in greater depth the ramifications for Britain’s Iraq policy of its decision to abandon its permanent military presence in the Persian Gulf after 1968. While he capably assesses the impact of London’s decision on the Nixon administration and the consolidation of an Iran-centered U.S. strategy for the Gulf, he does not evaluate how British anxieties about Iraqi radicalism complicated its intention to retrench from “east of Suez” by the end of 1971.

These, however, are quibbles. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt has written an important study that contributes greatly to our understanding of U.S.-Iraqi relations in a transitional era and illuminates the dynamics of natural resource nationalism and the consolidation of transnational oil elites in the post-imperial and Cold War years. It will certainly be on my graduate students’ reading lists!

Review of Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy: Oil and Arab Nationalism in Iraq*

Salim Yaqub

Major General ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim was Iraq’s prime minister from 1958 to 1963. His surname means “divider” in Arabic, a fact his political opponents sometime used against him. In late 1958 and 1959, when Qasim resisted calls by fellow Iraqis to take their nation into the United Arab Republic (the recently formed union between Egypt and Syria), Gamal Abdel Nasser, the UAR’s Egyptian president, sneered that Qasim was living up to his name by sowing division in Iraqi ranks as well as in the broader pan-Arab nation.

Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt’s outstanding new book, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy: Oil and Arab Nationalism in Iraq*, makes the opposite case. Qasim, the author argues, was committed to knitting together Iraq’s disparate and sometimes mutually antagonistic communities in a multiethnic republic united by egalitarian and socialist principles. He and other members of Iraq’s state-building class—some serving alongside him, others inhabiting earlier or later eras—saw the nation’s vast petroleum reserves as key to this political project. “[T]he idea of nationalizing oil,” Wolfe-Hunnicuttt perceptively writes, “was the material analog to a multicultural conception of Iraqi national identity” (226).

Of course, foreigners had their own ideas about how Iraq’s mineral resources and political affairs ought to be managed. Although these outside actors could not, in the end, prevent the nationalization of Iraqi oil, their interference did help to ensure that this milestone would be achieved by a grimly authoritarian regime, not the humane, cooperative polity Qasim and others had envisioned.

The Paranoid Style chronicles the efforts of Iraq’s leaders, across the span of several decades, to gain sovereign control over their nation’s oil. To reach this goal, Baghdad had to overcome the hostility and machinations of two formidable adversaries, the British-dominated Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) and the U.S. government. These three actors

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faced their own peculiar challenges, but at the most basic level they all suffered from the curse of fragmentation. Iraq was divided into numerous ethnic and sectarian groups, some of them bitterly hostile toward one another. The IPC was a consortium of firms originating in several different countries and harboring a range of competing objectives. The U.S. government, too, served a host of conflicting interests and constituencies, with the result that its Iraq policies were often vacillating or ambivalent.

Of the three actors, Baghdad was the most successful in overcoming its internal divisions. By the 1970s, it had bested its two external foes and successfully nationalized Iraq's oil industry. Yet this achievement, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt maintains, came at a fearful price. In their determined but ultimately failed drive to thwart nationalization, American policymakers and spies repeatedly meddled in Iraq's internal affairs, hardening that nation's political culture. In a world in which open Iraqi institutions were fatally vulnerable to outside interference, only a ruthlessly despotic figure like Saddam Hussein (who wielded de facto power throughout the 1970s and formal power after 1979) could thrive. "Who," the author asks, "could withstand the immense pressure coming from Washington but a kind of Arab Stalin backed by the Soviet Union?" (226).

Some of the most damaging U.S. actions, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt shows, were visited on the regime of 'Abd al-Karim Qasim. Soon after taking office in 1958, Qasim forged an alliance with Iraqi communists to check the power of Iraqi Nasserists clamoring for union with the UAR. Then, in 1961, Qasim issued Law 80, which nationalized the vast majority of the IPC's holdings.

These moves antagonized officials in the administrations of both Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy. Eisenhower and his advisers clearly favored the series of coup attempts that Iraqi Nasserists unsuccessfully mounted in the late 1950s, though the extent of U.S. involvement in them remains unclear. A congressional investigation later found that in 1962 Kennedy's CIA sent a poisoned handkerchief to an unidentified Iraqi colonel. Drawing on the work of Nathan Citino, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt speculates that the targeted officer was Fadl 'Abbas al-Mahdawi, who had presided over a military trial of prominent Iraqi Nasserists and was favorably disposed toward Iraqi communists and the Soviet Union.

If the CIA's handkerchief reached al-Mahdawi, it did not kill him. The colonel instead met his end in February 1963, after a successful Ba'thist coup against Qasim's government. Qasim, al-Mahdawi, and other officials were hastily court-martialed and shot, their corpses gruesomely displayed on Iraqi television.

Was the United States actively involved in the regime change? Clinching evidence remains elusive, but Wolfe-Hunnicuttt demonstrates that, while some Kennedy administration officials counseled caution, others were eager to see Qasim go and closely studied the obstacles that had to be surmounted to accomplish his ouster. They monitored the Ba'thists' own preparations for a coup with interest and approval. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt also shows that a U.S. embassy official in Baghdad compiled a list of suspected Iraqi communists, including "university professors, writers, and merchants" (115) whose names may or may not (the evidence is murky on this point) have been furnished to Ba'thist torturers and executioners. On the day of the coup, Robert Komer, an influential National Security Council analyst, told President Kennedy that Qasim's overthrow was a "net gain for our side" (118).

As the above passages suggest, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's book is richly researched. The author consulted a wide range of secondary accounts, declassified U.S. government documents, archived papers of individual historical actors, some Arabic-language monographs and memoirs, and records of the IPC, among other sources. He was also

able to interview Khair el-Din Haseeb, an economist and statistician who, under the auspices of the Nasserist Iraqi government that in November 1963 replaced the first, short-lived Ba'thist regime, "was in many ways the key architect of Iraq's radical oil policy" (137), a project that built on Qasim's earlier nationalization efforts.

Haseeb made considerable headway in this endeavor, exploiting divisions within the IPC and the broader international oil industry. But in 1968 the Ba'thists seized power again and jailed, interrogated, and tortured the oil specialist on suspicion of being an agent of Nasser. Following Nasser's death two years later, Haseeb was released from prison and allowed to resume a professorship at Baghdad University. He soon found himself advising his erstwhile tormenters, albeit in an odd way. Knowing that Ba'thist informants were attending his economics classes, he saw to it that the course content included his own policy recommendations on matters petroleum. The citations are unclear, but it appears that Haseeb shared this story with Wolfe-Hunnicuttt during one of their conversations in the mid-2010s—an oral history gem if ever there was one.

On the whole, though, the Iraqi Ba'thists of the 1970s were uninterested in hearing from independent-minded citizens, even those possessing valuable expertise. By mid-decade, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt writes, "the government had become 'coup-proof,' in the term of art. Dissent was severely repressed and promotion and advancement through public bureaucracies was determined by loyalty to the regime rather than professional competence. This was a far cry from the secular, democratic, and socialist Iraq" that Haseeb and likeminded members of the Iraqi intelligentsia had hoped to create (220). Haseeb fled the country for exile in Lebanon.

The thwarted desire of many Iraqis to build a humane and just society, one that welcomed and valued the participation of all of the nation's many ethnic and sectarian communities, is a recurring and poignant feature of *The Paranoid Style*, and Wolfe-Hunnicuttt writes about it with empathy and compassion. But he loses traction, in my view, when he assesses Americans' culpability for this aspect of the Iraqi tragedy.

Take, for example, the case of Colonel al-Mahdawi, the possible target of the CIA's poisoned-handkerchief plot. Al-Mahdawi's offense against Washington, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt writes, wasn't simply his friendliness toward the Soviet Union; it was also his desire, professed in public statements in the late 1950s, to create a "multiethnic republic." This vision "clashed violently with the American vision of world order in the 1950s. At home, Americans were rent by the notion of equal citizenship without regard to color. The idea that the United States would allow a pro-Soviet multiethnic republic to emerge in Iraq was simply beyond the pale. In trying to poison the Iraqi colonel, the CIA was in fact 'killing hope' for secular pluralism in Iraq and the wider region" (58).

The insinuation here is that because African Americans were still struggling to achieve full legal and political rights, the U.S. government must have been determined to prevent Iraq from establishing "equal citizenship without regard to color." In a footnote, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt cites books by Robert Vitalis, Michael Krenn, Thomas Borstelmann, and Penny Von Eschen that explore "how ideas about color affected US foreign policy" at the time (252–3, n. 138). These are pathbreaking works of scholarship, and it would be surprising if such ideas were *not* somehow implicated in the events Wolfe-Hunnicuttt recounts. Still, I would have liked to see him explore this influence more carefully and precisely, showing how American notions of race or ethnicity played out in Iraq in particular. (Lest anyone object that I'm demanding the impossible, allow me to cite a later instance in which ideological inputs of this sort can be tracked with some specificity. In the administration of

George W. Bush, Undersecretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith powerfully influenced U.S. policy in a pro-Israel direction. His later writings about the virtues of ethnonationalism shed retrospective light on his policy inclinations.¹)

Later in the book, commenting on a January 1963 press conference at which the ill-fated Qasim condemned racial segregation in the United States, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt writes that the Iraqi leader's "multicultural philosophy posed an existential threat to the organizing principle of the American state. . . . Even in the face of powerful and determined social movements, the American legal system was simply unwilling to entertain the notion of equal protection under the law without respect to color." Qasim's press conference, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt notes, occurred "not two weeks after Alabama Democrat George Wallace was inaugurated as governor. It was in that inaugural address that Wallace made his infamous pledge to defend 'segregation now, segregation tomorrow, [and] segregation forever'" (107–8).

Now, I don't usually find myself defending the U.S. federal government's record on race in the early 1960s. But "the American legal system was simply unwilling to entertain the notion of equal protection under the law without respect to color"? Over the previous two decades, the U.S. Supreme Court had issued decisions outlawing all-white primary elections (*Smith v. Allwright*, 1944), racial segregation in public schools (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954), and racial segregation in interstate public transportation (*Boynton v. Virginia*, 1960, and *Bailey v. Patterson*, 1962), to name just some of the landmark cases. True, the executive branch was dragging its feet in enforcing many of these court decisions, and vast areas of American life were as yet untouched by the gathering civil rights movement. But the nation's legal system—prodded at every turn by civil rights activists and lawyers—was vitally engaged with the issue of equal protection. If it weren't, Governor Wallace wouldn't have felt compelled to issue his defiant defense of segregation in the first place.

This discussion of race may seem peripheral, but it goes to the heart of Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's characterization of the United States as a world power, a portrayal that, on the whole, is discerning and persuasive. Throughout his book, he plausibly demonstrates how a host of intelligible, rational, and sometimes competing objectives—combating Soviet power, upholding the interests of international oil conglomerates and of domestic oil and gas companies, maintaining influence with different factions inside Iraq, placating Israel and its American supporters—translated into U.S. policies that could be deeply harmful to Iraqis, especially during and immediately after Qasim's rule.

Alongside this impressive historical reconstruction, the author's comments on race and ethnicity (and additional statements of this sort appear throughout the book) are gratuitous and distracting. To my mind, sending a poisoned handkerchief, supporting a murderous coup, and supplying the names of suspected communists to violent coup-plotters (assuming all of these things happened) are heinous enough already. Wolfe-Hunnicuttt's withering indictment gains no further power from hyperbolic imputations about an alleged U.S. campaign to prevent multiethnic harmony from taking hold overseas.

This misstep aside, Wolfe-Hunnicuttt has produced an ambitious, wide-ranging, nuanced, yet hard-hitting critique of the U.S. approach to Arab and Iraqi nationalism; of the international oil industry; and of the authoritarian

tendencies within Iraqi politics that, alas, surged to the fore during this three-cornered diplomatic encounter. The author is right to remind us that it didn't have to be this way, that champions of a far more appealing vision of Iraqi politics did, for a time, wield genuine authority in Baghdad. We have more to learn about the local, regional, and international forces that brusquely swept these actors from the Iraqi national stage, but Wolfe-Hunnicuttt admirably advances this inquiry.

Note:

1. See, for example, Douglas J. Feith, "Can Israel Be Jewish and Democratic?" *Wall Street Journal*, October 25, 2010, A19; and Feith, "Why I'm a Zionist," *National Review*, January 18, 2021, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/01/why-im-a-zionist/>.

On the Apocalyptic Style in American Diplomatic Historiography

Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt

I am gratified to read these very generous reviews of my book. It is an honor to have it reviewed by such an esteemed group of scholars, and I want to thank each one of them for reading the book so closely and offering such thoughtful evaluations. I also want to thank Andrew Johns for organizing this roundtable and offering me this opportunity to respond to the important points raised in the reviews. And thank you also to Nathan Citino for putting it all in context.

What is most gratifying about these reviews is that each recognized the methodology of overlaying different perspectives as a core strength of the book. In completing the work, I was animated by an abiding faith that if I could maintain a balanced commitment to three distinct perspectives, I would be able to bring an elusive subject into clearer focus. My penultimate goal was to offer something of value to audiences rooted in each of those three perspectives. My ultimate goal was to synthesize them into a compelling narrative that would express a certain philosophy of history. Indeed, I hoped that the book would be read on three levels at once: as an engaging spy thriller and murder mystery, as a rigorous scholarly monograph, and as a manifesto of climate existentialism.

I am particularly appreciative of Gregory Brew's picking up on this broader philosophical ambition and directing attention to the book's use of humor and irony to capture (and sometimes even satirize) what I see as the absurdity of American statecraft. Taylor Fain also points in this direction with his attention to the use of provocative section subheads. The chapter titles listed in the table of contents keep all of their secrets. But the subheads reveal, or at least hint at, the deeper meanings of the book. In a similar vein, I appreciate Fain directing attention to my use of biography and character development to advance the analysis.

The reviews of Brew and Fain are made all the more salient by their willingness to acknowledge points of weakness in the book. Of course, Brew is correct that the book is full of tantalizing suggestions that are far from fully documented. The point about petrodollar recycling through the military-industrial complex in the Kennedy

years is just one example. That section of the book relied heavily on Weldon Matthews's pathbreaking research.¹ I found very compelling Matthews's analysis of how closely focused key Kennedy administration officials were on the potential contributions of arms exports to Iraq to the U.S. balance of payments. But the larger question of the influence of the military-industrial complex on American foreign policy in the years leading up to the Vietnam War remains open, and I hope that future scholarship will shed greater light on the issue.²

In a similar vein, I would look forward to further studies of the conflict between the State Department and the Department of Interior over the direction of American foreign oil policy in the 1960s. Of particular interest would be the way competition between the major multinational oil companies and the domestic American oil and gas industry factored into and overlay the conflict between U.S. government agencies. I had difficulty finding robust scholarship on these questions. I tried to highlight the issues as best I could but felt limited by what I could find in the secondary literature.

It would also be helpful to learn more about the centrality of the military-industrial complex, the domestic oil and gas industry, and the Israel lobby to the historical bloc of interests that catapulted Lyndon Johnson to national political leadership. It would be even more interesting to learn how this bloc of interests shaped Johnson's political psychology and eschatology. As with the Cold War between State and Interior, I found it difficult to find published scholarship on this question.

In a play on Gilles Kepel's notion of "Petrodollar Islam," I sought to highlight the influence of what I referred to as "Petrodollar Christianity" on American foreign policy in the Johnson years. What I had hoped to do here was point out the deep structural continuities and affinities between the dominant political cultures in both Washington and Riyadh. I had also hoped to highlight the symbolic importance of Jerusalem to Johnson's brand of Bible Belt fundamentalism. Perhaps all these occurrences were merely coincidental and my drawing meaningful connections between them expressed a tendency toward apophenia. Hopefully, new scholarship will emerge that might shed greater light on the issues. In the meantime, I did the best I could to construct a coherent narrative with a clear moral valence on the basis of the fragmentary and episodic evidence I could find.³

Turning to Fain's review, I take to heart the point that I devoted insufficient attention to the British imperial context. Probably much the same could be said of all my capsule narratives of supporting actors. I imagine that specialists in Soviet, French, Egyptian, and Iranian history will have similar critiques. Given the centrality of British imperialism in setting the stage for so much of the action, however, Fain's point is very well taken. But again, I wonder if my own lack of precision reflects the state of the field. Fain's own work on Anglo-American-Iraqi relations in the early 1960s was very helpful.⁴ Still, much of the scholarship that I could find focused on the earlier period, and I was very much groping in the dark to make sense of British foreign policy as the 1960s wore on. Apologies to any scholars working on the period whose work I failed to consult.

The reviews by Mary Ann Heiss and Salim Yaqub are equally discerning. Each recognizes the analytical strength of the work while raising substantial critiques that merit consideration. As with Brew and Fain, Heiss and Yaqub are very generous in their assessment of the book's strengths, which renders their critiques all the more compelling.

Heiss raises an excellent point (echoed or endorsed to one degree or another in all of the reviews) when she notes that my analysis of executive decision-making with regard to intelligence matters and covert operations is rather impressionistic in nature. Readers may search in vain for smoking-gun evidence pertaining to the details of CIA covert operations.

As a work of impressionism, the book paints with an awfully broad brush. There are certainly places where the brushstrokes obscure the subject. Part of the explanation for this is that I regard the question of what the CIA actually does in the world to be methodologically irresolvable. Given the doctrine of "plausible deniability," we can really know only what the government wants us to know about the history of U.S. covert operations.⁵ In recounting the deep history of the American state, I tried to take a step back from the kind of philosophical positivism and methodological empiricism that remains unduly wedded to the quest for absolute certainty. I tried to make peace

with the inevitability of ambiguity and to engage in a more speculative enterprise that might reveal some of the deeper truths about the U.S. role in the world—even if some of the details are a little fuzzy.

A second point of critique offered by Heiss concerns my rather cursory explanation of what I mean when I refer to a "paranoid style" and how my concept relates to Richard Hofstadter's original and more famous use of the term. Despite borrowing an evocative phrase for the book's title, I mention the phrase only in passing on pages 43–44, and the accompanying footnote is rather brief. I didn't elaborate on how

my usage relates to that of Hofstadter, because the truth is that I can't elaborate on the question. I am in no way an expert on Richard Hofstadter. What I do know from the secondary literature is that Hofstadter used the term to insult ideological enemies to his right and left in defense of something he called the "vital center."⁶ In my book, I tried to give the right and left a fair hearing in service of a critique of the intellectual vapidness and moral bankruptcy of that supposedly vital center. Par for the course, I speak of paranoia in the broadest of terms. Mostly what I mean by this is an irrational fear of Communism and the Soviet Union. So to the extent that Hofstadter shared this fear, Hofstadter himself was paranoid, in my more expansive sense of the term.

In choosing to employ such broad and sweeping strokes, I was inspired by Edward Said's famous critique of the notion that the "secular and democratic" West possessed a monopoly on "rational" thought, while the "backward and despotic" Orient was congenitally doomed to religious fanaticism. While some reviewers lamented that Said's seminal critique of orientalism served only to reinforce a binary conception of the world, this was not my concern. I was less interested in dismantling orientalist binaries than I was in repurposing them. I tried to turn those old orientalist ideas on their head to reveal Iraq as a fount of secular and democratic wisdom, and the United States as a polity driven, above all else, by a spirit of religious fanaticism.

This spirit of religious fanaticism adopted many guises and manifested itself in a variety of different forms. In the late 1940s and 1950s, puritanical anti-Communists called upon spectral evidence to purge the community of the faithful of all heresy. In the early 1960s, the evangelicals of economic development spread the Good News of modernization to the far corners of the earth. By the late 1960s, the armies of the faithful had set their eyes upon Jerusalem and

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sharpened their knives for a fight to the finish. Following the lead of Talal Asad and Ussama Makdisi, I tried to do something more “apocalyptic” in nature by removing the veil to reveal the extent to which American secularism was a mere pretense concealing a deeper and sublimated theology.⁷ There are undoubtedly secular and democratic traditions to be found in the store of American history, but they are hardly the dominant influences shaping the U.S. role in the world.

Assessing the dominant traditions and general character of the American state raises the very important questions that Salim Yaqub poses. His analysis of the meaning of the Arabic word “qasim” (to divide) points to what he sees as a core strength of the book: the analysis of three distinct sets of actors, each of which is internally divided against itself and compelled by the narrative arc of the drama to overcome these divisions and achieve a unity of purpose. Yaqub notes irony in the fact that it was Qasim “the divider” who made such bold strides to overcome Iraqi and regional social divisions. This point may be particularly significant, because it introduces one of the book’s more original contributions: a reassessment of Qasim and his role in the oil politics of the era. The chapter on Qasim and OPEC was the last that I drafted and came to me as a kind of missing piece that rendered the narrative as a whole intelligible, though I won’t be surprised if my portrayal of Qasim as a tragic hero committed to multicultural populism fails to win a throng of adherents.

In anticipating how the book might be received, I wondered if my rather sympathetic portrayal of Qasim would generate criticism. I attended graduate school when the postcolonial critique of nationalism was all the rage, and so I imagine that my attempt to empathize with Qasim’s nationalist perspective might strike some readers as dissonant with so much of what we know (or think we know) about nationalism. On this point, I will say that I didn’t set out to produce such a favorable portrayal of Qasim (my dissertation was filled with as many insults directed at him as one would expect to find in any English-language writing on the subject), but ultimately, over the course of the research, I came to see him in a different light, and I felt compelled to give his side of the story. But in seeking to give equal weight to Qasim’s perspective, perhaps I joined too closely with the spirit of Charles Beard who, just after completing *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* in 1913, remarked that his book had been “more belligerent than was necessary and overemphasized a number of matters in order to get a hearing that might not have been accorded to a milder statement.”⁸

It may be that my defense of Qasim’s perspective was similarly more belligerent than necessary. In embracing Qasim’s accusation that the United States was a fundamentally racist country and that this racism was inscribed in its political and legal institutions, was I not conceding too much to a kind of Afropessimism that forecloses all historical possibility and runs counter to the book’s larger theme of historical contingency?⁹ Was I not contradicting the book’s thesis, which explicitly disavows monocausal explanation and contends that foreign policy motives are “overdetermined”—in the old Marxist term of art?¹⁰ In presenting George Wallace as kind of true cipher of the American Spirit and suggesting that American foreign policy was, at bottom, racially motivated, was I not arguing that a defense of prevailing racialized, colonial hierarchies was somehow the First Cause and the Unmoved Mover of American foreign policy?

Readers should rightfully ask who speaks for the nation

as a whole, and why should it be George Wallace? (Why not Henry Wallace? Or John Kennedy?) Am I not overlooking apparent disagreements between Kennedy and George Wallace and the extent to which Kennedy was in fact deeply embarrassed by the Jim Crow treatment afforded African diplomats in the DC area?

It is true that John Kennedy and the Warren Court saw George Wallace as a glaring black eye on the face of American democracy, and it is true that they and others worked diligently to conceal this injury and maintain the appearance of racially neutral political and legal institutions.¹¹ But beneath the surface appearance of facial neutrality was a more substantive reality. Kennedy might have said this, that, or the other thing about civil rights and the grand traditions of American democracy, but the fact remains that when the Ba’th sent its police and military commanders to the United States for counterinsurgency training, those trainees interned with southern police departments who were then at front of the effort to defend the color line.¹² This same culture of counterinsurgency permeated American embassies throughout the Third World.¹³ I think it also significant that both Melbourne and Qasim explained what happened in February 1963 with reference to the “Indian Question.” Melbourne clearly saw Qasim as a “Redskin,” and Qasim clearly saw himself as standing in solidarity with “Indians.”¹⁴

In explaining my decision to endorse the views of Melbourne and Qasim, and to make George Wallace the authentic Voice of America, it may be instructive to note that I wrote those pages against the backdrop of a Muslim ban, “kids in cages,” and an endless stream of police shootings. With those realities weighing on my consciousness, George Wallace appeared less a vestige of a fading and benighted past and more of a harbinger, or perhaps even a prophet, of a new dark and frightening age of climate authoritarianism.¹⁵ Standing where we do, I don’t know that we can safely conclude that Wallace was defying a progressive march of history. In the final analysis, it may have been his tiki torch that was lighting the path of the nation.

Of course, the broader arc and direction of history is beyond the scope of what I could answer in the book or here in this author’s response. But in closing, let me reiterate the context in which I wrote in an effort to better explicate what I was trying to accomplish. The germ of the concept began to form more than twenty years ago while I was still a private in the U.S. Army. At the time, I wondered why I was being trained for a potential war in Iraq. I then spent many long years trying get a better sense of what underlay the U.S. desire to invade Iraq. But I finished the book under conditions imposed by the pandemic shut-in, as wildfire smoke choked the California skies and endangered salmon were being cooked alive in the Sacramento River. Climate anxiety and grief suffused every line of the final draft, and the whole concept was informed by a philosophy of climate existentialism, in light of which the entire enterprise of American foreign policy seemed absurd.

With 2020 hindsight, it seemed that the “Best and Brightest” had spent unfathomable resources doing unimaginable damage to the world—all in the name of fighting a phantom menace called “Communism.” Meanwhile, they willfully ignored the real existential danger posed by an ecocidal capitalist world system. I don’t know how to describe this situation as anything other than as an expression of a kind of Thanatosian death wish and a sign of a deeply pathological political culture. Hopefully, a common humanity committed to a globally sustainable

ecosocialism can displace the pathologies of American empire before it's too late.¹⁶ Hopefully, my book helps to illustrate just how dangerous those pathologies are, and hopefully, the recovery of the clear moral vision put forward by people like 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and Khair el-Din Haseeb will help get us from here to there.

Notes:

1. Matthews, Weldon C. "The Kennedy Administration and Arms Transfers to Ba'athist Iraq," *Diplomatic History* 43, no. 3 (2019), 469–92.
2. For a promising new study along these lines, see Jonathan Isaac Ng, "The Unquenchable Fire: The Arms Trade and Reproduction of the US Empire, 1960–1988," PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2021.
3. To get at some of the more speculative and psychological aspects of the narrative, I employed a methodology that was not unlike the one described by Peter Novick in *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" in American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, UK, 1988), 28: "The young historian who in the 1970s proposed a 'psychedelic' approach to history—altered states of consciousness as a means for historians to project themselves back into the past—was thus in some respect truer to the essence of Ranke's approach than empiricists who never lifted their eyes from the documents."
4. Taylor Fain, "John F. Kennedy and Harold Macmillan: Managing the 'Special Relationship' in the Persian Gulf Region, 1961–63," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 4 (October 2002): 95–122.
5. My thinking here is particularly influenced by Michel Rolph-Trouillot's *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA, 1995), which demonstrates the ways in which power "enters the story" or operates to constrain what can be thought or said about the past.
6. See Leo Ribuffo, "Donald Trump and the 'Paranoid Style' in American (Intellectual) Politics," *H-Diplo Essay*, June 13, 2017, 1–14; Anton Jager, "The Myth of Populism," *Jacobin*, January 3, 2018.
7. I use "apocalyptic" here in the original Greek sense of "removing the mask." See Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicut, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy, Oil and Arab Nationalism in Iraq*, 235n23, 235n27. For a fuller discussion of the issue see Ussama Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (Oakland, CA, 2019), 14–15.
8. See comments by Beard in Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 96.
9. On the philosophy of Afropessimism, see Frank Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (New York, 2020). For a biting critique of Wilder-

son's concept, see Jesse McCarthy, "On Afropessimism," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 20, 2020. For a more general critique of pessimism that seeks to uphold the progress narrative of American history, see Matthew Karp, "History as End: 1619, 1776, and the Politics of the Past," *Harper's Magazine*, July 2021. My own philosophy of American history lies closest to that of Greg Grandin as articulated in his "Slavery, and American Racism, Were Born in Genocide," *The Nation*, Jan 20, 2020.

10. Wolfe-Hunnicut, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy*, 7–8.
11. An important conceptual source on this point was James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*. See Wolfe-Hunnicut, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy*, 263n90–91.
12. Wolfe-Hunnicut, *The Paranoid Style in American Diplomacy*, 118.
13. See, for example, Vincent Bevins, *The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade & The Mass Murder Program that Shaped Our World* (New York, 2020); Nate George, "A Third World War: Revolution, Counterrevolution, and Empire in Lebanon, 1967–1982," PhD diss., Rice University, 2019; William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and C.I.A. Interventions since World War II* (Monroe, ME, 1995).
14. Douglas Little has persuasively demonstrated the way that Herman Melville's concept of a "Metaphysics of Indian Hating" (as developed in *The Confidence Man* [1858]) can help us make sense of American foreign policy in the Middle East. See Little, *US versus Them: The United States, Radical Islam, and the Rise of the Green Threat* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2016), chap. 6. I also tried to gesture in this direction with my final footnotes on pages 292–93.
15. It is true, as Thomas Noer notes, that Wallace didn't have much of a global vision. But his local vision spawned a global worldview that now appears everywhere ascendant. See Noer, "Segregationists in the World: The Foreign Policy of the White Resistance," in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945–1988*, ed. Brenda Gayle Plummer (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), 141–62. Also instructive to note in this context is the extent to which racism was inscribed in the first principles of the strategy of containment. See Clayton R. Koppes, "Solving for X: Kennan, Containment, and the Color Line," *Pacific Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 95–118.
16. For a glimpse of what this might look like, see, in different registers, Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future: A Novel* (London, 2020); and Max Ajl, *A Peoples' Green New Deal* (London, 2021).

In the next issue of *Passport:*

- A roundtable on Paul Hirsch, *Pulp Empire*
- Seven Questions on...Human Rights
- Jill Crandell on Family History at the DPAA

...and much more.

Seven Questions on... Intelligence History

*Richard Immerman, Sarah-Jane Corke, Kathryn Olmsted, Hugh Wilford,
and Peter Roady**

The views expressed in this article by Peter Roady are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or of the U.S. Government.

Editor's note: "Seven Questions On..." is a new 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 primer for graduate students and non-specialists. **AJ**

1. What drew you to this field and inspired you to focus on your specific area of intelligence history?

Richard Immerman (RI): I "entered" the field of intelligence history, more commonly referred to these days as intelligence studies because of its interdisciplinary nature, through the back door. My interest and concentration subsequently evolved incrementally and somewhat serendipitously. My engagement with intelligence history started when I decided to examine the CIA's project to overthrow the Arbenz regime in Guatemala as a dissertation. That developed into *The CIA in Guatemala*. What's notable for our purposes, however, is that I approached the subject as a historian of US foreign policy, not of intelligence. Over the next years, decades in fact, I only dabbled in intelligence history, as I wrote about Vietnam and other dimensions of US foreign relations. The next step began when I worked with the political scientist Fred Greenstein on the Eisenhower administration. That drew me to studying and assessing policy- and decision-making processes. It also led me to another political scientist, Bob Jervis, who mentored me, and I use that verb purposefully, in the application of psychological theories to international relations, including decision making. Bob, of course, is a leading expert on intelligence history. So the combination of Fred and Bob moved me in the direction of exploring the influence of intelligence on policy/decision-making.

Intensifying my engagement further was Athan Theoharis's invitation several years after the 9/11 attacks, the flawed National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, and US invasion of Iraq to write a chapter on the history of the CIA for a volume he was editing. Writing that chapter, which came out in 2006 and turned out to be a relatively lengthy one, prompted the subject of my SHAFR presidential address the following year: "Intelligence and Strategy." What is more, literally months before I gave that talk, and unbeknownst to the audience at the time, I accepted an offer to serve as Assistant Director of National Intelligence. The insight I acquired from that position into the intelligence process, particularly the analytic arm, "converted" me to intelligence history. I have subsequently

written primarily in the field, including a book on the CIA, and have taught courses on the History of the CIA and US foreign Policy at the US Army War College, Temple University, and Williams College.

Sarah-Jane Corke (SJC): I imagine I came to intelligence history like many others, through a completely different field. That field was US Foreign Relations. For my MA degree, in the early nineties, just as the Cold War was winding down I was researching the "containment" policy. After going through the National Security Council documents of the late forties and early fifties I concluded that the strategy outlined in these documents did not seem to match what historians had described as "containment." As I result I started to look for evidence that US foreign policy toward the Soviet Union was more aggressive than had been previously acknowledged. This led me to a series of books and articles on early American covert operations.

Around the same time, Robert Gates, who went on to become director of the CIA, announced the Gates Commission on Openness. The stated mandate was to declassify a number of documents on early American covert operations. With Gates promise in the back of my mind I began my Ph.D. that fall. My dissertation was on early American covert operations during the Cold War. Of course, the release of the documents took much longer than anyone expected but I was still able to find the story I was looking for by poking around the periphery of the documents that were released on the Psychological Strategy Board, a little know organization set up by President Truman in 1951.

Kathryn Olmsted (KO): I study popular perceptions of U.S. intelligence agencies. I'm interested in how culture affects intelligence, and how intelligence affects culture. I'm not sure what drew me to these issues, except a general interest in how political conservatives use intelligence to preserve existing hierarchies of power.

Hugh Wilford (HW): I came to intelligence history via a rather eccentric route. I trained in the U.K. as a U.S. cultural and intellectual historian then, in the latter stages of graduate school, encountered the strange story of the CIA's covert funding of American artists and intellectuals in the "Cultural Cold War." I was busy publishing in scholarly venues on the subject when my fellow Brit Frances Stonor Saunders came along in 1999 with her controversial blockbuster *Who Paid the Piper?* (published in the United States as *The Cultural Cold War*). This really put the topic on the map and ensured some public interest when I came out with my own history of CIA "front" operations a few years later (*The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 2008). The trouble with working on anything to do with spies is you rapidly get pigeonholed but, on balance, I don't regret my move from intellectual into intelligence history. I'm still fascinated by the CIA's

relationship with the wider culture and I was recently reminded, when writing lectures for a *Great Courses* video series on the Agency, how, *Zelig*-like, it constantly crops up at critical junctures in post-World War II U.S. and international history. You can hang so much from the study of covert U.S. power in the world.

Peter Roady (PR): My own experience in government made plain the centrality of intelligence activities to American foreign policymaking. As a historian, I focus on signals intelligence (SIGINT) and covert action. Those two lines of effort remain among the least developed areas of intelligence history and have not been fully integrated into larger historical narratives about U.S. and global history since the late 1940s.

2. Which scholars do you see as having laid the groundwork for the study of intelligence history?

RI: That's a tough one. I'm not sure I'd describe authors who laid the groundwork for intelligence history as "scholars" per se. I'm thinking of David Wise, Thomas Powers, Bradley Smith, Richard Smith, and their ilk. They were great story tellers. But as a subfield of international history and category of analysis, not until the 1980s and 1990s, with the release of more documents, did scholars begin to lay a foundation. Ernest May and John Prados are among the very few US historians who'd I'd include in this category. I would classify Ray Garthoff as a historian as well. Political scientists, like Bob Jervis, Richard Betts, and Gregory Treverton have more commonly served as pioneers than historians. Still, British scholars such as Christopher Andrew and Richard Aldrich, most of whom were trained as historians, without question were far ahead of Americans in writing about intelligence history as a distinct subfield. They have collectively trained a number of today's leading lights in intelligence history.

SJC: In Canada, in the nineties and double aughts, we were very lucky to have a number of excellent intelligence historians who worked at our universities: In alphabetical order they were: David Charters, Stuart Farson, John Ferris, Greg Kealey, Wesley Wark, and Reg Whittaker. Together they created a wonderful and supportive community for young scholars working in the field. Please note that I recognize that all of these scholars are men. While the field is finally beginning to change, we still have a long way to go.

KO: A lot of the most important texts of the early years of the field were written by British scholars: Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Christopher Andrew, Richard Aldrich, and John Ranelagh. Then the Americans and Canadians started producing field-defining books: for the CIA, John Prados, Richard Immerman, and Sarah-Jane Corke; and, for the FBI, Athan Theoharis and Ellen Schrecker.

HW: It's hard to trace a clear intellectual genealogy in U.S. intelligence history. It is, frankly, a rather weird historical sub-field, dominated more than any other in the discipline by journalists, starting with the great 1970s investigative reporters such as Seymour Hersh. But there's also a big Political Science/International Relations presence in the literature, with some cross-over to the policy world and the intelligence community itself, represented by senior figures like Robert Jervis and Loch Johnson. Stranger still, Canadians and Britons such as myself are everywhere in U.S. intelligence history, perhaps the best-known in the U.S. being Christopher Andrew, Richard Aldrich, and Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones—although there are many, many more I could name. Finally, there are, of course, several U.S. historians who have written major works on intelligence

themes, although they probably wouldn't self-identify as intelligence historians in the same way as the Brits: Richard Immerman, Nick Cullather, Kathryn Olmsted, and the extraordinarily prolific John Prados – again, not a comprehensive list.

PR: Christopher Andrew, on intelligence broadly. Thomas R. Johnson and Matthew Aid have done important work on the still comparatively underdeveloped topic of signals intelligence (SIGINT). Matthew Jones is working on a book on the National Security Agency that promises to be just as valuable. On covert action, Nick Cullather deserves special mention, as do the two generations of journalists who have tried with some success to lift the veil of secrecy and fill gaps in the historical record.

3. Discuss how the field has evolved to include different approaches to analyzing the history of intelligence.

RI: That's a far easier question to answer than the previous one. Intelligence agencies, most notably the CIA, are unusual among the constellation of contributors to the US national security enterprise in that they have responsibilities for both the formulation and execution of policy. Many of the early works, as I mentioned, were journalistic or popular histories, which not surprisingly concentrated on the former. They told tales of daring adventures (often failures) and other covert actions, with a little bit about the CIA's foundations thrown in. Then, as reflected in the writings of Jervis and Betts, intelligence's contributions to the formulation of policy became a much more prominent feature of the literature, incorporating a more theoretical dimension. Hence the literature gave more attention to the Directorate of Intelligence (analysis) than the Directorate of Operations (responsible for covert action and collection). That has continued, although the pendulum has swung back a bit because of drone warfare and other paramilitary endeavors. What is more, 9/11, the Global War on Terror, and the enactment of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) of 2004 generated multiple institutional histories of the Intelligence Community. In this regard, scholars focused on elements of the Intelligence Community other than the CIA (the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, etc.), on the IC itself, and on community management as a historical problem.

SJC: Unfortunately, although there was an enormous amount of talent in the field of intelligence history in Canada when I completed my PhD, today, twenty plus years later, the majority of these scholars have retired; and given the staff shortages at Canadian Universities they have not been replaced. At present there are very few scholars who consider themselves primarily intelligence historians at major research universities. The same argument has been made about Intelligence History at American Universities. This means that the majority of intelligence history is coming out of the UK and Europe. However, when compared to fields such as American Foreign Relations, our field still has a long way to go in meeting the former's standards for theoretical sophistication.

KO: As with many sub-fields, intelligence history began as institutional history, but has broadened to include examinations of culture, gender, and imperialism. In particular, there's a lot of exciting new work on culture and intelligence by Patrick Iber, Christopher Moran, Timothy Melley, Hugh Wilford, Jonathan Nashel, Simon Willmetts, and Tricia Jenkins.

HW: I'm not sure how much it has evolved. The dominant approach remains narrative history, often done extremely

well – Christopher Andrew, for example, is a delight to read. This might reflect another unusual feature of intelligence history as a field: the influence on it of spy fiction. I can't think of another historical subject that has been so shaped by a particular literary genre. Whatever the reason, compared with the history of American foreign relations or "America in the World" and all its recent "turns," intelligence history remains surprisingly under-theorized. This isn't true of the PoliSci/IR literature known as "Intelligence Studies," which employs an interdisciplinary variety of social scientific concepts, but the approach here tends to the ahistorical, treating intelligence as a closed hermeneutic "cycle" somehow sealed off from the rest of society, so it's not necessarily that helpful to historians. Still, there are signs of intelligence history starting to take its own set of turns, of which more below in the response to Q. 5.

PR: Because the American portion of the documentary record of U.S. covert action remains largely closed to outside researchers, historians have had to come up with alternative ways of learning about the track record of this important foreign policy tool. Most promisingly, Piero Gleijeses and Kaeten Mistry have both shown the value of relying on archives in the countries and regions affected by American covert actions. According to public records, the United States carried out an enormous number of covert actions in the years after World War II. Only a very small number of these have benefited from the approach championed by Gleijeses and Mistry a huge opportunity for future research.

4. What are some of the challenges faced by scholars working in the field?

RI: Some would argue that a great challenge to the "field" is establishing an identity. Is intelligence history a distinct field or subfield? If the latter, is it a subfield of history, international relations, perhaps even sociology or anthropology? I personally don't care and don't think the label matters. I would, nevertheless, like to see intelligence history or intelligence studies included in job descriptions. It almost never is, except in intelligence programs. And these programs rarely include a history component. Consequently, there remains in my judgment only one great challenge confronting intelligence historians. It's the one we've always confronted and from which flow all other challenges: access to and the declassification of archives. For a brief moment in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War, we saw a flickering light at the end of the archival tunnel. That's, alas, been largely extinguished, albeit not completely.

SJC: The primary challenge revolves around the system of declassification. Those of studying American intelligence tend to rely on four key sources: *The Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series, the CIA online database CREST, the Freedom of Information Act, and Mandatory Reviews. All four systems are rife with problems. While we now have retrospective collections from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* available on the Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment, Iran, and Guatemala, the route to publication for each volume was a torturous one. And although, we have been told that future *FRUS* volume will include intelligence documents, if past is prologue, they will not appear without a fight. That said, historians will have a wealth of new documents available to them because of a law suit that was filed by Mark Stout, Hugh Wilfred, Jeff Scudder, and Kenneth Osgood that seeks the release of hundreds of internal CIA organizational and functional histories. As they become available the full list of documents will be posted on the North American Society for Intelligence History's website; <https://www.intelligencehistory.org/>.

At some point in the future we hope to be able to archive all of the documents on the website.

The CIA's CREST system has been an absolute disaster as of late. When the CIA upgraded it system a few months ago all of its links were broken. This meant that for those of us who relied on documents or readings in CREST for our courses and research, the old links did not work and I personally found it impossible to find documents on the new website. Luckily a friend suggested that I try the "Wayback Machine," which is part of the Internet Archive. As a result, I was able to find most of the documents through this website. <http://web.archive.org/>. However, the CIA does have an obligation to fix the problems associated with the CREST system.

Using FOIA during the pandemic has also been an exercise in futility. I had requests returned to my home university when we on lock down that I could not access. When I was able to respond, my six month appeal deadline had passed. Although I did write a letter alerting the CIA to the problem I never heard back. Finally, as a Canadian citizen I do not have access to Mandatory Declassification Review. The Obama Administration changed the laws in 2009 so that this tool is no longer open to foreign nationals.

In sum, researching covert operations over the last two decades has been difficult. However, that said good work is still being written. Two edited collections on the topic are in the works. The first is edited by Rory Cormac, Genevieve Lester, Mark Stout, Damien Van Puyvelde, and Magda Long. It is tentatively titled, *Covert Action in Comparison: National Approaches to Unacknowledged Interventions*. The second is edited by Stephen Long, Sarah Jane Corke, and Francesco Cacciatore. It is tentatively titled *Covert Operations in the Early Cold War: Rethinking Western Intervention Against International Communism*. Both volumes are just in their initial stages of research and are a few years out, but they indicate a growing interest in the field.

KO: The greatest challenge is access to records. Sometimes intelligence documents remain classified for many decades. Scholars must continue to push for more declassifications—and also to try to put together the puzzle as best they can, even if some of the pieces are missing.

HW: The obvious one is official secrecy. Again, the field is perhaps unique in the extent to which governments withhold relevant documentation or release it selectively, thereby directly, and often deliberately, shaping the historical record. That said, intelligence historians have shown some (as Richard Aldrich puts it) "fancy footwork" accessing non-official sources as well as playing honorable roles in campaigns to compel greater freedom of information. This, by the way, might be another reason for the field's under-theorization: the hunt for sources is so all-consuming it's hard to find the time for abstract reflection. Related to this is what I see as the field's second great challenge. I might be being paranoid but I've developed the distinct impression that historians in other sub-fields look askance at intelligence history because of this conjoined scarcity of sources and theory. I also wonder whether the generally low regard in which U.S. intellectuals hold the world of secret intelligence hasn't rubbed off on perceptions of its historians too. This leads to a paradoxical situation in which, despite there being tremendous public interest in intelligence history, American academic funding bodies tend to shy away from it. Certainly, there is strikingly more support available for the non-applied study of intelligence history in the U.K. than there is in the U.S.

PR: Secrecy is both the most obvious and the most difficult challenge that intelligence historians face. It is not simply a problem of access to documents. On the most sensitive matters, as Henry Kissinger noted in 1970, often the “Documents have nothing to do with it.” Kissinger concluded that “you can’t write history after you’ve seen a thing like that.” But of course historians can. They just have to work harder to assemble the facts, looking critically at the documents that are available and supplementing them with information gleaned from other sources and methods. At least in the American context, succeeding at this task requires coming to terms with how our system of secrecy functions in practice and in particular with the way the holders of secrets selectively reveal information. David Pozen’s work is a great starting point on this topic.

A second challenge is that the intelligence world has its own language and culture, including myriad local dialects and practices, much of which is slippery by design and by habit. This presents enormous difficulties to outsiders and sometimes manifests in confusion. For instance, it is quite common to see the words “covert” and “clandestine” conflated as they are even in the *FRUS* “Note on Covert Actions.” The problems are even greater when dealing with technical intelligence, unless the researcher happens to be a specialist in electrical engineering, computer science, or another relevant discipline. Interviews with insiders and collaborations with technical experts can help scholars learn the language(s) and gain the tacit and explicit knowledge needed to meet this challenge.

5. What are some of the significant questions in the field that you feel need to be addressed in greater detail or, alternatively, which questions need to be reconsidered by contemporary scholars?

RI: In the classes I teach, I have my students debate the efficacy of covert action: Is it ever constructive and productive? Is it really the “quiet option”? If paramilitary operations are to be continued, should they become the responsibility of the military, which would require revising titles 10 and 50 of the US code? On the analytic side, the question are no less controversial, albeit perhaps more theoretical. How do we define the politicization of intelligence, and are there institutional prophylactics? Similarly, how faithful has the intelligence community been to the prohibition against advocating or prescribing policy initiatives (sometimes euphemistically referred to as Opportunity Analysis)? Should they be faithful to the prohibition? Which leads to the larger questions of what kind of support decision makers should expect from intelligence.

SJC: To my mind one of the most important questions in the field goes to significance. What do these operations tell us about the more important issues of strategy and policy? The operations themselves, while interesting, are only important in the larger historical context. Our stories need to reflect this. A second question, that has continued to preoccupy me of late, revolves around language. As of yet we do not have a consensus on the terminology to describe these types of operations. Today scholars refer to them as either: psychological warfare, psychological operations, covert operations, political warfare, covert action, disinformation, or active measures. Understanding why these terms were used and when, can tell us a lot about their history. Debates over language speak to a both a national consciousness and to bureaucratic battles and turf wars that were happening behind the scenes at the time. There are important stories here. I encourage anyone who is interested in the evolution of the terms to spend some time with Google NGram (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>)

or The History Lab to examine documents released under FOIA. (<http://historylab.org/>).

KO: Intelligence historians have been integrating cultural analyses into their work for the past two decades, but there’s still much to be done. I’m eager to read the next books of Jonathan Nashel and Simon Willmetts, who are each working on cultural histories of the CIA, and of Hugh Wilford, who’s writing an imperial history of the Agency. Kaeten Mistry and Hannah Gurman have also done exciting work on whistleblowers. Finally, I’d love to see more gender analysis in intelligence history.

HW: So, a customary response to this question from intelligence historians would be to contrast the large literature on covert action – coup operations, psychological warfare, and the rest of it – with the relative dearth of works about intelligence gathering and analysis, especially signals intelligence, as shown, for example, in the unequal scholarly attention paid the CIA and the National Security Agency. Or, they might see the question as an opportunity to reproach the larger field of international history for its inattention to both intelligence and covert action – the old “missing dimension” lament. While both these complaints still have a lot of truth to them, I would instead encourage historians of U.S. intelligence to think about what they themselves might stand to learn from recent developments in the parent field of America in the World and its various conceptual turns, especially the Cultural, Global, Emotional, and Imperial ones. Some of these, it seems to me, have tremendous potential for illuminating subjects of traditional interest to intelligence history: thinking about the collection of secret intelligence from human sources (HUMINT) in light of recent developments in the History of Emotion or post-colonial histories of intimacy, for example, or reconceiving intelligence alliances in the context of new imperial history scholarship about entangled empires and “transimperial” connections. Showing a willingness to join in these recent turns would, I suspect, not just recast old questions in interesting new ways, it would also help intelligence history as a sub-field win the attention and respect it deserves from other historians. Fortunately, there are signs of the field opening up to new voices and ideas, as seen in, for example, the recent growth of the North American Society for Intelligence History, and the launch of new publishing initiatives such as Edinburgh University Press’s Intelligence, Surveillance, and Secret Warfare series. I suspect intelligence history is set for an intellectual rejuvenation by younger scholars like the one that has already occurred in America in the World. For more about these changes, see Simon Willmetts “The Cultural Turn in Intelligence Studies,” *Intelligence and National Security* 34 (2019): 800-817.

PR: The existence of official secrecy presents a basic epistemological question for anyone writing about intelligence, which is: how do you know what you think you know about intelligence activities? Historians of science, including Peter Galison and Alex Wellerstein, have grappled with secrecy’s epistemological effects in the context of nuclear weapons research and development. But the secrecy associated with intelligence activities differs from the nuclear weapons context in ways that make it important for historians of intelligence and foreign relations, particularly those writing about covert action, to undertake similar explorations.

6. For someone wanting to start out in intelligence history, what 5-8 books do you consider to be of seminal importance—either the “best” or the most influential titles?

RI: That’s another tough one, because the field has evolved and there has been, if not an explosion, a proliferation of good books on intelligence over the past half-dozen years or so; maybe a little longer. But I’m old school, so you’ll see that a number of my choices connect to my answer to #2. I note that I’m trying to cover the waterfront while at the same time stressing books that I consider foundational to the historiography’s current wave, which also dovetails with my interests. I’m going to punt on labeling them the “best” or “most influential,” but they are all very good, influential, and of “seminal importance.” I’m taking advantage of my full allotment of 8 books, and listing them alphabetically so as avoid drawing any inferences as to my rankings:

Christopher Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only*
James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace*
David Barrett, *The CIA and Congress*
Richard Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence*
Thomas Fingar, *Reducing Uncertainty*
Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*
Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails*
Gregory Treverton, *Covert Action*

SJC: As I mentioned above Intelligence History has traditionally been dominated by male scholars. That is changing, however. Some of the best new works in this area are written by women. In alphabetical order I would recommend:

Mary Barton, *Counter Terrorism Between the Wars, An International History 1919-1957*
Helen Fry, *MI9: A History of the Secret Service for Escape and Evasion in World War Two*
Melissa Graves, *Nixon’s FBI: Hoover, Watergate and a Bureau in Crisis*
Nancy Greenspan, *Atomic Spy: The Dark Lives of Klaus Fuchs*
Aviva Guttman, *The Origins of International Counter-Terrorism: Switzerland at the Forefront of Crisis Negotiations, Multilateral Diplomacy and Intelligence Cooperation (1967-1977)*
Ioanna Iordanou’s *Venice’s Secret Service: Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance*
Kristie Macrakis, *Prisoners, Lovers & Spies: The Story of Invisible Ink from Herodotus to al-Qaeda.*

It is also worth mentioning that the 2021 winner of the Bobby R. Inman Award was Dr. Alexandra Sukalo. The publication of her Ph.D. thesis, “The Soviet Political Police: Establishment, Training and Operations in the Soviet Republics,” will also be an important contribution to the field.

KO: For histories of the CIA, one might begin with these books:

John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*
Richard Immerman, *The Hidden Hand*
Christopher Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only*
Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*
Sarah-Jane Corke, *U.S. Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy: Truman, Secret Warfare, and the CIA*

For the relationship between intelligence and culture, I’d recommend starting with:

Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*
Timothy Melley, *The Covert Sphere*

HW: This is a tricky one for the reasons already alluded to in the response to Q. 2 above, and my choices might not please some intelligence historians, but here goes anyway:

Evan Thomas, *The Very Best Men. Four Who Dared: The Early Years of the CIA* (New York, 1996) (for me still the pick of intelligence history books by U.S. journalists for its rich evocation of the social world of the early CIA)
Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT, 2003) (my selection to represent the “British invasion” because of its author’s wider interest in U.S. history and lovely prose)
Christopher Andrew, Richard J. Aldrich, Wesley K. Wark, eds., *Secret Intelligence: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (London, 2020) (a very useful, up-to-date compendium of the “Intelligence Studies” literature)
Alfred McCoy, *Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison, WI, 2009) (a deservedly influential account of the role of intelligence in American imperialism and its “boomerang” domestic effects)
Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11*, 2nd ed. (New York, 2019) (a valuable work by a leading historian of U.S. secrecy);

And, finally, three books that approach the subject from a cultural or literary angle and in doing so suggest particularly promising future directions for the field:

Jonathan Nashel, *Edward Lansdale’s Cold War* (Amherst, MA, 2005)
Timothy Melley, *Covert Sphere: Secrecy, Fiction, and the National Security State* (Ithaca, NY, 2012)
Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (Berkeley, CA, 2016).

PR: Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* is a useful general starting point. On secrecy’s profound and often overlooked effects on policymakers and intelligence officers, see Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Secrecy: The American Experience* and David Pozen, “The Leaky Leviathan: Why the Government Condemns and Condone Unlawful Disclosures of Information.” On covert action, Nick Cullather’s *Secret History: The CIA’s Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954* is a good starting point. On signals intelligence, see Matthew Aid, *The Secret Sentry* and Thomas R. Johnson, *American Cryptology During the Cold War*.

7. For someone wanting to teach a course on intelligence history or add intelligence history to an existing course on U.S. foreign relations, what core readings and/or media would you suggest?

RI: I should state up front that in the class I’m currently teaching, I assign few books and about 50 articles. For this purpose, nevertheless, I’m going to concentrate on books, albeit not exclusively. It’s obviously awkward for me to suggest my *Hidden Hand*, but I wrote it primarily for use in a course on intelligence history. It’s a manageable

introductory survey, and I honestly can't identify an alternative that serve the same purpose. I would also strongly suggest including Thomas Finger's *Reducing Uncertainty* on one hand, and Richard Betts's *Enemies of Intelligence* on the other. Bob Jervis's article in *Political Science Quarterly*, "Why Intelligence and Policymakers Clash" frames them both. Harold Ford's, *CIA and Vietnam Policymakers: Three Episodes* is a valuable addition to any course. So is Greg Treverton's somewhat dated but still thought-provoking "Covert Action: From 'Covert' to Overt" in *Daedalus*. And to add some contemporary flair, at the end of the course I'd assign Robert Draper's 2020 *New York Times Magazine* article, "Unwanted Truths: Inside Trump's Battles with the U.S. Intelligence Agencies." For those who are ambitious, last year the journal *Intelligence and National Security* published a special issue on the controversial and very instructive 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program. That's a lot to assign. But in my judgment, it's worth it. Moreover, Bob Jervis and Jim Wirtz have collected these articles, added a few more, and will soon publish the result as an anthology. There's nothing quite like it. I currently assign one of the articles. But if I teach this course again, I will figure out a way to assign them all.

SJC: I teach three courses on intelligence history: A first year course on the spy in history, a third year course on the history of the CIA and a fourth year course on the NSA. For my first year course I have my students examine a number of spy cases throughout history. In order to prepare them for the reading required in our field I have them choose two books on famous spies. These often include the work of Ben Macintyre. I find students really enjoy *Agent Sonya: The Spy Next Door*; *A Spy Among Friends: Kim Philby and the Great Betrayal*; and *The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War*. Although I have to say I am really looking forward to the publication of Calder Walton's forthcoming book *Spies: The Hundred Years Intelligence War between East and West*, which is due out in 2023. In my third year course I used Richard Immerman's *The Hidden Hand: A Brief History of the CIA*. I then supplement this book with a number of journal articles. For my fourth year course I use Mathew Aid's *The Secret Sentry: The Untold History of the National Security Agency*. I also supplement this with a number of articles.

KO: I'd consider teaching the books I listed in the answers above, and also adding this essential historiographical article: Hugh Wilford, "Still Missing: The Historiography of U.S. Intelligence," *Passport* 47, no. 2 (2016): 20-25, and this collection: *Intelligence Studies in Britain and the U.S.: Historiography Since 1945*, ed. Christopher Moran

and Christopher J. Murphy.

HW: The Andrew, Aldrich, and Wark collection mentioned above would be a good source of weekly Intelligence Studies readings. Richard H. Immerman, *The Hidden Hand: A Brief History of the CIA* (Chichester, UK, 2014) is a fine short text that touches on larger American debates about foreign intelligence; Huw Dylan, David Gioe, and Michael S. Goodman, *The CIA and the Pursuit of Security: History, Documents, and Contexts* (Edinburgh, 2020, and shortly out in paperback), is an excellent document reader. For a longer and wider view, Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (New Haven, CT, 2018), is magisterial but perhaps too massive for most teaching purposes; Michael Warner, *The Rise and Fall of Intelligence: An International Security History* (Washington, DC, 2014) might serve most students better. For media, I've had good teaching experiences basing a class around *The Quiet American*, both the original 1955, Vietnam-set novel by Graham Greene, and the two movie adaptations (1958 and 2002). You can do a huge amount with this text on such themes as Orientalism, Modernization Theory, CIA operations in Vietnam, and the career of "legendary" Agency officer Edward Lansdale, including the question of what role (if any) he played in inspiring the titular character and the 1958 film version of the book. Dare I also recommend my Great Courses video lecture series *The Agency: A History of the CIA* (2019)? I probably shouldn't.

PR: In an existing course on U.S. foreign relations, devoting a class or two to the American overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 works well. Students can read Nick Cullather's *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954*, which provides unique insight into the nuts and bolts of the American covert action and is quite accessible. The documents Cullather includes in the Appendix are also a great starting point for a discussion about evaluating a covert action's impact across different time horizons and the related importance for policymakers of what Ernest May and Richard Neustadt called "thinking in time."

For a standalone course on intelligence history, Christopher Andrew's *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* provides an amusing and insightful tour of several thousand years of intelligence activities. Andrew's book shows that intelligence activities are as old as humanity—a useful temporal corrective for readers inclined to think that the history of intelligence began in the 20th century. Andrew's book also brings a much needed global perspective to a subject that remains confined mostly to national silos.



THE TONOUS AND WARDA JOHNS FAMILY BOOK AWARD

The Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association invites submissions for the 2022 Tonous and Warda Johns Family Book Award.

The prize honors Tonous Hanna and Warda Paulis, who immigrated to the United States from Syria in 1900, married in 1906, and became U.S. citizens along with their children in 1919. Tony and Warda Johns, as they became known, emphasized the importance of education, hard work, and philanthropy to their children and grandchildren, and had a deep and abiding love for their adopted country and its history. These values—shared by so many other immigrants to the United States—profoundly shaped the lives of their descendants. In celebration of these ideals and in recognition of Tony and Warda’s continuing influence on their family, the Johns family created this endowment in the hope that Tony and Warda’s legacy will be felt and appreciated by the PCB-AHA community and that the award will encourage and recognize excellent historical scholarship.

The Tonous and Warda Johns Family Book Award will recognize the outstanding book (monograph or edited volume) in the history of U.S. foreign relations, immigration history, or military history by an author or editor residing in the PCB-AHA membership region.

Copies of books submitted for consideration for the award should be sent directly to each of the three members of the prize committee—Yong Chen, University of California, Irvine; Kathryn Statler, University of San Diego; and Kara Dixon Vuic, Texas Christian University—by **February 15, 2022**. More information is available at <https://www.pcb-aha.org/tonous-and-warda-johns-family-book-award>.

Questions about the award or inquiries regarding donations to the endowment should be directed to Michael Green, PCB-AHA executive director, at michael.green@unlv.edu.

The Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association was organized in 1903 to serve members of the American Historical Association living in the western United States and the western provinces of Canada. With over 4000 members, it is one of the largest professional historical organizations in the United States.

A Roundtable on Thomas Schwartz, Henry Kissinger and American Power: A Political Biography

*Andrew J. Kirkendall, Daniel J. Sargent, Jeremi Suri, Chester Pach,
and Thomas A. Schwartz*

Roundtable Introduction

Andrew J. Kirkendall

Few of my students over the years have expressed strong opinions about National Security Advisor/Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. For someone of my generation, this is hard to fathom. Since history in the United States continues to be made (if not always written) by older people, Kissinger has remained a name to conjure with, even invoked by rival Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders for dramatically different purposes in 2016. At the time, I thought that it would be great to hold an old-fashioned teach-in and gather students together to read books by authors like Christopher Hitchens and Niall Ferguson and see if they could figure out what all the fuss was about.

A Distinguished Professor of History at Vanderbilt University, Thomas A. Schwartz has written two highly-regarded monographs on U. S. relations with Europe. His political biography of Kissinger, it is to be hoped, will attract a larger audience. Our reviewers clearly think that it deserves one, not least of all for its measured tone of sweet reasonableness. Perhaps one has to know much of the previous literature, as most undergraduate students do not, to appreciate such a truly “fair and balanced” approach, if one can use that phrase anymore without drowning in irony. But, as Daniel Sargent suggest, in Schwartz’s own modest way, he provides “an analytical agenda that is as bold and vital as it is persuasive.” Schwartz, Sargent continues, is a “creative and perceptive historian working at the very top of his game.”

In contrast with the international and trans-national trends of recent years, the reviewers clearly appreciate Schwartz’s attention to Dr. Kissinger’s own focus on the domestic aspects of foreign policy, an approach Schwartz first laid out in his *Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations* presidential address of 2008. Kissinger tried to employ his scholarly credentials to present himself as an apolitical expert, in keeping with what Suri notes were the intentions of institution-builders in the early stages of the Cold War. The wealth of information available in Richard Nixon’s extensive tape recordings of conversations with Kissinger provides little that supports such a self-image. As Suri notes, “More than any other author, Schwartz shows in detail how the politics, national and personal, drove the policy, and not vice-versa.”

Pach emphasizes the inadequacy of Kissinger’s reputation as a cold-blooded realist with a larger vision of U. S. national interests, and the dangers frequently posed by his tendency to personalize issues. Kissinger was better

at tactics than grand strategy. In the short term, as Suri contends, he still was able to expand U. S. influence (and his own) in an age of perceived decline. Sargent contends that Kissinger’s “aura of competence... made American foreign policy, for much of the 1970s, appear more coherent and purposeful than it was capable of being.”

All three reviewers also recognize the contribution Schwartz has made by employing the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. Kissinger’s gravelly voice and heavy German accent made him at first an unlikely spokesman for administration policy on the three major networks of the time. Suri, Pach, and Sargent all concur that Schwartz has done an excellent job of delineating how Kissinger became powerful through courting the press through background briefings and gradually and then explosively acquiring an unlikely “pop star status” for a foreign policy-maker. (To use the phrase “rock star negotiator,” as Pach does, may, in itself, date him.)

Pach particularly admires the chapter on Kissinger’s “enduring status” in the years since the end of his secretaryship. Sargent considers this part of the book alone to be “worth the price of admission.” (Personally, I find that the extended treatment of the Jimmy Carter administration in this chapter represents Schwartz at his most conventional.)

The sharpest criticism of Schwartz’s book is offered here by Suri, who suggests that Schwartz ignores the larger debates about U. S. domestic and foreign policies in the Kissinger years, both on the streets of American cities and even in the halls of Congress, not least of all about the perceived disconnect between American values and foreign policy. The breakdown of the Cold War consensus and the increasing incoherence of the Cold War itself in the 1970s may provide an explanations for the periodic “prosecutorial” takedowns of Kissinger over the years, as represented by what Sargent characterizes as “leaden and derivative tomes” by authors Hitchens and Greg Grandin.¹

Sargent maintains that Schwartz’s book represents the first truly historical treatment of his subject. Suri himself might want to contest that, and I would certainly propose other worthy contenders like Jussi Hanhimäki and Mario Del Pero who preceded him as well. Kissinger continues to attract admirers, like Ferguson and Barry Gewen. (The latter author is bold enough to tackle the fall of Chilean democracy in 1973 first.)² By this point, one can hardly expect any one book on this subject to be definitive. But the reviewers concur: Schwartz has made an extraordinarily valuable contribution. The book will be on graduate students’ comprehensive exam reading lists for many years to come. But one also hopes that the elusive educated public will encounter it “in the wild” in local bookstores.

In contentious times, as in Kissinger's day, Schwartz could be the calm voice at a teach-in at your local college or university.

Notes:

1. Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (London: Verso, 2001); Greg Grandin, *Kissinger's Shadow: The Long Reach of America's Most Controversial Statesman* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2015).
2. Jussi Hanhimäki, *Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Mario Del Pero, *The Eccentric Realist: Henry Kissinger and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Barry Gewen, *The Inevitability of American Foreign Policy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2020).

Review of Thomas A. Schwartz, *Henry Kissinger and American Power: A Political Biography*

Daniel Sargent

Some books begin with grand proclamations of authorial intent. Thomas Schwartz, in *Henry Kissinger and American Power*, reveals in more incremental fashion both the originality of his agenda and his reasons for writing the book. As he does, he answers the question that his agenda cannot help but raise: who needs another biography of Henry Kissinger? Contributions to the catalog, as it already exists, range from the vital to the vituperative. Meanwhile, Niall Ferguson is well on the way to publishing the second volume in what is likely to become the authoritative life of Kissinger. So, to lead with a blunt question, what is left to say?

Quite a lot, as it turns out. The key to Schwartz's agenda is buried in his subtitle, in a word as commonplace as it is freighted: *political*. The term "political biography" is sometimes deployed to describe biographies of the bloodless sort: public lives denuded of their private desires, lingering resentments, and messy divorces. But that is not how Schwartz proceeds.

Here, "political biography" signals not a circumscription of authorial ambition but an analytical agenda that is as bold and vital as it is persuasive. Henry Kissinger, Schwartz tells us, must not be taken on his own terms as a self-conceived *Realpolitiker* who fabricated foreign policy on the basis of conceptual insight but blundered, like a naïf, in the murky arena of American politics. Rather, Kissinger functioned as a consummate politician whose mastery of politics was not just the foundation for his career in policy but the very essence of it.

Readers may assume at the outset that Schwartz's attentiveness to domestic politics will yield an interpretation of Kissinger as a devoted reader of opinion polls—a reactive figure whose actions derived, to a greater extent than previously understood, from calculations of personal or partisan self-interest. Far from it. Schwartz's conception of politics is far grander than the ebb-and-flow of opinion polls, punctuated by elections. For Schwartz, politics involves not only personalities and parties but also institutions, whose logics and limitations emerge, with impressive clarity, through the lens of Kissinger's experience. The author confirms the expansiveness of his own analytical vision at the very end of his book when he invokes Alexis de Tocqueville's prediction, made in the 1820s, that democratic institutions would enfeeble the United States as a great power and that institutional weaknesses would likely preclude America from pursuing the kind of purposeful foreign policy in which Richelieu,

Vergennes, and Talleyrand specialized.

Schwartz concurs, grasping in the turmoil and rancor of the post-Vietnam years the prescience of de Tocqueville's insight. This approach situates Schwartz's Kissinger in a novel perspective: not as the inheritor of a Cold War consensus that the Vietnam War merely bruised, but as an apex official in a government that in some sense lacked, and perhaps continues to lack, the institutional capacities necessary to uphold the imperial responsibilities into which the United States stumbled after the Second World War.

Henry Kissinger's great achievement, Schwartz suggests, was to project an aura of competence that made American foreign policy, for much of the 1970s, appear more coherent and more purposeful than it was really capable of being. Operating as the "voice and symbol of American foreign policy on the evening news," Kissinger's authority at the height of his powers in the mid-1970s conjured a "perception of both reliability and creativity" that resulted, at least for a time, in extraordinarily high levels of public approval for Henry Kissinger as secretary of state and, during the Watergate years, a de facto president of the United States for foreign policy.

This analysis of Kissinger rests upon the deep insight that Schwartz brings as a creative and perceptive historian working at the very top of his game. But Schwartz's analysis also builds upon the novel use that he makes of media coverage, including television news, as a historical source. If other historians, especially Luke Nichter, have made pioneering use of Nixon's secret tapes to enrich their histories, Schwartz's major methodological innovation is to integrate media coverage into the history of American politics and foreign policy in a comprehensive fashion. Schwartz, to his great credit, leverages from these sources not just illustrative quotes and anecdotes but a new understanding of the sources of Kissinger's power and influence.

illustrative quotes and anecdotes but a new understanding of the sources of Kissinger's power and influence. Schwartz does not trumpet his own methodological innovation so forcefully as he might have done, but his masterful integration of two quite different kinds of archive—the archive of government and the archive of media—situates the making of foreign policy in a new perspective. Schwartz's own mentor Ernest May, who was fascinated by the role of news media and public opinion in the making of foreign policy, would surely have approved. Historians working on varied topics, including topics far removed from Henry Kissinger, will find in Schwartz's approach a model for emulation. Those working on Cold War, or TV-era, topics may want to pay especially close attention to the use that he has made of the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, an exceptional repository of evidence for historians interested in the interplay between politics and the news media.

Schwartz's innovative method yields a story in two parts. The first charts Kissinger's ascent to the improbable pinnacles of power and influence that he achieved in the 1970s. While Schwartz moves quickly over Kissinger's intellectual formation, he notes that Kissinger's doctoral dissertation, which became *A World Restored*, dwelt at length on the struggles that its two central protagonists, Metternich and Castlereagh, waged "to reconcile the demands of their own domestic situations with the necessity for international leadership and cooperation." Here, Schwartz intimates, we find premonitions of the structural challenges that Kissinger would encounter after President-elect Richard Nixon tapped the Harvard academic and policy intellectual to serve as national security adviser.

The dynamics of the Nixon-Kissinger relationship



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appear, in Schwartz's careful rendering, in a new perspective. Kissinger emerges as a kind of Frankenstein's monster: a presidential invention whose position in government depended not upon intellectual alignment or personal affinity, nor even upon shared policy commitments, but upon sheer political necessity. "Nixinger," as some have called the hybrid, was an invention of necessity. Kissinger, Schwartz argues, disagreed with the president on some of the administration's crucial foreign policy dilemmas, including the question of whether progress in arms control negotiations should be "linked" to other priorities in U.S.-Soviet relations, especially the enlistment of Soviet assistance to end the war in Vietnam.

Kissinger lost many of the key debates, Schwartz notes, but he nonetheless made himself vital to the administration and to President Nixon as the public face and, in the public's mind, the presumptive architect of the administration's foreign policy. For Nixon, the consequences were exasperating. Kissinger was "Nixon's creation," Schwartz writes, "an extension of his authority and political power as president," but Kissinger became the recipient of praise and credit for the administration's achievements. Ultimately, it was Kissinger and not Nixon who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973, a recognition that left the president fuming.

Nixon's disgrace in the Watergate scandal thrust Kissinger into a new role for which American political history reveals few precedents, opening Schwartz's second act. Kissinger became in 1973 both secretary of state and, in effect, "chief executive" for U.S. foreign policy. Other historians have explained this extraordinary role as a consequence of the power vacuum that Watergate created. Schwartz goes further and emphasizes Kissinger's self-conscious cultivation of a "positive media narrative" that made the secretary of state himself the indispensable man in the execution of foreign policy, Watergate's self-designated survivor.

To an extraordinary degree, Schwartz shows, Kissinger harnessed his personal prestige that he had burnished during Nixon's first time to advance a geopolitical vision. His strategy aimed to preserve U.S. primacy in the "jigsaw puzzle of world politics" through the cultivation of close relationships between allies and adversaries alike, an approach that recalled Otto von Bismarck, the chancellor who had sought to dominate Europe through diplomatic engagement. In the Middle East, which became a preoccupation after the October War of 1973, Kissinger sought to position the United States as the region's power broker, as the closest intermediary to each of its warring protagonists. The ambition also resembled Bismarck's, but whereas Bismarck's power had depended, in the end, upon the favor of Wilhelm II, Kissinger's power derived, Schwartz argues, from the approbation of a news media that he played like a maestro.

So controversial has Kissinger become in more recent times that it may be difficult today to recall the breadth of enthusiasm and approbation that he enjoyed in his heyday. Positioning himself, quite self-consciously, as a responsible alternative to neo-isolationists on the Left and neo-conservatives on the Right, Kissinger became a paragon of reasonableness and responsibility—one of the few great figures in American political history to command a true breadth of public support. But this balancing act, Schwartz argues, began to break down under President Ford, as critics on both the Left and Right gathered strength. Kissinger strove to mobilize a broad political center in support of his foreign policy division—delivering a series of "Heartland Speeches" in 1975 to explain his vision to the American people—but his efforts to galvanize a base of support for

his centrist vision of an international order fell flat.

By 1976, Kissinger was flailing—and not only in the arena of electoral politics, where progressives and neoconservatives rallied in opposition to what critics from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan called Kissinger's amoral approach to foreign policy. Suspicious that Kissinger was pursuing a second SALT agreement with the Soviet Union for essentially political reasons, James Schlesinger's Defense Department worked to undercut the secretary of state's talks with Brezhnev and Gromyko, exhibiting in the process an impressive command over the inter-agency bureaucratic process, the mastery of which had been the key to Kissinger and Nixon's consolidation of presidential control over foreign policy in the first place.

Henry Kissinger's influence over American foreign policy did not end with Gerald Ford's defeat, though. In a remarkable chapter—itsself worth the price of admission—Schwartz shows how Kissinger has remained a central figure down to the present day. "American foreign policy after Kissinger," Schwartz writes, "would constitute a sustained dialogue with the policies and ideas he had propounded." As his legacies have been debated, Kissinger has, of course, become a more controversial figure. The process of Kissinger's vilification began, as Schwartz notes, with the publication of William Shawcross's *Sideshow* in 1979 and culminated, decades later, in leaden and derivative tomes from Christopher Hitchens and Greg Grandin.

Thomas Schwartz, among his many achievements, helps us to understand the vituperative style that Kissinger revisionism has embraced. He notes, echoing an observation that Niall Ferguson once made, that we have for the most part been spared Hitchens-style takedowns of other Cold

War luminaries: literary trials of Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, and Dean Rusk, not to mention Chou Enlai and Andrei Gromyko. That Kissinger's severest critics have succumbed, repeatedly, to their own prosecutorial temptations may reflect, Schwartz wisely suggests, the enduring success of Kissinger's own efforts, initially effected in partnership with Nixon, to make himself into a personification of foreign policy: an effort that gave U.S. foreign policy a patina of coherence, for a time, but also made Kissinger a foil for its failures and hypocrisies. In some sense, Schwartz shows, Kissinger's harshest critics in fact pay him an ironic tribute.

What results from Schwartz's perfectly calibrated analysis is not a milquetoast compromise between establishment orthodoxy and radical revision but something far more valuable: a truly *historical* interpretation that situates our understanding of Kissinger *in history*. With this accomplishment, Thomas Schwartz has given us an expanded appreciation, I think, for Kissinger's achievement Schwartz shows, with insight and verve, how Kissinger commanded organs of public opinion in order to build for himself a celebrity that enabled him, for a time, to invest American foreign policy with both direction and purpose. That Kissinger remains, in our time, an object of such intense fascination and controversy attests not only to the magnitude of his achievement but also, perhaps, to the essential incapacity of our political institutions to sustain, over the long-term, the kind of international strategy that Kissinger worked to enact. Our fascination thus reveals much about ourselves—and our government.

Thomas Schwartz's achievement is to achieve novel vantage in a crowded field, permitting us to see Kissinger—perhaps for the first time—as neither villain nor victor but as something altogether more interesting, as a historical figure like Machiavelli and Bismarck before him, who strived, for a time, to effect creative strategy amid formidable international challenges and, even

more important, circumstances of severe political and institutional limitation. This is a seminal contribution, and it should reshape not only our understanding of Henry Kissinger as a historical figure but also our understanding of U.S. foreign policy's achievements and, more often, limitations in the post-Vietnam era.

Power and Democracy

Jeremi Suri

The American Foreign Service trains its recruits to avoid politics. For at least a century, the United States has expected its professional diplomats to reject partisanship and focus on the objective interests of their country. Their job is to cultivate partnerships abroad, reduce the influence of adversaries, and report useful insights to policymakers. In our survey of ten major diplomatic services around the globe, Robert Hutchings and I found that these goals were widely shared. Every country wants foreign professionals who are highly skilled and rigorously non-partisan.¹

This is an impossible ambition. Foreign policy, like military affairs, involves frequent and inevitable political judgments. Daily behavior is framed by subjective assessments of friend and foe, threat and interest. If war is the extension of politics by other means, diplomacy is surely the internationalization of domestic politics.² For better or worse, diplomats are political operatives, and that is perhaps why American presidents have relied more and more on explicit political allies, rather than professional diplomats, for their key ambassador appointments abroad. They need representatives they can trust.

When Congress passed the National Security Act in 1947, creating the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council, it expected that these new foreign policy bodies would be run by professionals, not politicians. President Dwight Eisenhower followed the military staffing model when he appointed Robert Cutler as national security advisor in 1953. Cutler's job was not to take policy positions influenced by politics. He was to offer Eisenhower an objective assessment of international conditions and make certain that diverse policy options reached the president's attention. Cutler the professional was to offer facts and options; Eisenhower the politician was to make choices based, in part, on opinions in Congress, the wider public, and, yes, Republican circles. Most historians agree that this system worked as intended.³

Thomas Schwartz's deeply researched book, *Henry Kissinger and American Power*, is a close study of the national security system under Eisenhower's two Republican successors, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Schwartz, of course, focuses on the figure who dominated that system, Henry Kissinger. He would have been unthinkable in Eisenhower's time, but it is impossible to consider policy one decade later without him. A refugee, veteran, academic, and public intellectual before he entered the Nixon White House, Kissinger quickly placed himself at the center of most major U.S. foreign policy decisions, often replacing the president, as Schwartz shows in detail, during the months when Nixon faced the most intensive Watergate investigations. At times, Kissinger was the "president for foreign policy" and Schwartz shows that he contemplated taking over the entire job, if the constitutional limit on foreign-born citizens could be changed.⁴

How did this disheveled and gravelly voiced immigrant gain so much power? Schwartz's book offers

a compelling explanation. Kissinger combined his exaggerated credibility as an expert with a remarkable collection of political skills, including personal charm, manipulateness, persistence, deviousness, and sycophancy. He cleverly and tirelessly outmaneuvered everyone else and made himself indispensable to a flawed commander-in-chief, Richard Nixon, who distrusted Kissinger but needed him ever more desperately as his presidency crumbled. When Gerald Ford took over, he needed Kissinger to rebuild the presidency.

Schwartz's portrait of Kissinger is both flattering and critical. He emphasizes the countless issues and personalities that Kissinger juggled, as well as the creative, improvisational risks he took in various regions of the world, often to major effect. At the same time, Kissinger was not a team player, and he personalized all policymaking to such an extent that his errors were hard to correct and his achievements difficult to sustain. Schwartz notes the irony that although Kissinger's writings consistently emphasize "impersonal" international forces and interests, his policymaking was always driven by an intensive, often narcissistic, "personal lens." That was how he climbed to power, and it defined his time in office.⁵

In Schwartz's account, Kissinger appears as more of a political tactician than a strategic visionary. This raises a question: what did he do with his power? The simple answer, according to Schwartz, is that he tried to increase the influence of the United States, undermine perceived adversaries, and boost himself. He was ruthless in isolating the Soviet Union from its former allies in China, Egypt, and other regions, often at the expense of loyal friends to the

In Schwartz's account, Kissinger appears as more of a political tactician than a strategic visionary. This raises a question: what did he do with his power? The simple answer, according to Schwartz, is that he tried to increase the influence of the United States, undermine perceived adversaries, and boost himself.

United States (Japan) and long-standing commitments to democratic principles and human rights. In regions where the United States was embroiled in difficult conflicts, especially Vietnam, he was unsentimental about cutting ties to old partners and negotiating agreements that allowed the United States to evade further on-the-ground responsibility. In Latin America, particularly Chile and Argentina, Schwartz shows that Kissinger callously condoned military repression that served America's short-term interests, at grave costs to these

societies and their citizens.

Although Schwartz credits Kissinger with a rare ability to integrate the details of each region into a larger, coherent policy, he does not see a consistent plan or scheme. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Kissinger was not pursuing some objective balance of power or a carefully constructed model for international stability. He was conducting politics—managing various crises to increase his power. Every time he found leverage for the United States in a foreign dispute, he increased his own standing as the master manipulator, the indispensable diplomat. More than any other author, Schwartz shows in detail how the politics, national and personal, drove the policy, and not vice-versa.

Schwartz's most unique contribution is the integration of media into his analysis. He makes extensive use of the rich Vanderbilt Television News Archive to chronicle how Kissinger sold his actions to the American public—and the wider world—through the evening news, which was the most influential news source of his time. Kissinger's ceaseless travels, his countless meetings with foreign leaders, and his public articulateness made him a natural go-to source for television reporters seeking interesting color. He was the athlete on a team of stars who gets the most interviews and shapes the narrative, because he knows how to answer the questions at the end of the game.

Not content with star-athlete status, Kissinger made

himself sound like the quarterback, the running back, the wide receiver, the linebacker, and the place kicker, all in one. When things went wrong, he blamed his teammates, and sometimes the president. By controlling the narrative he gained more political leverage over events as his stature rose, and he gained more fame and recognition, which he obviously craved. Politics were both a source and an end for his diplomacy. Schwartz's last chapter chronicles this story for the decades after Kissinger left office, when his influence remained almost unmatched.

There is, of course, an enormous historiography on Henry Kissinger, which continues to grow. Schwartz is in the camp of many historians, myself included, who reject both the condemnations and glorifications of Kissinger. His account aims at balance by undermining claims about Kissinger's strategic brilliance and showing the many inconsistencies and reactive elements of his policymaking. Schwartz is, however, laudatory of Kissinger's energetic and creative efforts to improve the American position in the world, especially as it related to regimes that sought to do harm to the United States and its interests. In this sense, Kissinger was an effective Cold Warrior, with all the benefits and harms one might associate with that term.⁶

The limitation of Schwartz's important book comes in his hesitance to interrogate the political ideas and assumptions that were so central to Kissinger's policymaking. If objective interests and non-partisan goals were not at the root of his actions, how should we characterize the behavior of America's most influential Cold War diplomat? Is Schwartz's emphasis on personal ambition and ego, although very persuasive, sufficient?

Near the end of his book, Schwartz comments that Kissinger was "quite successful in overcoming the procedural weaknesses and dilemmas that American democracy created for the conduct of foreign policy." He emphasizes the "centralized decision-making" and "pragmatic and flexible foreign policy" pursued by the Nixon administration.⁷ *Henry Kissinger and American Power* chronicles what this meant in practice: secret White House decision-making with little accountability, the deployment of American resources far and wide, also with little accountability, and frequent public prevarication. At times, especially when raising the United States nuclear alert to DEFCON 3, Kissinger was acting less like a president for foreign policy and more like a dictator.

At its core, the Nixon administration's national security system was built around a presumption that democracy was at best a hindrance, at worst an illness of American governance. Both Nixon and Kissinger displayed pervasive disdain for basic procedures of oversight and transparency. The standards for careful bureaucratic examination of information and policy were too slow for them. The congressional reporting necessary for checks and balances jeopardized their maneuverability. And the press coverage of policy was valuable only when it reinforced their preferences; they targeted press critics for retaliation.

These observations explain why the domestic politics at the core of Schwartz's account do not sound like the United States of the early 1970s, filled with vibrant debates about war, civil rights, imperialism, and social justice. The discussions dominating American society then are absent from Schwartz's book, and Congress plays a marginal role in his narrative. Curiously, this is the way Kissinger would like us to see his world and define domestic politics.

The American foreign policy establishment emerged in the early twentieth century as an elite part of society,

but it was filled with men, and later women, who believed they were defending not just American power, but also the particular values associated with democracy. The expertise taught in the Foreign Service was meant to embody those values. The U.S. Foreign Service was neither morally consistent nor inclusive, but it gave American foreign policy a content beyond raw power. Schwartz's book leads readers to think that Kissinger severed the connection between foreign policy and values, and perhaps that was a consequence of not just his ambition, but also his profound discomfort with and pessimism about democracy. That is an argument I made in an earlier book, and I think Schwartz's insightful account provides many reasons for returning to that analysis.⁸

Henry Kissinger and American Power is deeply revealing about the politics of American diplomacy in the 1970s. It is also a cogent assessment of how those politics ran against presumptions of expertise and democracy, at the very time that both were emphasized strongly among activists at home. Thomas Schwartz has given us a valuable history, therefore, of more than foreign policy. This is a history of our nation's struggle to merge power and democracy—a struggle that has acquired a new urgency in recent years.

Notes:

1. Robert Hutchings and Jeremi Suri, eds., *Modern Diplomacy in Practice* (New York, 2020).
2. This sentence, of course, draws from the seminal text on politics and war (as well as diplomacy), Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard, trans. Peter Paret (Princeton, 1976).
3. See, among many others, William I. Hitchcock, *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s* (New York, 2018); Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford, UK, 1998).
4. Thomas A. Schwartz, *Henry Kissinger and American Power: A Political Biography* (New York, 2020), 211, 252.
5. Schwartz, 411–12.
6. I would group Schwartz's balanced interpretation of Kissinger with other scholarship that emphasizes his incredible efficacy, his moments of creative insight, and his recurring flaws. See, among many others, John Lewis Gaddis, "Rescuing Choice from Circumstance: The Statecraft of Henry Kissinger," in *The Diplomats, 1939–1979*, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Loewenheim (Princeton, 1994), 564–92; Jussi Hanhimäki, *Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy* (Oxford, UK, 2004); Mario Del Pero, *The Eccentric Realist: Henry Kissinger and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, NY, 2006); Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).
7. Schwartz, *Henry Kissinger and American Power*, 407.
8. See Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, especially 16–51. Niall Ferguson rejects this argument in his book, defining Kissinger in strangely "idealist" terms. See Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger: The Idealist, 1923–1968* (New York, 2015).

Starring Henry Kissinger

Chester Pach

In February 1973, something quite unusual happened to Henry Kissinger. He had traveled to Hanoi to complain about North Vietnamese violations of the Paris Peace Accords, and after a walk through the city with his staff prior to the first official meeting, a guard prevented him from re-entering his elegant guesthouse. Kissinger lacked the necessary identification card, and the guard had no idea who he was. He later joked that the guard's ignorance reflected the deficiencies of the gossip columns in Hanoi's newspapers.¹¹

Kissinger was a global celebrity whose improbable reputation as a “swinger” fascinated tabloid columnists around the world, if not in Hanoi. He achieved his pop icon status in an unlikely manner—by becoming the world’s most famous diplomat. His exploits as a rock star negotiator put his name in the headlines and his face on magazine covers. His authoritative voice and distinctive accent became familiar to television viewers and radio listeners after his sensational, if premature, declaration in October 1972 that peace was at hand in the Vietnam War. Millions of Americans considered Kissinger the “president for foreign policy,” much to the consternation of President Richard Nixon. The North Vietnamese functionary who blocked his entrance to the guesthouse may have been one of a very few government officials in any nation who had never heard of Henry Kissinger.

In this engaging and deeply researched political biography, Thomas Schwartz extracts new insight from these familiar facts about Kissinger: he assiduously courted journalists and became a media superstar. As Hamilton Jordan, the White House chief of staff during Jimmy Carter’s presidency, remarked about Kissinger, “He fed the press like they were a flock of birds. They ate well and they ate regularly, and they sang . . . Henry’s song” (354). What Schwartz adds to this well-known information is that “Kissinger cultivated, nourished, and charmed journalists, reporters, and media executives” because achieving “worldwide celebrity contributed to the power and influence he had as an American representative” to negotiate peace or advance U.S. interests (412).

Schwartz’s central argument is that “to fully understand Henry Kissinger, it is important to see him as a political actor, a politician, and a man who understood that American foreign policy is fundamentally shaped and determined by the struggles and battles of American domestic politics” (9). Kissinger luxuriated in the fawning media portraits of him as a miracle worker in foreign policy who was as welcome in Cairo as he was in Tel Aviv because he “understood how his celebrity status brought with it a form of political power” (413). He sought political power not only to satisfy his outsized ego, but also “to enact his preferred policies and to defend his perception of America’s national interest” (10).

Schwartz starts each chapter with a story from television news as a way of understanding how Kissinger’s career unfolded in American living rooms. By the time Kissinger became Nixon’s national security advisor in 1969, a majority of Americans got most of their news from television, a medium they considered more believable than newspapers or magazines. Both Nixon and Kissinger appreciated the power of TV to shape public thinking about foreign policy, but they reacted to its influence in fundamentally different ways. Nixon believed that he had “entered the Presidency with less support from the major publications and TV networks than any President in history” and warned aides not to cooperate with reporters. “Don’t help the bastards ever,” he insisted, “because they’re trying to stick the knife right in our groin.”²²

Kissinger saw reporters not as enemies but as potential allies who could raise his stature and burnish his reputation through favorable stories. While Nixon and Vice President Spiro T. Agnew stoked public resentment against supposedly biased television network executives who deliberately gave the news an anti-Nixon slant, Kissinger cultivated TV and newspaper correspondents with detailed background briefings, strategic leaks, and

exclusive interviews. The result was reporting that extolled Kissinger, after the signing of the first SALT agreement, as a “legend” (185). A resentful Nixon took solace in the spiteful comment of aide John Ehrlichman, who sneered that the reporters were “Henry’s world” because he had “no family, no personal life” and needed “some psychotherapy” (157).

A distinguished professor of history at Vanderbilt University, Schwartz draws extensively on an important but underutilized resource at his home campus, the Vanderbilt University Television News Archive. That repository’s recordings of network evening news programs show how Kissinger became a familiar presence in U.S. homes, convincing the American people that he could “do something”—maybe even achieve the seemingly impossible, like securing Egyptian, Syrian, and Israeli acceptance of disengagement agreements after the Yom Kippur War—while Vietnam came to a jarring end and Watergate destroyed Nixon’s presidency (409).

Schwartz meticulously traces the rising trajectory of Kissinger’s celebrity as Nixon wallowed in Watergate and Ford struggled to disprove critics who doubted that he could walk and chew gum at the same time. His careful, innovative research proves the wisdom of David Greenberg’s sage advice that historians should study television if they want to understand how “Americans learn about and interpret public events” (8).

Kissinger keenly understood that in Washington “the appearance of power is . . . almost as important as the reality of it; in fact the appearance is frequently its essential reality” (87). Aides estimated that he devoted somewhere between one-third and one-half of his time as national security advisor to press matters. Although the Nixon White House at first didn’t allow him to speak on television for fear that his German accent might not “play in Peoria” (88), Kissinger wowed reporters with background briefings that CBS reporter Dan Rather described as “brilliant, fair,

and persuasive” (185). He also spent endless hours on the telephone with sympathetic friends in the media, such as Max Frankel and James Reston of the *New York Times*. Media contacts helped Kissinger realize that his unusual image—Ivy League expert by day and “secret swinger” by night—made him more interesting to many Americans than Nixon.

Kissinger relied on profuse flattery to forestall or assuage Nixon’s discontent with his rising media profile. Most of the examples that

Schwartz uses are familiar to anybody who has sampled the extensive secondary literature on Kissinger. But a reader can still cringe at the cloying and transparent effort to mollify Nixon’s insecurities with favorable comparisons to John F. Kennedy that a biased news media supposedly refused to acknowledge. Kissinger’s claim that one couldn’t survive in the Nixon White House without paying lip service to “the conspiracy of the press, the hostility of the Establishment” provides dubious justification for his obsequiousness (64). To his credit, though, Kissinger maintained a dialogue with antiwar students and former Harvard colleagues, even at the price of painful accusations that he was “tearing the country apart” (98).

Kissinger’s dramatic trip to China in July 1971 created his new role as superstar diplomat, the secret agent who could transform world politics with “dazzling intellect... [and] beguiling aplomb” (143). Columnist Russell Baker dubbed Kissinger “Mr. Professident,” someone who “transcended academia” to become “something new in American life” (159). Kissinger’s stature increased during Nixon’s trip to China in February 1972, a summit meeting

with such elaborate and extensive TV coverage that 98 percent of the American public was aware of it, a record at that time in the Gallup Poll. Once the Nixon administration lifted its earlier restriction on recording his voice, Kissinger became, according to Schwartz, “a regular fixture on the nightly news” and a frequent presence in American living rooms (185). By the beginning of 1973, Kissinger and Nixon—in that order, it seemed, to millions of TV viewers—had pulled off a diplomatic trifecta: the opening to China, the conclusion of the first SALT agreement, and the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, which ended U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Kissinger and Nixon became *Time* magazine’s Men of the Year for changing “the shape of the world, [and] accomplishing the most profound rearrangement of the earth’s political powers since the beginning of the cold war” (204).

Kissinger reached the apex of his global celebrity during the end of Nixon’s presidency by pulling off dazzling feats of diplomacy while taking control of foreign policy from a compromised president consumed by the Watergate scandal. “Henry Kissinger did it,” NBC news anchor John Chancellor exclaimed after weeks of shuttle diplomacy culminated in a disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria (211). Kissinger was determined to use the negotiations after the Yom Kippur War to put the United States in “the catbird seat” in the Middle East while diminishing Soviet influence in the region (240).

However, when Nixon blurted out to reporters that he had outmaneuvered Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Kissinger exploded. “The crazy bastard really made a mess with the Russians,” he shrieked (242). Schwartz shows that the Yom Kippur War “marked a turning point in the Nixon-Kissinger relationship, with Kissinger now acting essentially as the chief executive while Nixon struggled to survive” Watergate (242). Kissinger, who added the position of secretary of state to his national security advisor portfolio in September 1973, later claimed that he was the “glue that held it together” while Nixon brooded over Watergate (228).

Kissinger continued to be the adult in the room during the Ford presidency, not to protect against depression or rage, as he had with Nixon, but to deal with Ford’s inexperience. The new president was at first content to leave foreign policy to Kissinger, even telling his secretary of state prior to the Vladivostok meeting with Brezhnev in November 1974, “If you see things heading the wrong way, don’t hesitate to set it straight” (282). Such unlimited authority didn’t last, as Kissinger went from the most admired American in the Gallup Poll in 1974 to “everybody’s favorite target” a year later (269).

Schwartz shrewdly explains that “Kissinger’s personalization of ‘his’ foreign policy and his insistence on maintaining tight control over it proved counterproductive” (308). Rising conservative discontent with Kissinger’s foreign policy eventually persuaded Ford to purge the word “détente” from his vocabulary, even as he continued to adhere to that policy. The collapse of South Vietnam in April 1975 also dimmed the luster of Kissinger’s reputation. Almost three years earlier, Kissinger predicted that if a decent interval passed between the signing of a peace agreement and the demise of South Vietnam, the public wouldn’t “give a damn” (187). That was a stunning error for someone so keenly aware of the connections between domestic politics and foreign policy.

Ford relieved Kissinger of his position as national security advisor in October 1975, but the secretary of state stayed on and helped prepare the president for debates with Democratic nominee Jimmy Carter. Ford remembered many of his tutor’s words verbatim. But he proved himself

to be the worst of Kissinger’s students with the notorious assertion that there was no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. “I seem destined to work for losers,” Kissinger indiscreetly told friends (324).

One of the best parts of the book is the final chapter about Kissinger’s enduring status as Cold War icon while serving during the past forty-five years as an international consultant, media commentator, and advisor to prominent Republicans as respected as John McCain and reviled as Donald Trump. “I’ve never known a man so admired and distrusted at the same time,” declared foreign policy expert Leslie Gelb (388). It’s not hard to understand why. For example, Kissinger praised Ronald Reagan publicly

One of the best parts of the book is the final chapter about Kissinger’s enduring status as Cold War icon while serving during the past forty-five years as an international consultant, media commentator, and advisor to prominent Republicans as respected as John McCain and reviled as Donald Trump.

during the campaign of 1980, but then privately told his friend Arthur Schlesinger Jr. that Reagan “tries to understand, in so far as he is capable . . . but I don’t have the impression that he ever ingests anything you tell him” (367). No wonder that Kissinger didn’t return to government in 1981, since, as one presidential aide explained, they wanted Reagan, not Kissinger, on the cover of *Time* magazine.

Schwartz shows that Kissinger used “the language of realism” to explain “the real limits of American foreign policy” (118). His reputation as an expert—someone positioned above politics—made him a compelling advocate. Kissinger talked about an architecture of foreign policy that structured great power diplomacy.

Schwartz is at his best in demolishing this caricature of Kissinger as a cold-blooded, realist expert who offered strategic prescriptions based on apolitical national interests. As the British government understood, Kissinger had no “coherent master plan aimed at promoting” U.S. international interests (412). He was instead an emotional and “chronically insecure” political tactician who improvised, sometimes brilliantly, in response to events as they unfolded (311). Kissinger often overreacted and sometimes misunderstood North Vietnamese actions that suggested there would be progress in negotiations, even believing in February 1970 that an agreement to end the war was only months away. When the Saigon government rejected the peace accords Kissinger had negotiated in Paris in October 1972 and the North Vietnamese refused to make further concessions, Kissinger reacted not with a sober assessment of U.S. interests, but instead with a denunciation of the North Vietnamese as “shits, tawdry, miserable filthy people” (200) and a recommendation to “start bombing the bejeezus out of them” (201). Schwartz’s analysis should deal a final, fatal blow to the enduring stereotype of the foreign policy realist—think George F. Kennan as well as Kissinger—who assessed the realities of power in detached, unemotional terms.

Schwartz analyzes Kissinger in calm, reasoned prose. Missing are the encomiums of Super K or the indictments of Kissinger as a war criminal. Nevertheless, Schwartz reaches significant, critical judgments. He reminds readers that Kissinger did not have as much control over many policies or actions as his “celebrity status and . . . personalization of foreign policy” suggest. He also cautions against reviling Kissinger for “uniquely evil” policies that were “not substantially different from those carried out during the Eisenhower, Kennedy, or Johnson years, when Cold War considerations fostered assassination plots and other covert actions” (414). Most important is his conclusion that “domestic political advantage and personal ambition” rather than grand strategy drove Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy (414).

Schwartz wrote this book to “reintroduce” a new generation of readers to someone who was “one of the most recognizable figures on the planet” fifty years ago (5). He

has succeeded admirably, while still providing those with vivid, first-hand memories of Kissinger with new ways of thinking about his power and celebrity. He helps readers of both generations understand that we should remember Kissinger both for his foreign policy accomplishments and failures and for his remarkable skill in an improbable starring role.

Notes:

1. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, 1982), 27.
2. Chester Pach, "Our Worst Enemy Seems to Be the Press: TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1969–1973," *Diplomatic History* 34 (June 2010): 555–65.

Author's Response

Thomas A. Schwartz

After reading book reviews like these, from accomplished and respected scholars like Jeremi Suri, Daniel Sargent, and Chester Pach, the best course for me to take is to shut up. These reviews are extraordinarily generous and, I think, fair-minded; and each reviewer recognizes what I sought to accomplish in this political biography of Henry Kissinger, even when they have their own doubts or questions. Indeed, I also confess they made me sound so much smarter and more purposeful in the writing of this book than I really was!

As often happens at such moments, I am reminded of a Lyndon Johnson story. (Whatever you think of LBJ, he was colorful and often very funny.) After receiving a fulsome, over-the-top introduction at a campaign event, Johnson got up to speak. "This is a moment that I deeply wish my parents could have lived to share," he said. "My father would have enjoyed what you have so generously said of me—and my mother would have believed it." Had she read these reviews, my mother would have been equally credulous!

With the reviewers' generosity in mind, I won't shut up, but I will be brief. I would like to address two points that arose in the discussions of my book. First, all the reviewers note that I had something of a "home-field advantage" in having easy access to the Vanderbilt Television News Archive (VTNA). I readily admit that the archive greatly assisted my research, and I am grateful that the reviewers largely accepted my argument that television news is an important source for understanding the history of American foreign policy in this period.¹ Henry Kissinger's reputation as a diplomatic genius flowed, at least in part, from his manipulation of the media; and in the early 1970s, television news, then at its zenith, was instrumental in making Kissinger a household name.

Ironically enough, the VTNA owes its existence to the belief of a Nashville insurance man, Paul Simpson, that the network news had a strong liberal bias. I have written elsewhere about the complicated early years of the archive, with its use by adherents of Vice President Spiro Agnew to support his campaign against the "nattering nabobs of negativism" in the media.² Despite the efforts by Nixon and Agnew to discredit it, however, television news enjoyed high levels of trust during the 1970s and well into the 1980s.

A prominent government official who worked in both the Reagan administration and the second Bush presidency in the 2000s told me that one major difference between those two administrations was how closely they monitored the network news. During the Reagan years, it was still critical to an understanding of how Americans were seeing the world. But by the early twenty-first century, as alternative media sources proliferated, its importance had greatly diminished.

As I originally conceived of the Kissinger book, there would be an electronic edition that could connect directly to the broadcasts I cited, so that a reader could click on a link and see how television news portrayed the story. Unfortunately, there remain legal and copyright barriers to such a use of the archive. Also, for the most part using the VTNA still requires a trip to Nashville, an expense the internet should have made unnecessary. It is my fervent hope that future historians of American foreign relations who are studying the period between 1968 and the 1990s will be able to take full advantage of the archive from their home offices.

The other point I wish to address arises from Jeremi Suri's acute observation that "both Nixon and Kissinger displayed pervasive disdain for basic procedures of oversight and transparency" in their foreign policy. He relates this to Kissinger's "profound discomfort with and pessimism about democracy." I don't disagree with this, but I do think it is important to recognize some of the tradeoffs that are made when decision-makers are too enamored of seeking democratic approval and political advantage from their policy choices. The Biden administration seems to have genuinely believed that setting the date for a withdrawal from Afghanistan on the anniversary of the September 11 attacks would enable it to take a political victory lap, since public opinion polls showed Americans overwhelmingly in favor of a withdrawal. The result was a humiliating debacle that made the "decent interval" that Kissinger sought for American withdrawal from Vietnam look positively noble by comparison.

Alexis de Tocqueville had a point when he wrote of the problems that democracies have in conducting foreign policy with the necessary resolve, secrecy, and speed. In such political systems, public opinion is inclined toward short-term thinking and reluctant to embrace complicated solutions over a longer time horizon. In my view, it may be too easy to criticize Nixon and Kissinger for their excessive centralization, secrecy, and avoidance of the checks and balances in the system. Watching the clumsiness and incompetence of many of their successors over the last fifty years, and quite recently with Trump and Biden, reminds me that what Suri describes as "our nation's struggles to merge power and democracy" remains an ongoing dilemma.

Notes:

1. My article on the early history of the archive can be accessed at The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/a-conservative-activists-quest-to-preserve-all-network-news-broadcasts-92009>.
2. <https://politicaldictionary.com/words/nattering-nabobs-of-negativism/>. In the same speech, Agnew went on to accuse members of the media of having "formed their own 4-H club—the hopeless, hysterical hypochondriacs of history." Sometimes I think that line could be used to describe some history departments I have known.

The Pinckney Papers

Constance Schultz

We at the Pinckney Papers editorial projects think that members of SHAFR would find much of interest in the editorial work we have been doing since 2008 in editing the papers of the Pinckney family of Revolutionary era South Carolina. We are grateful for the support throughout of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) which have funded our full-time staff first of one, then of two, and currently of three editors. *The Papers of Eliza Lucas Pinckney and Harriott Pinckney Horry*, published in 2012 in the University of Virginia Press's Rotunda "American Founding Era Collection," was the first of our two born-digital editions. It expanded significantly the number of documents previously included in the edition of Pinckney's *Letterbook* edited by her descendant Elisa Pinckney in 1972. Of interest to diplomatic historians in our online edition are the letters that Eliza Pinckney (1722-1793) wrote to friends and relatives home in South Carolina and to friends in England about her experiences while she and her husband Charles Pinckney (1699-1758) resided in England from 1753 to 1758 when he unofficially represented the Carolina colony to the Board of Trade.

The bulk of the correspondence we have edited and published that deals with diplomacy is in our second editorial project, *The Papers of the Revolutionary Era Pinckney Statesmen*, also published in Rotunda's "American Founding Era Collection." The three Pinckney men, who represent one of the most important southern families of the founding period, served as military, political, diplomatic, and economic leaders in South Carolina and the nation during and after the American Revolution: brothers Charles Cotesworth Pinckney (1746-1825) (hereafter CCP) and Thomas Pinckney (1750-1828) (hereafter TP), and their cousin Charles Pinckney (1757-1824) (hereafter CP). They served as officers in the Revolutionary War, the 1799-1800 Quasi-War with France, and the War of 1812. They became state and national political leaders in the creation of an independent United States and were key figures in the post-independence emergence of the first political party system in the South. Three different presidents appointed them as ministers plenipotentiary in London, Paris, and Madrid where they served as leaders in the development of early national foreign relations.

The first three volumes of the *Pinckney Statesmen* edition, published between 2016 and 2021, contribute important new sources for all of these founding-era events and issues; the fourth will be released in mid-2022.¹ In Volume 1 (1760-1792), the correspondence of CCP and TP with each other, members of their family, and leading men of the American Revolution, provides granular details of the southern wartime experiences of young military leaders in the field: supplying their troops, fighting in

difficult terrain, enduring battles in Charleston, Savannah, Camden, and along the southern coast, and negotiating the exchange of prisoners of war. Volume 1 also contains important correspondence related to American political life before and after independence. CCP and CP attended the Constitutional Convention in 1787. TP and CP served as governors of South Carolina and struggled with postwar issues of unrest on the state's western frontiers and diplomacy with native Americans, with slave insurrections, with the problems of the Revolutionary War debts owed by the state, and with the larger problems of funding government.

Volume 2 (1792-1798) shifts the focus from revolutionary military and political issues to diplomacy. The diplomatic documents preserved by TP during his four years as minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain from 1792 to 1796 include not only the correspondence he carried on with U.S. secretaries of state and British foreign secretary Lord Grenville before John Jay's successful treaty negotiations in 1795, but also for the first time make widely available his extensive correspondence with the U.S. consuls in British and European ports. These reveal details of the difficulties faced by American travelers, merchants, and seamen that Pinckney had to address after the 1793 resumption of war between Britain and France. He supported his colleague John Jay in the negotiations in 1794 leading to the Jay Treaty, and at its conclusion, accepted George Washington's appointment sending Pinckney to Madrid to settle ongoing difficulties with Spain. Volume 2 of our edition published for the first time a complete time table of Pinckney's negotiations, and the full record of the several annotated drafts he exchanged with the Spanish first minister Manuel de Godoy. Of particular interest are the rough notes he prepared for his meetings with Godoy for the Treaty of San Lorenzo, or Pinckney's Treaty, securing the right of deposit in New Orleans.

While other scholarly editions have published many of the official documents related to CCP's leadership of the three-man commission culminating in the 1798 XYZ Affair, this volume contains correspondence related to his initial efforts to gain recognition from the French revolutionary government as minister plenipotentiary in 1796 and during his subsequent exile in Holland. Of equal value are his wife Mary Stead Pinckney's letters to friends and family in South Carolina and France, describing the frustrating aspects of CCP's diplomacy as well as diplomatic social life in Paris and Amsterdam in the final years of the eighteenth century.

The documents that comprise Volume 3 (1799-1811) begin chronologically with previously unavailable detail on CCP's efforts during the Quasi-War with France from 1798 to 1799 to build an army (one that was never needed) in the South for land operations and the defense of the coastal cities in North and South Carolina and Georgia. The

majority of documents in this volume, however, contain the records of CP's mission as minister plenipotentiary to Spain from 1801 until 1805, including his negotiations for the never-ratified Convention of 1802. We have provided transcriptions of the extensive original French and Spanish correspondence he carried on with the Spanish prime minister and foreign secretary Pedro Antonio de Cevallos, as well as English translations. CP also corresponded with Robert Livingston and James Monroe during their negotiations for the purchase of Louisiana, and afterward worked with Livingston to promote purchase of the Floridas from Spain. A key part of Pinckney's mission was to negotiate with Spain the unresolved issues of spoliation claims of American merchants against Spanish seizure of their vessels. Correspondence related to this includes extensive information about the struggles of American merchants to protect their markets and their cargoes in Spain and in the Spanish empire.

Though less voluminous than the diplomatic and military documents, Volume 3 also contains correspondence related to the political split between the Pinckney cousins, the election of 1800 in which CCP was on the presidential ballot for the Federalists, TP's brief membership in the House of Representatives and CP's in the U.S. Senate.

The fourth and final volume of the *Pinckney Statesmen* edition is still in the final stages of editing. It documents three themes in the lives of the Pinckneys, focusing first on TP's role as major general of the Sixth (or southern) Division of the U.S. Army in the War of 1812. Pinckney regularly offered tactical and strategic advice for the war in the South to a poorly organized and overwhelmed War

Department. He took charge of ending the disastrous American attempt to invade East Florida in 1812 and acted as a *de facto* diplomatic agent to the Spanish governor at its conclusion. As commander-in-chief of the southern department of the U.S. army during of the Creek War of 1813-1814, TP moved his field headquarters to the frontier, from which he issued orders and received regular dispatches from his subordinates, including Andrew Jackson and Indian agent Benjamin Hawkins, describing interactions between American soldiers and Creeks both friendly and hostile to the U.S. His responsibility for the defense of the southeast coast throughout the war took on additional urgency following the burning of Washington and attack on Baltimore in August 1814. A second theme of Volume 4 is CP's return to politics as a member of Congress during the Missouri crisis in 1819-1820. The third theme of Volume 4 covers the retirement economic and civic activities of all three men, and the changing dynamics within their immediate families as their wives died and their children matured into adulthood.

Diplomatic historians will find Volumes 2 and 3 particularly useful for their contributions to an understanding of the developments "in the field and on the ground" of early American foreign policy. We hope that other material in our volumes will also help to create a contextual understanding and a larger view of the role of the Pinckney family in the founding era.

Note:

1. Readers of this essay can search the first three volumes online at <https://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/PNKY.html>.

CALL FOR PAPERS

THE DAYS AFTER: U.S. POST-CONFLICT DIPLOMACY SINCE 1783

Some of America's strongest bilateral relationships have been forged in the aftermath of a war. At the same time, war has failed in other cases to resolve outstanding underlying issues, and hostility has continued or intensified in the following years. Why have former adversaries at times become American allies, at other times remained enemies of the United States, and sometimes fluctuated between these two poles? This conference is dedicated to exploring these fundamental questions. As such, we invite proposals that explore issues including:

- Distinctive U.S. approaches to repairing relationships;
- U.S. diplomatic efforts with a particular region or country;
- Situational factors that support or impede rapprochement; and,
- Particular tools (political, economic, public diplomacy, etc.) that facilitate closer ties after a war or conflict.

We anticipate that the papers will be initially presented at a one-day workshop at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University, immediately before the 2023 annual meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations in Arlington, VA, with a potential edited volume and/or published case studies to follow.

To learn more, please visit <https://isd.georgetown.edu/2023-post-conflict-workshop>, or contact one of the conference organizers:

Brian Etheridge (betheri4@kennesaw.edu)
Andrew Johns (andrew_johns@byu.edu)
Kelly McFarland (kelly.mcfarland@georgetown.edu)

The United States Did Not Go to War in Afghanistan

David L. Evans¹

It was August 15, 2021. I stared at my phone and watched as the Taliban retook Kabul. Feelings of distress, sadness, and resignation surged through me. Eleven days later, concern morphed into rage when thirteen U.S. servicemembers and over a hundred Afghan civilians were killed in a suicide attack at the Kabul International Airport.

I had spent eight years in the U.S. Marines, from 2002 to 2010. I was part of the 9/11 generation and had enlisted to fight the Global War on Terror. The last time I deployed was in 2008, as part of Marine Special Operations Company C, to Forward Operating Base Delaram in southwestern Afghanistan. In the ensuing years, after I left the military and shifted to an academic career path, I watched friends who stayed in deploy repeatedly. Here we are: twenty years and two trillion dollars later, and the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in a matter of weeks.

With the Taliban's spectacular overthrow of the Afghan national government and the chaos and death at Kabul's airport, America's media outlets all suddenly rediscovered Afghanistan. They booked guests to opine about what could or should have been done. These "experts" will no doubt spill a great deal of ink in the coming years promoting arguments about how either victory in Afghanistan was always unattainable, or how it was actually winnable if our leaders had only done this or that. The chaos on display this August also reawakened ordinary Americans to the war. They posted on Facebook and Twitter, lamenting with disgust, irony, and sadness the end result of "America's longest war." Nevertheless, this flash flood of concern quickly receded. By September, the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops was old news. If it remained a topic of wide discussion in the media or politics, it was only a cudgel with which to batter President Joe Biden.

According to the conventional narrative, Afghanistan was America's longest war and had been for years by August 2021. For a long time, I concurred with this assumption. When I first read George Herring's seminal book on Vietnam, America's Longest War, I thought the work might need a new title, given how long the United States had been in Central Asia. I found America's sudden attention to and equally rapid forgetting of Afghanistan as infuriating as everything else. It led me to the stark conclusion that Herring's book is still, after all, accurately titled.

Afghanistan was not America's longest war because the United States never went to war. My intent here is not to minimize the destruction wrought by U.S. adventurism in Central Asia. Instead, I focus on what U.S. political leaders over the last two decades asked of the military and what they did not ask of the American public. For twenty years the all-volunteer U.S. military fought and suffered. The immediate families of these servicemembers also experienced the war's impact. The same can be said with perhaps greater force for the Afghan peoples, who have found "peace" in short supply for an even longer period of time.

I make this argument in order to add a few pebbles to the mountain of work done by giants in our field, and

by Marilyn Young in particular. She understood the disengagement of the wider American public. She grasped that forever war both linked and obscured the country's imperialistic behavior abroad.² Afghanistan drove home this point: despite all the destruction and suffering, the bulk of the American home front insulated itself from the pain for two decades.

If war is both constant and constantly erased, how can we claim that the country was ever at war at all? How do we, as historians of U.S. foreign relations, measure a country's participation in a conflict? When does a nation go to war? Is it measured by direct experience, a declaration, by civic engagement, the price paid in money and blood, or by some combination thereof? Mary Dudziak's 2017 presidential address at the SHAFR annual meeting focused on how physical distance from the war impacted how Americans experienced World War II. Then, as now, most Americans saw Afghanistan only through the mediation of a lens, through images, through sound, if they perceived it at all.³ Most Americans have no direct experience with Afghanistan. If that is what counts, then calling the conflict America's Longest War is problematic for the simple reason that our allies—German, British, and French soldiers—could all make more legitimate claims on involvement than most Americans.

We can dispense with the second point as well. The United States did not declare war after the September 11 attacks. The last time the country declared war was after Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, when Congress passed resolutions on December 8 and 11, 1941. A declaration does not make a war. It would be irresponsible—and extremely cynical—to frame American involvement in Korea and Vietnam as anything other than fighting in armed conflicts. On the U.S. side alone, these struggles engulfed hundreds of thousands of participants, incurred tens of thousands of casualties, and seriously disrupted the domestic status quo.

Why did the United States not declare war after September 11, 2001? The attacks by Al Qaeda were the Pearl Harbor of my generation.⁴ The country experienced a similar sense of shock, followed by feelings of righteous anger and a desire to retaliate. But in thinking about the lack of a declaration, we can see the first indication that, despite the rhetoric, the United States was not at war, nor would it be. The Bush administration asked nothing of the American people except to pray and mourn. The U.S. military made good on its promise to bring retribution to Osama Bin Laden, Al Qaeda, and the Taliban (cue the Toby Keith song). But only a month after the attacks, President Bush asked Americans to carry on with their normal lives, "to fly on airplanes, to travel, to go to work."⁵ There would be no sacrifice by the American people. As Mary Dudziak has argued, the idea that there was a war at all was promoted by the president's own rhetoric. Bush did not need a declaration because Congress gave him the necessary power to carry military operations through use-of-force authorizations.⁶

If direct engagement or declaration does not determine a war, what does? How conflicts are financed can reveal the degree to which a civilian population shares the burden of war. Did the United States raise taxes to pay for military operations after 9/11? No, and not only did President Bush and Congress make no efforts to absorb the increased costs of war or spread the burden to people beyond those serving in the military, but they also gave the nation's citizens and corporations a tax break. In May 2003, Bush doubled down on tax cuts passed two years earlier with yet another round. He signed these cuts into law just weeks after he declared an end to combat operations in Iraq, the second front of the Global War on Terror.

Fast forward seven years. It is 2010, and U.S. Marines have pushed deep into southern Afghanistan to subdue a reinvigorated Taliban. Despite this escalation, President Barack Obama found it politically difficult to allow these same Bush tax cuts to expire, and so he caved to conservative opposition.⁷ The Bush-Obama tax cuts underscore the public's isolation from military affairs. If financial efforts mark civil engagement, future Americans paying the interest on money borrowed to finance the war in Afghanistan will have a more legitimate claim of having shared the burden of the Global War on Terror than Americans living during the actual conflict. The Global War on Terror helped increase the national debt from over five trillion dollars in 2001 to over twenty-five trillion dollars at the present time.⁸

All of this stands in stark contrast to America's past. In October 1917, Congress passed the War Revenue Act, which dramatically increased tax rates to help pay for U.S. participation in the First World War. Federal revenue tripled in this period. In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt cited this earlier financial sacrifice when he felt commitment to the Second World War flagging. He recalled how even late in the previous conflict, Congress had expanded the draft. "That is the way to fight and win a war—all out" Roosevelt said, "and not with half-an-eye on the battlefronts abroad and the other eye-and-a-half on personal, selfish, or political interests here at home."⁹

During the Cold War, the United States supported the largest standing military force in its history. But it paid for that military by demanding years of service and tax dollars from its citizens. From the 1940s through the early 1970s, the period that encompassed Korea and Vietnam, both middle-income Americans and the wealthy paid higher taxes than they have for the last forty years.¹⁰

Money, however, is not the only form of payment that war demands. It is the human cost of the war that is the most significant. War costs lives, and that check was honored by only the tiny proportion of the population who volunteered to serve. These volunteers paid with their lives or with their bodies and minds shattered by wounds visible and invisible. Too often they became casualties after the fact, as the scars they bore led to suicide. Their loved ones paid by living through it all with them.

The United States never really went to war in Afghanistan because the vast majority of the population neither served nor were asked to sacrifice in any meaningful way. Five million people circulated through the U.S. military in the last twenty years, and out of these, two to three million served in or supported operations in the Global War on Terror. At its peak strength between 2010 and 2011, the military deployed only 100,000 troops to Afghanistan—this out of a total U.S. population of over 300,000,000.¹¹ There was no substantive effort to ease the burden of repeated deployments of the same personnel by significantly increasing the size of the military. Instead, the all-volunteer force was stretched to a breaking point. U.S.

armed forces were expected to carry out major offensives in Afghanistan and Iraq, followed by counterinsurgency operations. At the same time, they continued to carry out all the peacetime and global policing they had performed before 9/11.

The all-volunteer force felt so normal to Americans that it was easy to forget what a radical shift it represented. For most of the Cold War, the United States maintained a draft, and during both Korea and Vietnam the military expanded to meet the requirements of the conflict. To be sure, the draft was flawed and unequal. People with money and influence found ways to avoid serving directly in Vietnam. George W. Bush and National Security Adviser John Bolton served in the reserves, which were never called up because President Lyndon B. Johnson saw it as "not essential" and a politically damaging prospect.¹² Former President Donald Trump, who described himself as "always the best athlete" in his youth, received his medical deferment for conveniently discovered bone spurs during this period.¹³ Others, like Vice President Dick Cheney, simply had "other priorities" when called to serve in the military at a time of intense conflict.¹⁴ There are many more examples. Vietnam was, as Christian Appy argued in 1993, a "Working Class War" that drew mainly from the parts of society that could not find a way out of it. The draft ended in 1973 because of these inequalities and the unpopularity of the Vietnam War.

Every conflict since Vietnam has been waged solely by volunteers. It bears asking whether this was truly the positive outcome so many had imagined when the draft ended. Some effort was made during this transition to ensure wider public engagement with future conflicts. The Total Force policy hitched Reserve Units to Active-Duty Units and would in theory spur greater public awareness about how U.S. military forces were employed. This proved only half effective. Yes, the reserves were deployed and used to support active-duty units. No, they did not raise concerns and continually deployed over the last twenty years with little in the way of dissent.

Scholars must also question whether voluntary sacrifice by a few is truly wise. Even if some are willing to wage war without end, should society ask them to? We are told war is horrible, and it is, but we also cannot deny its allure. I watched the second airplane, United Airlines Flight 175, smash into the South Tower live on television. I was a senior in high school, and the moment crystallized my decision to join the Marines. The impulse that glorifies war is old and well documented.¹⁵ In his book *War*, Sebastian Junger captured something of this idea when he wrote that "combat isn't where you might die—though that does happen—it's where you find out whether you get to keep on living. Don't underestimate the power of that revelation. Don't underestimate the things young men will wager in order to play that game one more time."¹⁶

Consider that the United States is a society that relentlessly wrings value out of whatever it seizes. A person's worth is far too often boiled down to their wages. Understanding this explains how the U.S. government could still find volunteers to serve even at the worst moments of the war on terror. Serving in the military could enable an impoverished young person to pay for college using the GI Bill. It provided a way for immigrants to expedite the process of gaining U.S. citizenship. Even more attractive was the prestige of military service itself.¹⁷ Nowhere else could a person get as much respect with just a high school diploma or general education degree as in the United States military. It did not matter what you were paid. Everyone from CEOs, politicians, professional

Money, however, is not the only form of payment that war demands. It is the human cost of the war that is the most significant. War costs lives, and that check was honored by only the tiny proportion of the population who volunteered to serve.

athletes, and celebrities had to pay some kind of homage to the sacred profession of military service.

The United States never went to war because Americans at home never felt the war after the shock of the initial attack on 9/11. By 2003, the wave of patriotism that followed was already countered by vocal opposition to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Nothing disrupted American life in the long term. By March 2004, the media had already cast Afghanistan as America's "Other War."¹⁸ Afghanistan never mattered in politics and was never a major campaign issue. Iraq mattered: it took center stage in the 2004 and 2006 elections, and it dominated the national conversation until the surge began to see results around 2008. What, by contrast, was the country's concern for Afghanistan in 2008? Did the Taliban's resurgence draw attention? Not really. The country turned inward. Many Americans congratulated themselves for electing the first African American president or lamented the economic downturn that followed the housing market crash. And yet even in the midst of the Great Recession that followed, the United States found the personnel and money to continue sending troops to Afghanistan, and very few questioned this logic or seemed to care.

Put bluntly, over the last twenty years the involvement of most Americans when it came to Afghanistan and the wider wars on terror centered on performance and ritual. Honoring the troops and veterans remains the hollowed-out civic religion of the country. We display big (the bigger the better) American flags on the field at the Super Bowl. We hold moments of silence to honor veterans, soldiers, and the dead. Politicians wear little American flag lapel pins. Thousands enjoy YouTube videos in which service members surprise loved ones by returning from overseas unannounced. Some place yellow ribbon bumper stickers on the backs of their cars. Almost everyone, when they encounter someone who served, speaks the words "thank you for your service" as if they were saying a short prayer before going on with their business.

I remember listening to Mary Dudziak give the SHAFR presidential address in 2017 in Arlington, Virginia. Now, thinking back on my time as a Marine, I can only concur with her and add to the chorus of concern about the relationship between America's civilians and its military. It is this isolation between the two that can help explain how war is, as Marilyn Young might put it, erased from the everyday lives of the vast majority of Americans. I lived this disconnection for eight years. There was always a combat tour on the horizon. It might be six months away or a year away, but it was coming. People of my age group who chose not to serve experienced very different lives. If they were students, their concerns were their grades, the next school break, the financial cost of their education, or their jobs. This is not an indictment of my peers. It is just a recognition of the reality that they lived in peace, while I and everyone else serving remained at war.

When I say that the United States did not go to war, that Afghanistan is not the country's longest war, I mean that not only is it the truth, but this reality gives historians of U.S. foreign relations and the U.S. military the opportunity to rethink how we conceptualize American involvement in conflicts abroad. As an analogy, few historians would say that the United States struggled to realize civil rights in the

1960s. They would be more specific and argue that certain activists and groups fought for these reforms. Perhaps we should apply the same perspective to the conflict in Afghanistan. Military volunteers should not be treated as emblematic of the wider population.

How much of the consensus (some would say fact) that America went to war in Afghanistan is fueled by the immediacy of the present or by mass media that communicates ideas widely and communally? The financial costs of the War on Terror have been huge. The stakes may seem to be far greater because the United States stands as a global superpower. But in what way did the country engage with Afghanistan that is different from how it implemented economic imperialism in the small wars era? How is Afghanistan different from Haiti between 1915 and 1934 or Nicaragua between 1912 and 1933? Contemplating answers to these questions challenges how the history of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan will be written, but it is a discussion that is essential to our profession as historians, since it is our job to help write about and interpret the past.

Finally, it is worth recognizing how the disparity between the experiences of civilians and service members might lead to a reassessment of past events. The last twenty years demonstrate that the shift to the all-volunteer military in the early 1970s had far-reaching implications. Histories should give this event greater weight. We should consider the end of Vietnam and the draft as a major turning point for how the post-NSC-68 U.S. military carried out combat operations. The all-volunteer military should be understood as the framework by which we understand every conflict after Vietnam.

Whatever I feel about recent events, it is nothing compared to the anxiety of those people who sat on a tarmac, wondering if they would be able to escape Taliban reprisals. It is nothing compared to the feelings of the people directly impacted by the carnage of the August 26 suicide attack or the feelings of the U.S. military personnel and their families, some of whom I knew personally, who suffered death and grievous injuries over the last twenty years.

What disturbed me the most in August was the hypocrisy involved in a suddenly rekindled concern for Afghanistan, a country and a war that most Americans had blissfully ignored for two decades. Americans paid attention to the last days of this forgotten war because it was a spectacle, and because U.S. prestige and credibility seem imperiled. Now that it is history, it is incumbent on us as historians to explain what the conflict in Afghanistan demanded of a few Americans while the overwhelming majority were let off the hook.

Notes:

1. First and foremost, I want to thank my wife Anna who has stood by me through a lot, including my deployment to Afghanistan in 2008. I also want to thank my friend and mentor Frank Costigliola for helping me work out the ideas for this article both in terms of substance and writing clarity.
2. Marilyn Young, "I was thinking, as I often do these days, of war": The United States in the Twenty-First Century," in *Making the Forever War*, ed. Mark Philip Bradley and Mary L. Dudziak (Amherst, MA, 2021), 187.
3. Mary L. Dudziak, "You didn't see him lying . . . beside the gravel road in France": Death, Distance, and American War Politics,"

Diplomatic History 42, no. 1 (January 2018): 1–16.

4. Mary Dudziak records a nearly verbatim reaction from others: see Mary Dudziak, *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences* (Oxford, UK, 2012), 99.

5. President Holds Prime Time News Conference, October 11, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011011-7.html>.

6. Dudziak, *War Time*, 100–104.

7. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/06/barack-obama-bush-tax-cuts>.

8. “Federal Debt Trends over Time,” <https://datalab.usaspending.gov/americas-finance-guide/debt/trends/>.

9. Franklin D. Roosevelt, State of the Union Message to Congress, January 11, 1944, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/address_text.html.

10. “Historical Highest Marginal Income Tax Rates,” February 4, 2020, <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/statistics/historical-highest-marginal-income-tax-rates>.

11. Linda J. Bilmes, “The Long-Term Costs of United States Care for Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars,” in *20 Years of War: A Costs of War Research Series* (August 18, 2021), 2, 6, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Bilmes_Long-Term%20Costs%20of%20Care%20for%20Vets_Aug%202021.pdf; Associated Press,

“A timeline of U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan since 2001,” *Military Times*, July 6, 2016, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2016/07/06/a-timeline-of-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-since-2001/>.

12. Lyndon B. Johnson, Press Conference, July 28, 1965, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/july-28-1965-press-conference>.

13. Quote excerpted from Michael D’Antonio, *Never Enough: Donald Trump and the Pursuit of Success* (2015) in Jack Holmes, “Is Donald Trump a Star Athlete?” *Esquire*, July 28, 2017, <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a56671/trump-athlete-cult/> ;

14. Edward Walsh and Amy Goldstein, “Cheney’s Style: Cool, Methodical, And Conservative,” *Washington Post*, July 26, 2000.

15. One of the first books that comes to mind for me is Kristin Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT, 1998).

16. Sebastian Junger, *War* (Washington, DC, 2010), 144–45.

17. The “prestige” in question is geographically dependent. Getting it requires stepping beyond the confines of the military base and beyond the hinterlands of the military town that surrounds it. This is noteworthy because it is another example of how the military and civilians exist in distinct spheres.

18. See cover of *Time*, March 8, 2004, referencing article by Tim McGirk and Michael Ware, “Remember Afghanistan?” <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601040308,00.html>.

Writing About Reagan: Archival Sources and an Elusive President

Evan D. McCormick, Susan Colburn, Augusta Dell’Omo, and Michael De Groot

Introduction

In recent years, a subset of historians working on American political history has been experimenting with new ways of writing about the presidency. In historiographical terms, this approach has aimed to bring the presidency “back in” after years on the margins of academic scholarship and to integrate high politics with the insights of cultural, social, and economic histories.¹ In analytical terms, this has meant placing the power of the executive branch and the occupant of the United States’ highest office in the broader context of the social and cultural forces that both enable and constrain the power of the presidency.² In both senses, although the approach places presidential power in the frame, that power is, in the parlance of our times, decentered, used to refract or illustrate how it was embedded in and impossible to divorce from a broader political world.

One can think of few presidents for whom the task of “decentering” is more challenging than Ronald Reagan. This may seem counterintuitive. After all, Reagan’s enigmatic qualities, his aloofness and distance, are by now well-established features of his biography, as is how these qualities were manifested in intra-administration squabbles.³ Indeed, at times it could almost seem that Reagan was seeking to decenter himself. Nonetheless, he continues to loom extremely large in the historiography of the long 1980s as an outsized political figure, as an architect of a governing program and global order, and as the symbol for the age of American political experience that he ushered in. For those who see that legacy as deleterious as well as those who see him as a visionary, Reagan stands at the center of explanation.

Today an increasing number of scholars of the United States and the world, many of them junior scholars, are turning their attention to the 1970s and 1980s. They seem less motivated by the desire to engage with the mythos of Reagan than by the urge to recognize the significance of the transitional period constituted by the Carter-to-Reagan years both for American foreign policy and for the changes to the international system that predate the formal end of the Cold War.⁴

This roundtable brings together three such scholars. Their essays are an extension of a panel at the SHAFR 2021 annual conference that focused on the intellectual and methodological challenges of writing about the Reagan years across a broad variety of topics. That panel originally coalesced around the realization that the scholars had something in common: their research was compelling them to grapple not so much with Reagan as with Reagan’s absence.

Each essay combines the analytical with the experiential, allowing the scholars to convey the diverse nature of the considerations that have informed their choices to write

around Reagan and the implications of doing so.

For Susan Colburn, who writes on Reagan’s nuclear policies, transatlantic relations, and the competition with the Soviet Union, assessing Reagan had much to do with the experience of finding the president so elusive in materials at the Reagan Library (an experience shared by all contributors to the roundtable, including this one!). Colburn explains how Reagan’s absence from the documents on the Euromissiles episode mirrored the way he shaped so many of the conversations surrounding the Euromissiles. His ambiguousness led him to be seen alternately as “a driver of policy, a source of consternation, and an avatar of sorts.”

Augusta Dell’Omo also uses the word “avatar” to describe Reagan’s role in mediating among actors in U.S. policy towards South Africa, but she focuses on how his absence was weaponized by international conservative movements. Unlike Reagan’s ambiguousness in transatlantic relations, Reagan’s absence on South Africa was deliberate. After he voiced support for the apartheid government in 1981, his advisors isolated him from the policy of constructive engagement led by Secretary of State George Shultz and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker. Crucially, Dell’Omo argues that Reagan’s “absence on constructive engagement—and his continued refusal to come out forcefully against apartheid” opened the door for rightwing supporters of the apartheid state to build a narrative that “what Reagan wanted”—i.e., the truly conservative policy when it came to South Africa—had been wrongly sidelined.

Michael De Groot notes that explaining Reagan’s international economic policies requires “viewing him as one actor among others,” but he adds that this challenge is a feature of all executive-level policy histories. He suggests that the challenge of writing around Reagan may appear exceptional only in the wake of Jimmy Carter, whose detail-oriented approach to the presidency actually invites an understanding of his personal role. Be that as it may, De Groot argues forcefully for paying attention to the relationship between Reagan’s White House and the oft-overlooked Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker. The story, often framed as a triumphant, Reagan-led free market victory, De Groot says, emerges as a narrative of “improvisation and unintended consequences instead of intelligent design. The Federal Reserve compensated for Reagan’s unwillingness to live up to his promise of balancing the budget by exploiting Washington’s structural advantages in a post-Bretton Woods world in which the dollar reigned supreme and capital traveled freely across borders.”

Whatever readers think of the suggestion that Reagan could indeed be submerged within a history of his own presidency, this group of essays provides several extremely compelling models for how scholars of the United States and the world can do such decentering work around the

presidency. For although such an approach seems naturally congenial to American foreign relations, a field that is fundamentally interested in the study of power, the debates over the proper role of the state have been long-running and often totalizing.⁵

The essays provide beautiful examples of how scholars writing about *the* primary elite institution, the presidency, need not necessarily reinforce the centrality of executive power, but can instead use it to illuminate a broad range of social movements, cultural forces, economic structures, and issues of memory. These matters are precisely what historians of international politics during the Reagan years must grapple with—more so than Reagan personally. And these scholars' thoughtful engagement with that elusive figure helps interrogate just these themes. As historians think about addressing another president—the 45th—for whom the task of wrestling with historical causation will occur in the shadow of an all-consuming personal image, the modes of inquiry modeled by these scholars can hardly seem more urgent.

Notes:

1. See Brian Balogh and Bruce J. Schulman, *Recapturing the Oval Office: New Historical Approaches to the American Presidency* (Ithaca, NY, 2015), particularly the introduction.

2. See Jeremi Suri, "The New Presidential History," *Reviews in American History* 49, no. 3 (September 2021): 422–28, as well as the book reviewed by Suri, Nathaniel C. Green, *The Man of the People: Political Dissent and the Making of the American Presidency* (Lawrence, KS, 2020). See also Vanessa Walker, *Principles in Power: Latin America and the Politics of U.S. Human Rights Diplomacy* (Ithaca, NY, 2020).

3. For Reagan biographies that highlight elements of his personality in discussing his political significance, see H.W. Brands, *Reagan: The Life* (New York, 2016) and Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York, 1991). For examples of historians grappling with Reagan's place in the course of events, see much of the literature on the end of the Cold War, including James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY, 2014); Simon Miles, *Engaging the Evil Empire: Washington, Moscow, and the Beginning of the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY, 2020); and some of the recent literature on human rights and democracy promotion, including Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard, *Reagan, Congress, and Human Rights: Contesting Morality in US Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK, 2020). See also the comprehensive essay by Melvyn P. Leffler, "Ronald Reagan and the Cold War: What Mattered Most," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3 (May 2018).

4. The most striking example of this phenomenon can be found in the essays in Jonathan R. Hunt and Simon Miles, eds., *The Reagan Moment: America and the World in the 1980s* (Ithaca, NY, 2021).

5. The most recent iteration of this debate came in response to the argument for focusing on elite institutions made within Frederik Logevall and Daniel Bessner's essay "Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 38–55. That debate was taken up in these pages, among other places. See Chester Pach, Cindy Ewing, Kevin Y. Kim, Daniel Bessner & Fredrik Logevall, "A Roundtable on Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, 'Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations,'" *Passport*, September 2020. <https://shafr.org/system/files/passport-09-2020-bessner.pdf>.

Nuclear Cowboy, Nuclear Abolitionist: Perceptions, Personal Preferences, and the Policymaking Process in the Reagan Years

Susan Colbourn

Going to the Reagan Library is an experience. Researchers must brave L.A. traffic or, worse still, try to navigate the train-to-bus connections of a place designed for cars. Once in Simi Valley, visitors will find it

hard to ignore the symbolic setting of the library, which is perched atop a hill. From the top, panoramic views feature elephant topiaries and the obligatory segment of the Berlin Wall. Visitors pour off tour buses to have photos snapped with the bronze statue of the president in the courtyard. People get emotional. The first time I visited the library for research, I saw a woman sobbing in the museum at video of Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's eulogy at the fortieth president's funeral in 2004.

Ronald Reagan is inescapable—except, that is, in the archive files. In the reading room at the Reagan Library, it is easy to go days without seeing the president's handwriting. I knew Reagan's management style was more hands-off than that of most presidents, but during my first visit, these absences in the files still surprised me. The fact that I had already been through countless folders at the Carter Library, where the Democratic president's personal annotations abound alongside tiny scrawls of JC on nearly every page of some folders only made Reagan's silence in the margins even more striking.

The absence of personal annotations is only one part of a governing style that can make Reagan difficult for historians to pin down.¹ It was not unusual for him to remain silent in meetings of the National Security Council. Reagan himself described a process in which, amidst heated debate between his advisers, he would keep a "poker face" before going away to make a final decision. "If a horse was nearby, that always helped in my decision-making," Reagan wrote in his memoirs, "but sometimes I might just stand in the shower or think out a problem at my desk or before going to sleep."²

How can we, as historians of U.S. foreign relations, make sense of Ronald Reagan as a policymaker? Where does Reagan the individual fit in the making and implementation of the administration's foreign policy? How did his personal beliefs, his priorities, and his overall worldview shape the policies the administration ended up pursuing? What is left unexplained when we focus too much on the president?

What follows briefly considers these questions from my vantage point as a historian interested in the issues that occupied much of the president's two terms in office: the competition with the Soviet Union, the role of nuclear weapons within that struggle, and the administration's efforts to forge a common policy with its allies within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the history of the Euromissiles, Ronald Reagan occupied any number of roles. He was a driver of policy, a source of consternation, and an avatar of sorts.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to explain the process that led to signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty without putting Reagan and the evolution of his relationship with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev front and center. The road to that December 1987 agreement was shaped by Reagan's personality, outlook, and priorities in critical ways. The near-deal that Reagan and Gorbachev almost struck at Reykjavik, envisioning an agreement to eliminate the two superpowers' nuclear weapons stockpiles by the year 2000, opened the door to an agreement that did away with both sides' intermediate-range forces a year later.

Reagan's willingness to question the orthodoxies of the atomic age ruffled feathers within his cabinet and among his allies. After Reykjavik, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher panicked about what the president had almost done. Horst Teltchik, who served as Helmut Kohl's chief adviser on security policy, confessed to British interlocutors that "perhaps it was just as well that the meeting at Reykjavik had broken up when it did." Had Reagan and Gorbachev seen their deal through, the European allies

would have ended up saddled with a commitment to “the theoretical objectives of a world without nuclear weapons.” Thatcher, who shared none of Reagan’s aversion to marginalia, underlined numerous phrases in the embassy report on Teltschik’s comments, including one noting that the consequences of such a deal “could not be foreseen.”³

These concerns were a far cry from those that had brought protestors into the streets. After his inauguration in January 1981, Reagan’s reputation as a hawkish, anti-Soviet hardliner shaped the grassroots activism of the era in pivotal ways. His bombastic rhetoric and sky-high defense spending encouraged their activism, and, to make their point, many invoked his likeness on placards, banners, and protest flyers.

Many of the protestors who took the streets in the autumn of 1981 in record-breaking rallies and demonstrations across Western Europe credited their presence to the American president.⁴ A few weeks earlier, Reagan had made an offhand comment to a group of reporters about how a tactical nuclear exchange could take place in Europe “without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing the button.”⁵ Already, prominent peace campaigns like European Nuclear Disarmament had been arguing that NATO’s doctrine suggested a limited nuclear war could be fought in Europe. The president’s remarks left a great many convinced on that front.

Anti-nuclear campaigners on both sides of the Atlantic urged the president to dial down his rhetoric and change course, lest he unleash a nuclear holocaust. But their critiques of Reagan’s policies were not confined to his defense spending or seemingly cavalier attitude toward the use of nuclear weapons. Critics linked NATO’s plans to deploy the Gryphon ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) and Pershing II ballistic missiles to Western Europe to other

elements of the Reagan foreign policy that aroused their ire, such as the administration’s obsession with Central America or the general thrust of U.S. policy in the Middle East. The planned introduction of new U.S. missiles in Western Europe was held up as prime evidence of an aggressive and militaristic administration, even though the plans were a holdover from the Carter years.

As opponents rallied against NATO’s deployments, they often turned to images of the president to share their overall message. Placards and posters satirized the president as a gun-slinging, missile-toting nuclear cowboy. Demonstrators donned masks of the president’s face and made papier-mâché statues of Reagan riding a missile à la *Dr. Strangelove*’s Slim Pickens. In a famous riff on a movie poster for “Gone with the Wind,” Reagan held Thatcher in his arms in front of a giant mushroom cloud. “She promised to follow him to the end of the earth,” the poster’s tagline blared. “He promised to organise it!”⁶

Reagan was not, of course, the only politician pilloried by protestors, nor was he the only symbol of the United States employed. Some demonstrators latched onto stereotypes about the American way of life, like a group of West Germans who made an elaborate model of a McDonald’s hamburger covered in little American flags and armed with a fake missile. In case any passerby failed to appreciate the critique, the hamburger was labeled Schießburger.⁷ Others turned to more traditional expressions of opposition. At Rhein-Main Air Base in the Federal Republic of Germany, protestors at one 1982 rally draped an American flag over the perimeter fence and burned it.⁸

How these various facets of the Reagan years fit together is still fiercely contested. There is no shortage of historians who have tried to explain the seeming disconnect between

the bombast and heightened tensions of Reagan’s first term and the dramatic breakthroughs of his second. For some, it is a story of continuity, as the president devised, then implemented, a grand strategy designed for the long haul.⁹ Others see it as a fundamental rupture in the president’s foreign policy, an about-face often called, in a reference to Beth Fischer’s influential work, the “Reagan reversal.”¹⁰ Still more tout the president’s intellectual flexibility and capacity for improvisation.¹¹

Perhaps no subject is more controversial than the president’s attitude toward nuclear weapons. It is a topic I have grappled with at length in my research on the Euromissiles and a source of considerable ambiguity because of the kinds of records that the president did and did not leave behind.

In the autumn of 1981, the Reagan administration tried to craft a negotiating position for the forthcoming talks to limit intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF). While it was doing so, massive rallies grabbed headlines as hundreds of thousands of Western Europeans took to the streets: 250,000 in Bonn, 200,000 in London, 200,000 in Brussels. Against that backdrop, the administration elected to back a dramatic arms control proposal. The United States would offer to cancel its planned deployments of Pershing IIs and GLCMs, provided the Soviet Union removed its own SS-4s, SS-5s, and SS-20s, which were aimed at targets across Western Europe.

The zero option, as the proposal was known, divided Reagan’s cabinet. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger was an enthusiastic supporter, not because he hoped to secure an agreement with the Soviets, but because he assumed it would stiffen the spines of Washington’s waffling allies.¹² Secretary of State Alexander Haig detested the proposal for precisely this reason. It was a transparent public relations ploy and would easily be spotted as one.¹³

Reagan backed Weinberger. The zero option, he wrote in his later memoir, was “a vivid gesture demonstrating to the Soviets, our allies, the people storming the streets of West Germany, and others that we meant business about wanting to reduce nuclear weapons.”¹⁴

Since November 18, 1981, when Reagan formally unveiled the zero option at the National Press Club, observers have questioned the president’s motives. As Haig predicted, some contemporaries viewed the option as little more than a public relations stunt designed to make sure the deployments went ahead without pursuing any meaningful negotiations that might avert that outcome. Subsequent scholars have expressed similar doubts about the proposal’s sincerity. “The fact is,” as one historian recently put it, “that for the other side of the negotiating table”—the Soviet Union—“the proposal was simply unacceptable, which arguably is enough to establish that it was not intended as a serious diplomatic effort.”¹⁵

Is it enough? How can we know why Reagan backed the zero option and what he hoped to achieve in doing so?

Reagan’s later memoirs suggest a commitment to reducing nuclear weapons, though the framing highlights how difficult it was to parse the various strands that might have shaped the decision, including public opinion, popular anti-nuclear demonstrations, and the administration’s overall strategy to manage relations with the Soviet Union. Could these calculations not coexist, perhaps even align with a broader desire on the part of the president to see these weapons eliminated? The fact that the administration stuck with the zero option long after the missile deployments were under way adds another layer of complexity into the situation.

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"Until I got into the arms control business, I did not realize how antinuclear Ronald Reagan was," the president's second director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Kenneth Adelman, later told interviewers. "The fact was that he couldn't stand nuclear weapons; he wanted to get rid of nuclear weapons . . . I'd never met an antinuclear hawk before in my life. It was just part of Reagan's make-up."¹⁶ Aides and allied leaders agreed, regardless of whether they shared the president's point of view.¹⁷

For some, the image of Reagan as a nuclear abolitionist is a hard sell. Given the sheer partisanship surrounding Reagan's legacy and especially his role in bringing about the end of the Cold War, making the case becomes more fraught. Reagan defied neat characterization.¹⁸ And even on the issues that occupied so much of the president's attention, his motivations can be difficult to discern and even more difficult for some constituencies to accept. Reagan might not drive policy anymore, but he certainly remains a source of consternation as well as an avatar of sorts.

Notes:

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2. Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York, 1990), 297.
3. UK Embassy Bonn to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Reykjavik Summit: German Views," 15 Oct. 1986, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), PREM19/1759.
4. Leonard Downie Jr., "Thousands in London Protest Nuclear Arms," *Washington Post*, 25 Oct. 1981.
5. Ronald Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Working Luncheon with Out-of-Town Editors," 16 Oct. 1981, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan 1981* (Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1982), 956–57.
6. A copy can be found at the National Portrait Gallery, NPG D43009, available at <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw251471/Gone-with-the-Wind-Ronald-Reagan-Margaret-Thatcher>.
7. Sahn Doherty photograph, "Anti-nuke protesters around giant model of McDonald's," 1 Apr. 1981, <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/anti-nuke-protesters-around-giant-model-of-mcdonalds-news-photo/50655833?adppopup=true>.
8. Don Sutherland photograph, "An American flag is burned on the perimeter fence by protesters demonstrating against NATO's decision to deploy Pershing II and cruise missiles in Western Europe," 12 Dec. 1982, <https://nara.getarchive.net/media/an-american-flag-is-burned-on-the-perimeter-fence-by-protesters-demonstrating-001764>.
9. Simon Miles, *Engaging the Evil Empire: Washington, Moscow, and the Beginning of the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY, 2020).
10. Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia, MO, 1997).
11. James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY, 2014).
12. "Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting," 13 Oct. 1981, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1981–1988*, vol. III, Soviet Union, January 1981–January 1983, ed. James Graham Wilson, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 2010, Doc. 92.
13. National Security Council minutes, 12 Nov. 1981, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council, Meeting Files, Box 3, "NSC #25" folder.
14. Reagan, *An American Life*, 297.
15. Marilena Gala, "The Euromissile Crisis and the Centrality of the 'Zero Option,'" in *The Euromissile Crisis and the End of the Cold War*, ed. Leopoldo Nuti et al. (Washington, DC, and Stanford, CA, 2015), 162.
16. Adelman interview, 30 Sept. 2003, Miller Center of Public Affairs, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project, 38.
17. See, for example, George Shultz interview, 2013, reprinted in "Remembering George Shultz: an interview with a key figure in ending the Cold War," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, <https://thebulletin.org/2021/02/remembering-george-shultz-an-interview-with-a-key-figure-in-ending-the-cold-war/>; Margaret Thatcher interview, 8 Jan. 1980, Margaret Thatcher Foundation Archive, Doc. 109324.

18. On the challenges of making sense of Reagan, see Melvyn P. Leffler, "Ronald Reagan and the Cold War: What Mattered Most," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3 (2018): 77–89.

Finding Reagan in "Reagan Foreign Policy": An Examination of Apartheid Policy

Augusta Dell'Omo

There are few figures that loom larger in post-World War II U.S. history than Ronald Reagan. He personified the American conservative movement, and his singular importance to seemingly every faction of the right persisted long after his presidency ended in 1989. He remains an endlessly fascinating subject for historians, with the Reagan Presidential Library listing nearly one hundred and fifty titles on him—likely a conservative estimate. But for all historians write about Reagan, a closer examination of his archival record reveals an elusive figure, leaving many of us studying Reagan's avatar rather than the man himself.

At first glance, it seems a strange statement to make. The policies of the Reagan administration remain some of the most distinct and significant of the Cold War. Domestically, "Reaganomics" policies of tax cuts, greater defense spending, and the elimination of federal regulations profoundly altered the American economy. The militant "War on Drugs" program at home targeted Americans of color and accelerated systems of mass incarceration. Internationally, the Reagan Doctrine sought to rollback communist influence, the blame for which the Reagan administration placed squarely at the feet of outgoing president Jimmy Carter. The 1983 invasion of Grenada, paramilitary involvement in Central America, and the Iran-Contra scandal defined Reagan's later years in office. Finally—and perhaps most crucially for Reagan himself—his close relationship with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev culminated in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which fundamentally changed the trajectory of the Cold War.

Thus, as I began my time at the Reagan Library, I assumed Reagan would occupy a central place in my research. I study the U.S.-South African relationship, specifically examining transatlantic white supremacist organizing in support of the apartheid state in the 1980s and 1990s. The seemingly dramatic shift by the Reagan administration on apartheid policy demanded consideration. The White House's decision to implement constructive engagement, a policy of behind-the-scenes dialogue with Pretoria to encourage racial reform rather than vocally challenge the apartheid government, broke from the strategy of the Carter years.

I started archival work in late July 2019, just after the release of a recorded conversation between Reagan, then governor of California, and President Richard Nixon in which Reagan used racist slurs to describe Africans. Historian Tim Naftali, who fought for the tape's release, characterized the recording as a "stark reminder of the racism that often lay behind the public rhetoric of the American presidents."¹ For me, a scholar examining race and U.S. foreign policy, it seemed to be the moment to focus on Reagan himself.

Almost immediately it became apparent that Reagan was hard to pin down on his administration's South Africa policy. As many scholars have documented, Reagan's own writings are limited. His diaries say little on the matter of South African apartheid. Uneven declassification further hindered my research. Decision-making on South Africa seemed to operate around Reagan, with Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker and the two secretaries of state, Alexander Haig and George Shultz, driving constructive engagement. Reagan often deferred to Haig and Shultz in NSC meetings on South Africa. Indeed,

while the State and Defense Departments often clashed on constructive engagement, a consensus seemed to emerge that Reagan should not take center stage on South Africa.

This decision likely came as a result of Reagan's 1976 statements in the *Manchester* (N.H.) *Union Leader*, in which he praised South Africa's homeland system—territories created to forcibly remove Black South Africans from urban areas. Reagan's election elated white South Africans, with Afrikaner newspapers praising the new American president. With Reagan, South Africans could count on a more approachable, friendly, helpful United States, Afrikaner reporters argued. Showering praise on Reagan's foreign policy team, Afrikaans-language papers *Die Beeld*, *Die Vaderland*, and *Die Transvaler* ran daily reporting on the administration's refusal to accept white downfall.

I realized that Reagan was simultaneously elusive and disengaged on South African apartheid. His racist view of South Africa's violent homelands and his refusal to take apartheid seriously pushed his advisors to remove "Reagan" from a central part in "Reagan's southern Africa policy." Still, while his writings remained sparse, his comments infrequent, and his presence elusive, it is possible to glean insights into Reagan's view of South Africa.

The public perception of Reagan's tilt towards South Africa only increased in the first few months of the new administration. In a televised address on March 4, 1981, Reagan stated that his administration would try to be "helpful" to South Africa as long as Pretoria made a "sincere and honest effort" on apartheid reform.² He questioned whether the United States should "abandon a country that has stood beside us in every war we have fought," to the elation of South Africa Prime Minister P.W. Botha. The decision—pushed by Haig—to invite South African Foreign Minister Roelof F. (Pik) Botha to visit Washington on May 18, 1981, seemed to further tie the United States to South Africa. *South African Digest*, published by the apartheid state's Department of Information, reported favorably on Pik Botha's visit to the United States, declaring that Reagan "stood up" for South Africa.

Pretoria's tying of Reagan to apartheid and the derisive treatment of Reagan's comments by U.S. media alarmed U.S. officials, particularly Counselor to the President Edwin Meese and Chief of Staff James Baker III. While the administration publicly denied any "tilt" towards Pretoria, insisting constructive engagement was a policy for all of southern Africa (not just South Africa), privately, administration members sought to distance Reagan from the issue. After the 1981 backlash to Reagan's South Africa statements, his involvement in constructive engagement became limited, with Shultz and Crocker taking a leading role in publicly defending the policy.

This limited involvement became more pronounced during his second term, after the administration came under fire for its 1985–1986 opposition to economic sanctions, and Shultz's relationship with P.W. Botha rapidly deteriorated. Reagan's only major remarks on South Africa, given before the World Affairs Council and the Foreign Policy Association on July 22, 1986, and almost universally panned in the United States, Europe, and Southern Africa, further incentivized this public retreat.

With Reagan largely isolated from South Africa policy by 1981, studying his role in U.S. policy towards South Africa appeared at first to be impossible. Initially, it left me both frustrated and alarmed at the viability of reshaping the way scholars think about constructive engagement. However, throughout my months of archival work at the Reagan Library, it was precisely Reagan's disengagement on South Africa that became the most important means

of understanding the U.S.–South African relationship. That relationship became a contentious issue within the Republican Party, as "moderate" and "hardline" conservatives split over the question of economic sanctions. Each sought to use Reagan to defend their position, insisting that they represented the "true" Reagan.

The tension within the Republican Party over South Africa came to a head in 1986 amidst congressional efforts to pass sanctions against the apartheid state. Congress had made various attempts at passing economic sanctions as early as the 1970s, but these efforts picked up momentum in the 1980s. Spurred by continued abuses by the South African government and the growing prominence of anti-apartheid figures like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, congressional Democrats and Republicans felt pressure to act. As a result, Democratic senators attempted to pass a version of economic sanctions in 1985, only to have it filibustered by Republicans. This filibuster emerged as a last-ditch effort by conservatives to give the Reagan administration time to let constructive engagement pay dividends.

It was the Reagan administration's belief (indeed, it became one of the few points of agreement between the State Department and the NSC) that not only would constructive engagement encourage reforms by the apartheid state, economic sanctions would antagonize the regime. Furthermore, the administration considered the legislation an infringement on the president's powers, a position accepted by many Republicans in Congress in September 1985.

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The P.W. Botha government's declaration of a National State of Emergency on June 12, 1986—after repealing a previous act in March—infuriated both Democrats and Republicans. The State of Emergency massively expanded the power of South African police, allowing forces to make arrests without warrants, impose curfews, seize property, and ban television and radio coverage of riots, strikes, or police action. In a matter of hours, it led to the arrest of hundreds of anti-apartheid activists, students, clergy, and labor leaders. Within a week, the apartheid government had detained over 3,000 people. The *Los Angeles Times* called the crackdown "unprecedented," and both the Reagan and Thatcher administrations lodged formal protests.³ The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives passed H.R. 4866, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, just six days later, on June 18, 1986.

Congressional frustration over the Reagan administration's apparent refusal to act on South Africa now included vocal Republicans. Jim Leach (R-IA) took the administration to task: "All we ask of this Republican administration is that it advances a foreign policy consistent with the views of the first Republican administration, put the Republican Party on the right side of its heritage, [and] our foreign policy on the right side of history."⁴ Influential members of the Republican Party within Congress, like Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, viewed the question of sanctions "as a litmus test of lawmakers' feelings on civil rights."⁵ As the Reagan administration signaled its commitment to veto sanctions again, Republican lawmakers, led by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Richard Lugar, informed the administration of Republican willingness to override Reagan's veto.

Republican lawmakers tried to avoid blaming Reagan personally, instead taking his administration to task for its "out of step" position on apartheid, all the more glaring in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. This approach—blaming the administration and not Reagan—

proved useful for defenders of the apartheid state.

A significant faction of conservative intellectuals, media, and lobbyists vehemently opposed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act and any prospect of economic sanctions against South Africa. According to these activists, the Reagan administration's policy of constructive engagement worked, pushing the South Africans towards minor racial reforms and regional rapprochement. Instead, the failure belonged to the State Department. Hardline conservative activists accused Shultz and Crocker of betraying the Reagan administration from within. *Human Events* and the *Washington Times* routinely ran stories promoting this narrative, pitting Reagan against an administration that undercut his policies at every turn. The belief in a Reagan Revolution betrayed was not unique to the apartheid issue, as conservative activists routinely accused members of the administration of being insufficiently committed to rightwing policies, particularly anti-communist action abroad.

For the most extreme supporters of white rule, a group I refer to as the pro-apartheid movement, Reagan's absence on constructive engagement policy fueled the narrative of right-wing policy betrayed.⁶ The State Department derailed "Reagan foreign policy," according to supporters of white rule. Pat Buchanan, then director of communications in the Reagan White House, echoed those accusations; he often accused Shultz and Crocker of ignoring Reagan's wishes and not executing "Reagan foreign policy." Afrikaner nationalist organizations and media ran articles lambasting Crocker and Shultz and insisting that Reagan himself wanted to protect and extend white rule throughout southern Africa.

Reagan's absence on constructive engagement and his continued refusal to come out forcefully against apartheid proved useful for white power actors looking for solidarity from the White House. For American conservatives—both for and against the administration's constructive engagement policy—"what Reagan wanted" became a useful organizing tool, as both factions became increasingly dissatisfied with the administration's policies.

Where does that leave Reagan scholars? In my own work, as I moved away from focusing on the hold Reagan seemed to have over the entire conservative movement, a richer underbelly of right-wing struggle became apparent. The idea of Reagan within conservative movements—not just within the United States, but globally—remains an important avenue of exploration for scholars, especially in light of the elusiveness of Reagan himself. Even for those who work on issues where Reagan's views, decision-making, and objectives appear starker, it is critical to consider how the avatar of Reagan looms large throughout the calculations his administrations made.

It also reminds us as scholars of foreign policy to be cautious of the way the role of the president seems to loom over every aspect of the field. While we have rightly noted the concentration of foreign policymaking power within the executive branch, we should be thoughtful in our treatment of American presidents. Accepting the limitations of the presidency and acknowledging the places where presidents ceded ownership of particular policy issues opens up broader and perhaps more complicated questions for scholars of American foreign relations to explore. We should not absolve America's presidents of their policies and decisions. Reagan deserves great scrutiny and criticism for his administration's South Africa policy. But the question of who takes up the mantle of Reagan and why might prove more interesting than the man himself.

Notes:

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Trench Warfare and Global Reaganomics

Michael De Groot

The Reagan years cast a long shadow. Though many Republican candidates seeking public office have tripped over each other in recent years to fall in line with Donald Trump, they traditionally endeavored to align their values with Reagan to sell themselves to their constituents. They drew on Reagan's rhetoric and invoked his policies as proof that deregulation, limiting public spending, and lowering taxes will lead to prosperity.

The neoliberal triumphalist narrative—that the empowerment of the free market led to sustained economic growth in the 1980s after years of onerous government intervention—is a simple and attractive story, but it obscures the international Keynesian reality. The devil is in the details, and as Director of the Office of Management and Budget David Stockman later admitted in his memoirs, whatever success the Reagan administration enjoyed had little to do with the original supply-side ideology.¹

Any effort to explain the links among Reagan's policies, the domestic economic expansion, and the international reverberations of the U.S. economy's recovery raises fundamental questions about structure and agency as well as correlation and causation. The Reagan years oozed contradiction and irony. The president promised to achieve conflicting objectives such as slashing taxes, boosting defense spending, balancing the budget, and reducing inflation. "How this fits together will give them quite some trouble for digestion," West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt remarked shortly after Reagan's election in November 1980.²

A Cassandra of sorts for the vagaries of international economics, Schmidt had reason to be skeptical of Reaganomics. With an undeniable gift for turning a phrase, the Great Communicator denounced big government, yet public spending exploded under his watch, and he added more to the national debt than all presidents in American history combined until that point. He ridiculed deficit spending, but meeting his domestic and foreign policy objectives required the Keynesian stimulus of foreign capital to help finance tax cuts, military spending, and, much to Stockman's dismay, social safety nets. Reagan sought to unleash the power of the free market and promote American businesses, but the trade deficit exploded instead, forcing the administration to coordinate with other industrial democracies in the mid-1980s to arrest the appreciation of the dollar and combat protectionism at home as deindustrialization accelerated.

Reaganomics and its international consequences beckon as a subject that speaks to a variety of contemporary issues, but for the moment, the growing interest in the field exceeds

the means to develop it. Reconstructing policymaking entails tracking the paper trail up the bureaucratic ladder, but the lack of access to archival materials at the National Archives presents a formidable obstacle. After receiving most of what I requested in European archives, I arrived in College Park for the first time during the fall of 2016 with high hopes. I asked the archivist on duty for assistance locating Treasury records on international economic affairs in the 1970s. He chuckled and responded, “Good luck.” Most of them remained unprocessed and unavailable, he explained.

If access to the Treasury records of the 1970s remains difficult, it is even tighter for the 1980s, so much so that in many respects I had better luck in Moscow with the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Trade, Gosbank, and Gosplan files. Prospects are better at the Reagan Library, but there too one confronts the same problem. Scholars must privilege what is available, and the field remains trapped in the streetlight effect for the moment, even if the declassification of more documents at the Reagan Library in recent years has allowed the bulb to illuminate a greater area.

Archival limitations notwithstanding, the challenge of situating Reagan within the policymaking process is not qualitatively different than for other presidents. To be sure, as Susan Colbourn and Augusta Dell’Omo point out in their contributions, Reagan does not often make himself known in the archives. He infrequently gave instructions, listened more than spoke during meetings, and left his advisers—as well as future scholars—to read between the lines and speculate about his true intentions.³ Yet the tough task of locating Reagan’s agency is endemic to the study of the American presidency because of the government’s relatively decentralized structure. “Writing around Reagan” echoes the difficulty of studying Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, who charmed his advisers and left them each believing that their policy preferences comported with the president’s wishes.

In fact, if any one president stands out as the “outlier” during the late twentieth century in terms of his legibility in the archives, it is Jimmy Carter.⁴ The detail-oriented Carter had his fingerprints all over his administration, and his handwriting and initials are at the top of many memoranda currently stored at the Carter Library to prove it. In this regard, Carter was the exception rather than the rule.

Putting the issue of Reagan’s elusiveness in the archives aside, understanding U.S. international economic affairs in the 1980s requires decentering him and viewing him as one actor among others. The most important figure may not have even been a member of the administration at all. A case can be made that it was the Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker.⁵ While the Fed does not figure prominently in scholarship on U.S. foreign relations, its policies have enormous implications for the global economy and the projection of U.S. power, given the centrality of the dollar in the international monetary system, finance, and international trade.⁶

The antagonism between the administration and the Fed created an unexpected cocktail of policies. While Reagan and his staff entered office confident in their supply-side ideology, their unsuccessful war against the welfare state, rising defense expenditures, tax cuts, and an end to tax bracket creep caused the budget deficit to rise to unforeseen levels. Setbacks deflated the administration’s confidence. During his November 1982 visit to Washington, Thatcher’s economic adviser Alan Walters reported the feeling of “uncertainty, loss of confidence, confusion

and flux” in the administration. Under Secretary of the Treasury for Monetary Affairs Beryl Sprinkel admitted that he had to reconsider “the need for a considerable and obvious reduction in the budget deficit,” and Secretary of the Treasury Donald Regan “merely huffed and puffed” in defense of the White House’s strategy, “clearly display[ing] some of the pressure he was feeling.”⁷

The Fed helped counteract the fiscal failure of Reaganomics. Focusing on contracting the money supply and keeping interest rates high, Volcker prioritized lowering inflation at all costs. The Fed’s disciplinary policy sharpened a recession in the early 1980s, which forced many Americans to the unemployment lines and undermined the GOP during the 1982 midterm elections. Reagan officials accused Volcker’s harsh monetary medicine of preventing the recovery, while Fed officials justified the tight monetary policy in part by pointing to the need to balance the administration’s lack of fiscal discipline and make investment in American debt attractive.⁸ Neither believed that it could yield while the other behaved recklessly.

The “trench warfare” between the two led to an unusual combination of budget deficits, high interest rates, and an appreciating dollar that ironically drove the resurgence of the American economy by the mid-1980s.⁹ Tax cuts and federal spending ultimately stimulated economic activity, and the administration could escape the constraints of fiscal responsibility because high interest rates and the appreciating dollar limited inflation and attracted the foreign capital that helped finance the budget deficits.

Reagan refused to compromise on defense spending to ease pressure on the budget, and a bipartisan congressional coalition voted against making significant cuts to entitlements. “I wanted a balanced budget,” Reagan explained in his memoirs. “But I also wanted peace through strength.” When asked which he would prioritize, he answered, “I’d have to come down on the side of national defense.”¹⁰ And so he did.

Reagan could make that choice because investors viewed U.S. debt as a prudent investment, and Treasury officials campaigned to liberalize foreign capital markets to make more savings available for investment in the United States. The American economy enjoyed non-inflationary economic growth after more than a decade of stagflation, although the expansion did not benefit everybody. America’s second wind accelerated deindustrialization, weakened organized labor, and widened inequality.

While the Fed focused its efforts on domestic issues, the impact of the Volcker Shock echoed across the globe.¹¹ High U.S. interest rates redirected capital to the United States, upending global lending patterns and crowding out sovereign lenders in the developing world and the socialist bloc that had relied on easy money during the 1970s to finance their public spending. A sovereign debt crisis erupted in both of those regions, striking a crippling blow to the Third World project and pushing some nations in the Soviet bloc to the brink of bankruptcy.

Gosbank officials believed that the Reagan administration had purposely created a credit “blockade” against the Soviet Union and its allies as part of an imperialist Cold War offensive, but Moscow gave Washington more credit than it deserved.¹² Commercial banks turned away from the socialist states in the early 1980s because they received better returns in the United States—and the industrial democracies more broadly—and they worried about the Soviet bloc’s solvency, not because Washington had implemented a successful strategy to squeeze its adversaries financially. U.S. foreign economic

After receiving most of what I requested in European archives, I arrived in College Park for the first time during the fall of 2016 with high hopes. I asked the archivist on duty for assistance locating Treasury records on international economic affairs in the 1970s. He chuckled and responded, “Good luck.” Most of them remained unprocessed and unavailable, he explained.

policy in the 1980s emerges as a story of improvisation and unintended consequences instead of intelligent design. The Fed compensated for Reagan's unwillingness to live up to his promise of balancing the budget by exploiting Washington's structural advantages in a post-Bretton Woods world in which the dollar reigned supreme and capital traveled freely across borders.

Exploring how this constellation of forces impacted such topics as the global economy's trajectory, the arc of American power, and the end of the Cold War will preoccupy scholars for years to come. The stakes for placing Reagan and his supply-side rhetoric within this story are high. In addition to liberating the field from the political partisanship, the new scholarship will demythologize the Reagan expansion and provide lessons for policymakers and elected representatives who reach back to the 1980s for guidance on how to approach contemporary challenges.

Notes:

1. David Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York, 1986), 377.
2. "Prime Minister's Telephone Conversation with Chancellor Schmidt on Sunday 23 November 1980 at 1115 Hours," TNA, PREM 19/471.
3. Melvyn P. Leffler, "Ronald Reagan and the Cold War: What Mattered Most," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3 (2018): 79.
4. Kai Bird, *The Outlier: The Unfinished Presidency of Jimmy Carter* (New York, 2021).
5. Paul Volcker's papers are located at Princeton University's Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, which recently digitized parts of the collection.
6. Take, for example, the Fed's role as the world's firefighter during the 2008 financial crisis. See Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How A Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World* (New York, 2018).
7. Alan Walters to Margaret Thatcher, "United States Economic Policy," November 24, 1982, TNA, PREM 19/1654.
8. William Greider, *Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country* (New York, 1989), 561–63.
9. Lewis James, "The No-Win War in Washington," *Euromoney* (July 1981): 51.
10. Reagan, *An American Life*, 235.
11. On the international consequences of the Volcker Shock, see Giovanni Arrighi, "The World Economy and the Cold War, 1970–1990," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume III: Endings*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge, UK, 2010), 1–22.
12. "Notes of the meeting: Chairman of the board of the State Bank of the USSR Cde. Alkhimov V.S. with the chairman of the board of the State Bank of the GDR Cde. Kaminsky," August 30, 1982, Russian State Archive of the Economy, f. 2324, op. 32, d. 2042, ll. 3–5.

SHAFR SPOTLIGHTS



Kelly J. Shannon

I grew up in Philadelphia, and I'm a first generation college student. It was when I took my first history class as a freshman at Vassar College – “Paris and London, 1500-1800” with Mita Choudhury – that I really fell in love with history. After I earned my B.A. from Vassar, I got my M.A. from UConn (where I worked with Frank Costigliola) and Ph.D. from Temple (where I worked with Richard Immerman). Temple was also where I met my husband, Jay Sylvestre. He is a talented librarian, and I don't know where I'd be without his love and support. Jay was game for moving all around North America: first to Alaska for my job at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and then to South Florida for my position at Florida Atlantic University. I've been at FAU since 2014, during which time I published my book, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Muslim Women's Human Rights* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); earned tenure; got elected to SHAFR Council; and won the 2019 Bernath Lecture Prize. I'm currently an Associate Professor of History and Executive Director of the Center for Peace, Justice, and Human Rights (PJHR) at FAU. I've been an active member of SHAFR since 2003, and I love being part of this community. I can't wait for SHAFR to be in-person again!

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

I'm sorry to list more than 10, but I have watched a lot of TV in my life. It's hard to choose! So, in no particular order: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Orphan Black*, *Community*, *Lovecraft Country*, *Killing Eve*, *Ted Lasso*, *We Are Lady Parts*, *The Good Place*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Deadwood*, *The Great Pottery Throwdown*, *My So-Called Life*, *Dr. Who*, *Fringe*, and the recent *Ducktails* reboot (David Tennant as Scrooge!).

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

Oh, man. I'm a klutz and often put my foot in my mouth, so I have a lot of embarrassing moments. I once fell off the stage at FAU. I was coming down the stairs from a rehearsal of our big department event that we have every spring in the university theater. The stage stairs, floor, walls, etc. are all black, and there were no lights on the steps. I couldn't see, missed a step, and ended up landing on my rear end in front of my colleagues, some grad students, and visiting scholars. Oops.

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

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Nilla Cram Cook. I would just fan-girl Wells-Barnett and Hillary. But Cook was an American woman who was a U.S. cultural attaché in Tehran in the 1940s and served in the Iranian Ministry of Education. I haven't found a lot of records on her, so I'd invite her to ask her questions about her life.

4. What would you do if you won the \$500 million Powerball?

Pay off my student loans. Move somewhere with a cold climate. Travel to places my husband and I have never been. Buy a horse and a house with a stable to go with it. Get a home library with sliding ladders (the dream!). Take lots of archives trips for my research. Set up a trust to support my nephews' educations. Set up a robust retirement account. And donate a lot of money to women's rights, social justice, human rights, and environmental NGOs, as well as to my alma maters and SHAFR.

5. 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 Totally Eclectic Music Festival, coming soon to a town near you! Featuring: Billie Holiday, Leona Naess, Josephine Baker, Pearl Jam, Sam Cooke, Veruca Salt, Farinaz, Aretha Franklin, 2Pac, Garbage, Ani DiFranco, The Doors, Screaming Females, Nirvana, The Cranberries, Janis Joplin, The Beatles (mid- to late 60s, not early), Juliette Greco, the Roots, Jimi Hendrix, Madeleine Peyroux, Rodrigo y Gabriela, Bikini Kill, Benny Goodman, The Corrs, Jefferson Airplane, Dessa, Ella Fitzgerald, Indigo Girls, Mona Haydar, Mazzy Star, Sinéad O'Connor, Sleater Kinney, TLC, NKOTB, and Salt 'n Pepa.

6. What are five things on your bucket list?

Visit Iran and Morocco. Spend a year in Norway. Learn to make cheese. Swim with beluga whales. Hang out with Gritty (the Philadelphia Flyers' mascot and a national treasure).

7. What would you be doing if you were not an academic?

In a fantasy world? A horse trainer in Ireland, an organic farmer (or something else involving the outdoors), an NGO worker, or owner of an independent bookstore/coffee shop.



I'm married to Catherine Tall, and we have one daughter, Claire. We enjoy spending time in the summers in a second home in northwest Connecticut. In West Virginia, I enjoy trail running and skiing, both cross-country and downhill. In true Appalachian fashion, we enjoy singing folk songs around the campfire, and drinking excellent WV microbrew. I got interested in history because of excellent teachers in high school and in college. These teachers opened my eyes to how learning history was a means of understanding the world we live in. The intensified Cold War of the early 1980s drew my attention to international relations in my formative years. Recently, I've become interested in the history of globalization, which can be seen in my recent book *Latin American Nationalism: Identity in a Globalizing World* (2017). Living in Bolivia in the late 1990s and early 2000s drove home for me the significance of neoliberalism in Latin America; and the "drug war" in the Andes, two of my ongoing research projects.

Jim Siekmeier

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

Favorite TV shows: *All in the Family*; *Hill Street Blues*; *the X-Files*; *Alone*.
Movies: *The Bicycle Thief*; *Harold and Maude*; *The Graduate*; *Fargo*

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

I had a job interview at a small university in South Texas, near the United States-Mexican Border, about 25 years ago. When the search committee asked me what I wanted to do for dinner, I said that we should forgo dinner and instead head into Mexico and visit cantinas and have a few pitchers of margaritas. (Historical note: the Border area was safer in those days.) The professors were not amused with my response. Needless to say I did not receive a job offer....

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

Confucius; the Buddha; and Jesus Christ. I'm fascinated with the influence of religion in world history.

4. What would you do if you won the \$500 million Powerball?

Considering how the opioid crisis has wracked Appalachia, and this crisis has fallen off the radar during the pandemic, I think I would use part of it for drug treatment and illegal-drug education programs. Maybe I would use part of it to buy a writer's cabin in northern New Mexico, just because it's beautiful.

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

Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, Steve Goodman; John Prine; Dvorak; Beethoven; Tchaikovsky; Miles Davis and basically anyone from the Cool School era of jazz. Louis Smith, who was a minor jazz figure in Europe in the 1970s-1990s, I would invite. He was one of my music teachers as a young person and helped me to understand both the importance of discipline and how to be an effective teacher.

6. What are five things on your bucket list?

Take a Mediterranean Cruise that replicates Odysseus's journey in the *Odyssey*. Cruise the Norwegian fjords. Patagonia. Brazil; especially Rio. Southeast Asia, in particular Vietnam and Thailand. China, especially the southeastern part of that country; and Hong Kong

7. What would you be doing if you were not an academic?

I would be organizing mountain-bike rides in the Southwest; or Bolivia. I might be an interpretive guide for visitors at Chaco Canyon (Chaco Culture National Historic Park), or Mesa Verde National Park.



Jason Parker

I wanted to be a professor since I was a kid, after I learned they got paid to read books and maps all day. But then my career goals changed to “rock star,” and I almost didn’t go to college because in my teens I played drums in an alt-rock band that became the Chainsaw Kittens.

We were offered a record contract (and briefly shared a manager with fellow Okies the Flaming Lips) but I was also offered a scholarship to Vanderbilt at the same time, and I decided to take the latter. They had a good run in the 90s— a half-dozen albums, videos on MTV, toured with Smashing Pumpkins. So I am the Pete Best of Norman, Oklahoma. Although unlike him I didn’t get fired and have zero regrets— especially given how the Vandy thing worked out for me...
Vanderbilt worked out twice over:

I caught the history bug and met my wife. (Actually worked out thrice, counting my daughter who just graduated from there!...) I was an English major, but I became friends with a couple of the younger history pros like the amazing Michael Bess. Then in France for study abroad, I devoured the small library of books in English: oldschool historians like Toynbee, Trevelyan, Prescott. Reading them in a place so thick with history enthralled me. I came back and added a history minor. I also met Pascale, whose Caribbean roots put that region on my mental map. After graduation I worked at Vandy as co-head of student volunteer activities, and got my M.A. in my free time. I wrote my thesis in Southern and Black history (two of my other loves) but I had a seminar with the awesome Tom Schwartz. We read the first edition of *Explaining*, in which I found my future advisor Bob McMahon (and the seeds of my second book in a footnote by Michael Hogan).

Looking back, I was always a Cold War kid, but the above revealed decolonization as the second part of my own personal research double-helix. And music has come back into the picture: I’m in a cover band with some other pros and partners, and I’m happy to say that our name— Ride The Panda!— has already graced these pages. If SHAFR ever comes to College Station, RTP could do the social event: punk/new-wave/’90s live karaoke!...

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

I have a gift for loving TV comedies that end too soon (*Arrested Development*, *Better Off Ted*, *Chappelle’s Show*, *Angie Tribeca*) but my all-time fave (*Simpsons*) has arguably gone on too long, which might also be true of my beloved South Park. The dramas I love (*Breaking Bad*, *Sopranos*) do better at hitting that Goldilocks length of “just right.” For movies, my Mt. Rushmore is *Airplane!*, *Stripes*, *Groundhog Day*, *Top Secret!*, *Lone Star*, *Spinal Tap*, Monty Python, and any early Mel Brooks.

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

I don’t tend to get anxious since going on *Jeopardy!* twenty years ago fried my nervous system. But there were a couple moments: an AHA travel nightmare that forced me to squeeze/reschedule my interviews into the one day I made it to San Francisco; giving a lecture at the Library of Congress in front of some of my academic idols; and last year’s virtual SHAFR when the power went out on my street right as my panel began.

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

I have a rather esoteric “wall of fame” on my office door— no one yet has correctly identified all the folks on there. But from it I would pick three for their genius and guts: Richard Feynman, George Orwell, and Perry Wallace. (And I would have Dave Grohl and Woody Guthrie at the table too, but they’re covered under #5.)

4. What would you do if you won the \$500 million Powerball?

I would take care of everyone I love, buy a Provence vineyard and live there half the year (and Texas or a beach the other half), travel to everyplace on my bucket list, and give a bunch to my favorite causes.

5. 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 invoke organizer’s prerogative and have Ride The Panda open the show!... Not all of my all-time musical loves are good live (REM, ugh) so I would cherry-pick the ones that are: Beatles, James Brown, Prince, Foo Fighters, Jane’s Addiction, the Lips, Rage Against The Machine, Public Enemy, the Beasties, Tribe, the Clash, Veruca Salt. And I would have Mozart, Beethoven, Miles Davis, Robert Johnson, Woody Guthrie, Johnny Cash, and John Philips Sousa in the VIP section just so I could see their interactions and reactions!...

6. What are five things on your bucket list?

I’ve lived for at least six months on three continents, and would like to do the same for the remaining three (Antarctica doesn’t count!). Travel extensively, and purposefully— e.g. I love college football gamedays, so I’ve been trying to hit all the major ones (I’ve been to 38, would like to get to 50). Publish some non-academic writing (in my free time I’ve been working on a couple non-academic writing projects— a novel, and a nonfiction piece on parenting our son through his epilepsy to adulthood). Jam with my musical heroes! (Also covered under #5).

7. What would you be doing if you were not an academic?

I love campus- and college-town life so much that I’d find a way to keep myself and my family in its orbit, even if on the non-academic side of things. So, in that setting, probably something in music, or in writing/publishing.

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

The type of movies I like are very much tied to my childhood, which was filled with Disney and musicals—most memorably *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*. (Yes, I still know all the words to “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” and all the songs from *The Sound of Music*, because we had both records when I was growing up.) So I still like a good animated film (like *Toy Story*) and love musical theater (*Les Misérables* is my favorite, which I first saw in London during study abroad as an undergraduate student).

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

Being SHAFR Executive Director provides me with plenty of nerve-wracking moments, especially during our annual conferences, when I see myself as the host trying to make sure that everyone has a great and rewarding time. The moment that immediately pops up in my memory is when the Arlington Renaissance Hotel double-booked the first day of our conference and there was a drumming celebration in the lobby outside our break-out rooms, which caused me to sprint from the Council meeting to investigate. But SHAFR members are a great bunch to work with and generally roll with the punches, which I appreciate more than you know.

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

If I could have dinner with three historical figures, I'd pick Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela, because I teach a course that ties the three together. Since I have spent years trying to put them into conversation with one another in the classroom, it would be awesome to actually be a fly on the wall as they were actually in conversation.

4. What would you do if you won the \$500 million Powerball?

If I won a \$500 million Powerball, I'd plump up SHAFR's endowment a wee bit, as I get to see day in and day out the difference it makes in what SHAFR can do for its members. But it doesn't need \$500 million (then everyone would want to be a diplomatic historian!). So I'd use the remainder for another passion of mine—abolishing the death penalty in Tennessee and hopefully the entire United States. I've advocated on this issue since a high school classmate of mine, Tim McVeigh, was sentenced to death after killing 168 people in the bombing of the Murrah Federal Office Building in Oklahoma City. In Tennessee, I've worked with Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, lobbied almost every year on the issue, written a book about the state's death penalty abolition movement (*Tennessee's New Abolitionists*), and visited a friend on Tennessee's death row for the past 21 years. So with that many million, I should be able to advance both SHAFR and this vital human rights issue.

5. 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'm afraid that if I had an unlimited budget and a time machine, I'd have to bequeath those to someone who cared a great deal about music, which isn't me. Maybe I could auction them off at the next SHAFR conference to the highest bidder—to deflect any criticism about my not donating my entire \$500 million Powerball winnings to the society;-)

6. What are five things on your bucket list?

I don't have a bucket list. I try not to save things up to do but rather to do them as I have opportunity—and to be very thankful for the opportunities I have, rather than focusing on something else I think I'd like to do. For the last dozen years, my Mom and I have section-hiked on the Appalachian Trail (AT). One year, we encountered a hiker who looked miserable. I asked him what had led him to hike the AT. He gritted out between clenched teeth that it was on his bucket list! I've been very fortunate to do a lot of things that others only dream of; for example, I've had the chance to travel to South Africa, Turkey, India, and much of Europe as a result of my work in academia. I'm not waiting for retirement to start traveling!

7. What would you be doing if you were not an academic?

If I were not an academic, I'd definitely be a high school History teacher. My grandmothers were both school teachers (proud graduates of Normal Schools in upstate New York in the 1930s), and the only thing I had ever wanted to be when I grew up was a teacher. That's what I went to college to be. I started out (for one semester) to be a high school Math teacher (because my mother told me there were always jobs for Math teachers), and then changed my major to History so I wouldn't be bored. I loved student-teaching 9th- and 10th-graders at Cuba Central School, and I received my provisional license to teach in New York State when I graduated. But doing research at the FDR Presidential Library for my Honors thesis on the Morgenthau Plan (for reconstruction/deconstruction of postwar Germany) made me fall in love with historical research. When my mentors at St. Bonaventure University—Dr. Tom Schaeper and Dr. Ed Eckert—told me I could both teach and research as a graduate student and professor, I started applying to grad schools. And today I also get to teach aspiring high school History teachers at Middle Tennessee State University.



Amy Sayward

I stumbled into history. I took my undergraduate degree in English with a pre-med concentration. I taught English in China for a year and then spent a few years living and working in New York City. It was not until I reconnected with one of my undergraduate history professors that I realized I could be a historian and so I applied to graduate school. I love research and storytelling. I find writing cathartic. Being in a room with students gives me energy. It was the right fit.

I live in Brookline, Mass., with husband (Brian), two teenagers, and our pandemic puppy. My office at Northeastern University is a short bike ride away. Though my graduate training was in U.S. diplomatic and Cold War history, my work has recently moved toward environmental history. My current book project, *From the Red Desert to the Red Planet*, traces American ideas and encounters with extreme environments from World War Two through today. Essays based on this research have been published in *Diplomatic History*, *Environmental History*, and *Endeavour*.

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

Wow, what a time to answer this question. Right smack in the middle of “peak TV” AND a global pandemic that has kept us all watching more screens than I ever thought possible. Here are some of the shows I have enjoyed over the past 18 months – all for completely different reasons. My son got me hooked on *Community* and a return to *30 Rock*. I binged *Money Heist* with my daughter who wanted to keep up on her Spanish. *Ted Lasso* and *The Mandalorian* were great for winter family TV nights and a little relief from the chaos of our world. Brian and I enjoyed *Lupin* and *Call my Agent*. *Better Things* is my own guilty pleasure. For those nights that I can’t sleep, or wake up restless, I have turned towards genres I have never before liked: sci-fi and historical fiction (I know, I know). I watched all of *The Expanse* in the dead of winter at 2am; have been known to turn on *The Great* or *The Crown* when I need my fix of gorgeous costumes. I recommend *Schitt’s Creek* to everyone.

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

Let me start by admitting that there are things that cannot be put into print. What I can share: during my first SHAFR conference, I called a senior scholar who took time to read my work by the wrong name – repeatedly. But in general, since I expect nearly all professional moments to be slightly anxiety producing, I am usually pleasantly surprised when they are not. Plus, I don’t embarrass easily.

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

I actually ask my students this question every year on the first day of class. After they answer, I pair them up and make them create brief dialogues between their historic figures. Needless to say, this leads to some pretty wonky combinations that give us conversation material for the entire term. My students come up with some amazing people, some that I cannot believe I never thought of. For example, last year two students said they would invite Jesus to dinner. And I was like, *of course!* Has any single historical figure been so cited, so mentioned, so attributed to global events? So, I would invite Jesus. And then I would add Emma Goldman. I find her radicalism, her power, her fierce confidence all thrilling. The last one I had to think about a bit, but I decided on Minerva Hamilton Hoyt, a woman I have discovered in my current research. She was an LA socialite who used her status and fortune to save the desert. The female John Muir you have never heard of. She explored the desert in heels.



Gretchen Heefner

4. What would you do if you won the \$500 million Powerball?

First, I would have to give a bunch of the money to whoever gave me the ticket, because I have never purchased a lottery ticket and don’t imagine that will change. Next, I would pay off any outstanding bills for my family, including college costs for nieces and nephews, mortgages for brothers and sisters, etc. I would make sure my mom is set up for the rest of her life. I would dump a chunk of change into my retirement for later; save a larger chunk for travel now. I would move into a small house with big windows and a sizeable yard (for the dog and some gardening). I would hire out the tasks I don’t like to do and spend the extra time doing the things I love to do. Most of the money would go to others – I would start with local charities that I know and respect, such as my local food pantry and education organizations; women’s health and environmental groups would follow. I would channel funds into voting rights organizations and state-level election campaigns. In doing so, I would copy Mackenzie Scott and give gifts without strings. And then the money would be gone and I could go back to living anonymously.

5. 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 just watched “Summer of Soul.” I could do no better than to simply recreate that experience.

6. What are five things on your bucket list?

I have never thought about generating a bucket list, I guess I just assume I will find interesting things to do as time allows and know that I will get around to those things I think are most important. That being said, being stuck at home for the past 18 months has amplified my wanderlust. In the immediate term I really want to travel. The five places I most want to go – for no less than 4 weeks each: the Sahara; Greenland; India; Norway; Sicily.

7. What would you be doing if you were not an academic?

From age 5 through 19 here were my plans: first female president of the United States; first female quarterback in the NFL; photojournalist; writer; painter; physician working for Doctors without Borders; for a time, I wanted to open a restaurant called “Bacon & Avocado” (not because the name is good, but because every dish would have either bacon or avocado in it). I still dream about a few of those.



Matt Masur

I am currently a professor at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire, where I have been teaching since 2004. Before Saint Anselm I was a graduate student at Ohio State, and before that I was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan. I was interested in history while I was in high school, and I had a few excellent professors at Michigan who inspired me to go to grad school. I recently edited *Understanding and Teaching the Cold War*, a volume in the Harvey Goldberg Series from University of Wisconsin Press. (Which, it should be noted, has essays from numerous SHAFR scholars.) I'm married to Jennifer Walton, who many SHAFR folks may remember from her work organizing the annual meeting for several years. We have two boys (11th grade and 8th grade), and we recently added a COVID dog to the family. The jury is still out whether that was a good idea.

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

I feel like my list of favorites is always changing. But a few things that have stood the test of time for me are *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Blue Brothers*, *Do the Right Thing*, most Coen Brothers movies (especially *Raising Arizona* and *Fargo*), *Freaks and Geeks*, and several of the Wes Anderson movies (*Rushmore*, *Royal Tenenbaums*, and *Fantastic Mr. Fox*).

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

There are so many! Pick pretty much any day during my first semester of full-time teaching when I never felt adequately prepared or that I had a good handle on the material. It was also nerve-wracking to participate in a SHAFR plenary panel just as I was finishing my PhD. That may have been the largest audience that I've addressed, and certainly the most knowledgeable on foreign relations. One of the most embarrassing was when I was part of a small group of recent PhDs invited to share our research with a senior Vietnam specialist. I was teaching a full load and a family member was facing a serious health scare, so I was woefully unprepared. I accidentally submitted an earlier (and very rough) draft of my work and didn't catch my mistake until we were discussing it as a group. It was a terrible paper, but everyone was very polite and complimentary. I did learn from the experience that sometimes it's okay to say no or to back out of an obligation when necessary. That's sometimes hard to remember, especially when we are early in our careers.

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

Zhou Enlai, W.E.B. DuBois, and Vo Nguyen Giap. That's almost 300 years of history at one dinner table. Think about what the three of them lived through and the historic developments they witnessed—and shaped.

4. What would you do if you won the \$500 million Powerball?

First I would express some shock, because I've never bought a Powerball ticket and that's unlikely to change. But then I'd think about using the money to fund study abroad experiences for students with limited financial resources. I've brought students to both Vietnam and Cuba, and it was a great experience—but those programs are expensive, and generally more affluent students are most likely to participate. It would be nice to extend those opportunities to other students as well. Plus, it would give me a chance to travel to all sorts of locales—isn't that always what people want to do when they win the lottery?

5. 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'd have to go with the bands I listened to in my "formative years." So U2, REM, Public Enemy, the Police, the Clash, De La Soul. As an added bonus I'd use the time machine to grab them at their peak. No one needs to hear U2 performing the "hits" from "Pop" or "How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb." If I'm going to try to sound more sophisticated I'll add Bob Dylan and Trinh Cong Son—that would be an interesting (and historic) collaboration.

6. What are five things on your bucket list?

I'm too young to have a bucket list!

7. What would you be doing if you were not an academic?

At this point, I feel like if I was ever qualified for another line of work I've lost those skills. But I like cooking, so maybe a chef? I have a feeling that's the type of job that is much different from its romanticized depiction on TV and in movies, so maybe I'll just stick with History Professor.



Professional Notes

Brian Etheridge (Kennesaw State University) has been appointed as SHAFR's inaugural Electronic Communications Editor as of November 2021.

Jayita Sarkar will be Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow in Scotland beginning in July 2022.



Recent Books of Interest

Akbaruddin, Syed. *India vs UK: The Story of an Unprecedented Diplomatic Win*. (HarperCollins, 2021).

Ben-Nun, Gilad. *The Fourth Geneva Convention for Civilians: The History of International Humanitarian Law*. (I.B. Tauris, 2021).

Brady, Steven J. *Chained to History: Slavery and US Foreign Relations to 1865*. (Cornell, 2022).

Brands, Hal. *From Berlin to Baghdad: America's Search for Purpose in the Post-Cold War World*. (Kentucky, 2021).

Brands, Hal. *The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us about Great-Power Rivalry Today*. (Yale, 2022).

Chavez, Tizoc Victor. *The Diplomatic Presidency: American Foreign Policy from FDR to George H. W. Bush*. (Kansas, 2021).

Cobas, José, Bonnie Urciuoli, Joe Feagin, and Daniel Delgado, eds. *The Spanish Language in the United States: Radicalization, Rootedness, and Resistance*. (Routledge, 2022).

Cooper, James. *A Diplomatic Meeting: Reagan, Thatcher, and the Art of Summitry*. (Kentucky, 2022).

Curtis IV, Edward E. *Muslims of the Heartland: How Syrian Immigrants Made a Home in the American Midwest*. (NYU, 2022).

Doenecke, Justus D. *More Precious Than Peace: A New History of America in World War I*. (Notre Dame, 2022).

Downes, Alexander B. *Catastrophic Success: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Goes Wrong*. (Cornell, 2021).

Dunn, Dennis J. *Caught Between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow*. (Kentucky, 2021).

Gwatiwa, Tshepo. *The African Union and African Agency in International Politics*. (Palgrave, 2022).

Fajardo, Margarita. *The World that Latin America Create: The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in the Development Era*. (Harvard, 2022).

Ferrer, Ada. *Cuba: An American History*. (Scribner, 2021).

Fink, Leon. *Undoing the Liberal World Order: Progressive Ideals and Political Relations Since World War II*. (Columbia, 2022).

Fish, Isaac Stone. *America Second: How America's Elites are Making China Stronger*. (Knopf, 2022).

Fitzgerald, David. *Militarization and the American Century: War, the United States, and the World since 1941*. (Bloomsbury, 2022).

Friedman, David. *Sledgehammer: How Breaking with the Past Brought Peace to the Middle East*. (Broadside, 2022).

Galeotti, Mark. *The Weaponisation of Everything: A Field Guide to the New Way of War*. (Yale, 2022).

Garrity, Patrick J. and Erin R. Mahan. *Averting Doomsday: Arms Control during the Nixon Presidency*. (Virginia, 2021).

Ghazvinian, John. *America and Iran: A History, 1720 to the Present*. (Vintage, 2021).

Gripentrog, John. *Prelude to Pearl Harbor: Ideology and Culture in U.S.-Japan Relations, 1919-1941*. (Rowman & Littlefield,

2021).

Haas, Mark L. *Frenemies: When Ideological Enemies Ally*. (Cornell, 2022).

Hattori, Ryuji. *China Japan Rapprochement and the United States: in the Wake of Nixon's Visit to Beijing*. (Routledge, 2022).

Henriksen, Thomas H. *America's Wars: Interventions, Regime Change, and Insurgencies after the Cold War*. (New edition; Cambridge, 2022).

Heupel, Monika, Caiden Heapy, and Janina Heaphy, eds. *US Counterterrorism and the Human Rights of Foreigners Abroad: Putting the Gloves Back On?* (Routledge, 2022).

Hinkelman, Jeffrey A. *For No Reason at All: The Changing Narrative of the First World War in American Film*. (Mississippi, 2022).

Hixson, Walter L. *Architects of Repression: How Israel and Its Lobby Put Racism, Violence and Injustice at the Center of U.S. Middle East Policy*. (Institute for Research, 2021).

Hixson, Walter L. *Imperialism and War: The History Americans Need to Own*. (Institute for Research, 2021).

Ho, Joseph W. *Developing Mission: Photography, Filmmaking, and American Missionaries in Modern China*. (Cornell, 2022).

Hulbert, Kylie A. *The Untold War at Sea: America's Revolutionary Privateers*. (Georgia, 2022).

Hunt, Jonathan R. and Simon Miles, eds. *The Reagan Moment: America and the World in the 1980s*. (Cornell, 2021).

Johnson, Loch K. *The Third Option: Covert Action and American Foreign Policy*. (Oxford, 2022).

Kaplan, Robert D. *The Good American: The Epic Life of Bob Gersony, the US Government's Greatest Humanitarian*. (Random House, 2022).

Karlsson, Håkan and Tomás Diez Acosta. *The Policy of the Ford Administration Toward Cuba: Carrot and Stick*. (Routledge, 2022).

Kassenova, Togzhan. *Atomic Steppe: How Kazakhstan Gave Up The Bomb*. (Stanford, 2022).

Lautz, Terry. *Americans in China: Encounters with the People's Republic*. (Oxford, 2022).

LaVole, Mark. *Reagan's Soviet Rhetoric: Telling the Soviet Redemption Story*. (Lexington, 2021).

Melnik, Ross. *Hollywood's Embassies: How Movie Theaters Projected American Power Around the World*. (Columbia, 2022).

Norwood, Dael A. *Trading Freedom: How Trade with China Defined Early America*. (Chicago, 2022).

Parrott, R. Joseph and Mark Atwood Lawrence, eds. *The Tricontinental Revolution: Third World Radicalism and the Cold War*. (Cambridge, 2022).

Prior, David, ed. *Reconstruction and Empire: The Legacies of Abolition and Union Victory for an Imperial Age*. (Fordham, 2022).

Ramos, Tom. *From Berkeley to Berlin: How the Red Lab Helped Avert Nuclear War*. (Naval Institute Press, 2022).

Reeder, Tyson. *The Routledge History of U.S. Foreign Relations*. (Routledge, 2021).

Rees, Morgan T. *Ideas and the Use of Force in American Foreign Policy: Presidential Decision-Making in a Post-Cold War World*. (Bristol, 2021).

Rizas, Sotiris. *America and Europe Adrift: Transatlantic Relations after the Cold War*. (Praeger, 2022).

Roniger, Luis. *Transnational Perspectives on Latin America: The Entwined Histories of a Multi-State Region*. (Oxford, 2021).

Sakai, Naoki. *The End of Pax Americana: The Loss of Empire and Hikikomori Nationalism*. (Duke, 2022).

Scarfi, Juan Pablo and David M. K. Sheinin. *The New Pan-Americanism and the Structuring of Inter-American Relations*. (Routledge, 2022).

Smith, Bruce L. R. *The Last Gentleman: Thomas Hughes and the End of the American Century*. (Brookings, 2022).

Specter, Matthew. *The Atlantic Realists: Empire and International Political Thought Between Germany and the United States*. (Stanford, 2022).

Sutter, Robert G. *US-China Relations: Perilous Past, Uncertain Present*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

Takeyh, Ray. *The Last Shah: America, Iran and the Fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty*. (Yale, 2022).

Zegart, Amy B. *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence*. (Princeton, 2022).

2021 Michael J. Hogan Foreign Language Fellowship Report

Throughout Portugal's colonial wars from 1961 to 1974, Lusophone-African anticolonialists inspired Third World solidarity movements around the world, including diverse civil rights groups in the United States. At the same time, the dictatorship in Lisbon led efforts to counteract their outreach by courting what it saw as reliable allies in the United States through paid public relations campaigns targeting conservative lawmakers, journalists, and academics. U.S. relations with Portugal were thus caught in a tug-of-war, as competing interests in the Portuguese Empire vied to win over American public opinion and influence policymaking.

To explore how different social groups in the United States employed these ideas and arguments to suit their own agendas in local contexts, I consult diverse archives in the United States and Portugal. Analyzing Portuguese-language sources in particular is essential to this project. Correspondence and published works from African intellectuals like Amílcar Cabral and Eduardo Mondlane, for example, are key to assessing their efforts to engage with activists in the United States and on the world stage. The importance of understanding – or failing to understand – debates in local languages is even illustrated by my historical actors themselves; the Portuguese dictatorship effectively weaponized theories that had been widely debated and refuted in Lusophone academic circles on an unwitting American audience.

Over the last year, SHAFR's generous Michael J. Hogan fellowship has allowed me to undertake comprehensive language instruction in a number of formats, as well as consult archival material in Portuguese in Lisbon. The grant has provided me with an unparalleled opportunity to refine my foreign-language research capabilities, strengthen my communication skills, and ultimately engage sources that provide crucial and underexamined perspectives to the questions framing my doctoral dissertation at the Freie Universität in Berlin.

As with almost every facet of life, in 2021 studying Portuguese came with unprecedented challenges. Berlin remained under various forms of lockdown through the end of April this year, forcing language schools to close and courses to be moved online. As a result, from January through April I took virtual private lessons through the German Language School (GLS) in Berlin and supplemented the course with a subscription to Babbel, an online language-learning service. In May, I switched to a daily, intensive private course online with the Lisbon-based school, *Português Et Cetera*.

In August I was delighted to return to in-person instruction in the form of a week-long intensive course through a program with the Berlin Volkshochschule, where the instructor specialized in the accents and particularities of African Portuguese. I then enrolled in a further private course with the GLS in Berlin to continue building on these skills from September through the end of November.

In addition to studying Portuguese online and in person in Berlin, the Michael J. Hogan fellowship provided support for me to travel to Lisbon, Portugal, for on-site language training at the *Português Et Cetera* school in the last week of August. The trip was also the first time I was able to access the Portuguese national archives in 2021. Returning after nearly a year away highlighted the progress I have made with Portuguese, including a marked improvement in my ability to communicate with archivists and understand handwritten notes without clear context clues. Is there a more satisfying feeling than returning to a source that was once incomprehensible to find that it suddenly all makes sense?

This kind of extensive language training with five different instructors from Brazil and Portugal was an incredible opportunity to strengthen my comprehension, pronunciation, writing, and communication skills. As I work toward the completion of my dissertation, Portuguese will continue to be an essential tool for understanding source material involving *Estado Novo* officials, the Portuguese diaspora in the United States, and Lusophone-African anticolonialists.

While mastering any foreign language is a lifelong journey, this year marked a major turning point in my progress with Portuguese and I will remain forever grateful to SHAFR for supporting me in the process.

Clare Richardson
PhD Candidate, Freie Universität Berlin
Project: Lusophone-African anticolonialists and the shaping of
race and decolonization debates in the United States, 1961-1974
September 21, 2021

In Memoriam:

Robert A. Divine (1929-2021)

October 16, 1963: "This is a well-written report, but you focus too much on the factual contents of the books, and do not give much critical analysis of the authors' techniques and interpretations. Avoid summarizing in future reports; instead concentrate on analyzing the book." B+.

October 30, 1963: "You give a good, concise summary of Japanese-American relations in this period, but you do not comment on the books and their value. I want more of an historiographical essay in which you analyze and evaluate the contributions of the books; rather than a summary of the subject they cover." B.

November 13, 1963: "Good. Try to give more of your own evaluation of the author's interpretation." A-.

November 27, 1963: "Good." A-.

December 11, 1963: "Very good." A.

Whew! The students in Dr. Divine's fall 1963 seminar on the history of American foreign relations had to write a five to ten page book report every two weeks. As his comments on mine suggest, they had to be critical. We weren't allowed to get by with letting him know what Tyler Dennett, or Paul Varg, or Thomas A. Bailey had said: he knew that already. He wanted to know what *we* thought about what they'd said, and that was pretty exhilarating for a first semester graduate student who'd only recently made up his mind that he wanted become a historian in the first place.

"You want to do what?" his parents exclaimed. "Why not something practical like running the ranch, or the drugstore, or becoming a librarian?" But it didn't rain often enough to keep the ranch going, he didn't have the skills for the drugstore, and he was bored stiff doing library science. So he put his foot down, announced that he was going to graduate school, and that he'd do it at the only place in the



known universe – for a kid from a small town in Texas – where that might be possible. That's how I wound up, in Austin in 1963, in the diplomatic history seminar of Dr. Divine.

I'd only vaguely heard of him as an undergraduate, and had taken none of the courses he'd offered at that level. I didn't have any clearer idea, either, of what a seminar was until I walked in on the first day, found a seat at the big table in Garrison Hall, lit a cigarette as all the other students at that moment were doing, and tried to stay cool by blowing smoke at the ceiling while wondering what all of this was going to be like. What it was like – this is the only word that

really describes it – was "electric."

This big energetic guy swept in, probably just off the phone from Washington we assumed. He sat down, spread out his notes, tilted back in his chair at an alarming angle, and began talking at an even more alarming speed. I later discovered that this was because he'd grown up in Brooklyn and studied at Yale, mysterious places where people did that sort of thing. He'd spin out ideas at twice the rate of any regular Texan, while we scrambled to take notes with one hand, while waving the other one in the air to get our questions answered, while at the same time trying to avoid setting each other on fire with all the ashes we were flinging around. That was the atmosphere – crackling – and we left the room at the end of each seminar excited, exhausted, and sometimes singing.

We soon learned the secret: that Dr. Divine's metabolism worked faster than anybody else's. Only that could have allowed him to take the time he did for us – grading our papers, rewriting lectures, updating bibliographies, making himself available in office hours – while still publishing new books almost annually, chairing the History Department, and maintaining a normal family life. It was pretty amazing.

As time went on, though, I also learned that Dr. Divine had a remarkable capacity for calm, reassurance, and long-term vision. I discovered this

on the dismal day, in 1966, when I completely blew my oral examination. He was unperturbed, negotiated a pass with the other examiners on the grounds that perhaps the candidate would amount to something anyway, and then claimed ever afterward that he'd forgotten the event entirely.

He then allowed me to pick a dissertation topic so broad that it would never have been approved in the current era of micro-monographs, and turned me loose. He'd check periodically to make sure I was on the right track, he always answered my questions promptly, and he'd write gentle comments on my drafts like "vague," or "awkward" (but never "crap!" or worse, as I've been known to inflict on my own students). Somehow, without appearing to prod or pressure, he got me from orals to dissertation defense in two years.

At which point, he took another big chance. I'd been on fellowship most of this time, but had never taught. I told him I thought I should before going on the job market. He said "OK," and immediately put me down for a full-scale lecture class – not a discussion section, not a seminar – on the history of the United States since 1865. This strikes me, in retrospect, as a great risk for all concerned, not least for the 50+ students I found myself in front of. But it went fine, despite the average grade I gave having been C. I learned from this that I loved teaching – that I could create my own occasional crackles in the classroom. But I'd had an excellent role model.

The mentoring didn't stop after I left Austin. I was surprised, looking back over our correspondence, at how much help Dr. Divine gave me in transforming the dissertation into a book, a process that took four years. When it finally came out, he noted neutrally that "it bears only a passing resemblance to the original dissertation." He was right about that, and along with my editor, Bill Leuchtenburg, deserves the credit for making that happen. They'd conspired secretly, I suspect, to keep me going.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Divine invited me to do my next book in a series he was editing, and not long after that he became "Bob," a critical transition in any mentor-mentee relationship. Another important milestone came in the mid-1970s, when he started sending *me* drafts of *his* articles and books to comment on.

My correspondence with Bob had memorable moments:

May 17, 1967: "To whom it may concern: Mr. Gaddis is a serious and mature scholar who can be relied on to use archival materials with care and discrimination."

October 2, 1968: "The university here is in full

swing again, with over 31,000 students. . . . Yet no one seems to be really grappling with the issue of enrollment limitation."

August 15, 1969: "There is always a danger in trying to perfect a manuscript. This is a laudable idea up to a point, but I have seen too many promising scholars grow old and grey putting the final touches on their dissertations."

July 21, 1972: "I found the Democratic convention stimulating, if exhausting, and was delighted with McGovern's victory. . . . His candor contrasts so strikingly with Nixon's guile that I believe he has a better chance than the pundits are giving him."

May 3, 1973: "I was very pleased to hear that *Foreign Affairs* will print your AHA paper. I wouldn't worry about being co-opted by the Establishment yet, but when you are asked to take part in a Council on Foreign Relations seminar, then I will begin to wonder."

And so it went: the advice was always better than the political predictions.

I'm often asked whether I regret not having done my graduate work at one of the more "prestigious" universities thought to cluster along the east and west coasts. My answer has always been "not in the slightest," because I believe the training I got in Austin was as good as I could have received anywhere – and certainly, during the 1960s, more *serene* than it would have been at Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Berkeley, or even Yale.

It's been a big surprise, then – but also a great privilege – to have wound up as a professinstaoor at the university where Bob Divine was a student. I've even learned to talk a little faster. But I'm also proud, and extremely grateful, to have been a student at the university where Bob Divine was my professor. For that, as a poet once said, made all the difference.

—John Lewis Gaddis

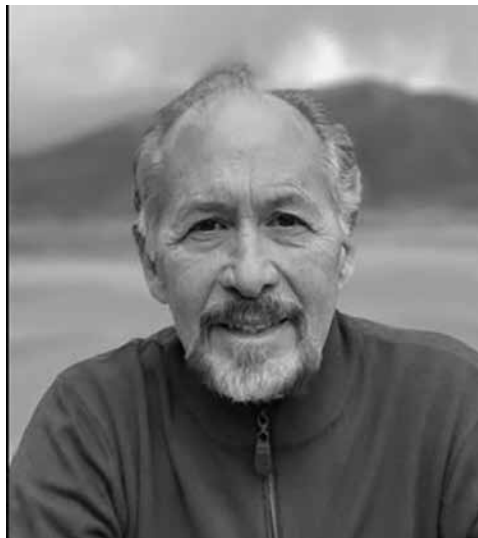
In Memoriam:

Martin Sherwin (1937-2021)

Nuclear history lost a giant—a founding pioneer, influential scholar, commentator, and activist, and warm and wry friend, colleague, teacher, and mentor—with the passing, on October 6, 2021, at age 84, of Martin J. Sherwin. An energetic, exuberant, painstaking researcher, Sherwin, whom we all knew as Marty, co-authored *American Prometheus*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of J. Robert Oppenheimer, between two totemic books on the early nuclear age, and taught at universities including Princeton, Tufts, and, most recently, George Mason.

Born in New York City (to a Jewish family of modest means in Brooklyn), Sherwin attended James Madison High School and graduated in history from Dartmouth College in 1959. As he remembered in his last book, *Gambling With Armageddon: Nuclear Roulette from Hiroshima to the Cuban Missile Crisis*, three years later, in the Navy, he had an ominous brush with the apocalypse. Part of an antisubmarine warfare (ASW) unit based near San Diego, he was part of urgent preparations as the missile crisis peaked. At one point, he retrieved for his commander from an office safe top secret war plans to disperse planes to an airfield in Baja California, Mexico “beyond the reach of Soviet missiles” with nuclear warheads. Some sailors joked that the Baja beaches “would be a delightful place to die,” he recalled, but the situation was grim, even on the West Coast far from the Kennedy Administration’s blockade (“quarantine”) of Cuba.¹

Sherwin (and the world) survived, but the experience piqued his interest in the nuclear arms race and nuclear danger. Over the next decade, in addition to marrying Susan Smukler in 1963 (they had met in high school but only dated in college) and starting a family (Andrea was born in 1965, Alex four years later), he enrolled in a Ph.D. program in history at the University of California-Los Angeles to investigate why and how the weapons that could destroy civilization had originated. His UCLA doctoral dissertation evolved into his first book: *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*, published in 1975 by Alfred A. Knopf. Sherwin’s playfulness was evident from the cover—hilariously, wickedly, it featured the *dramatis personae* drawn by *New York Review of Books* caricaturist David Levine, and the title was a backhanded allusion to Henry A. Kissinger’s *A World Restored*. Inside, the narrative was nuanced, serious, and eloquent. Exploring the intersection of scientific, military, political, and diplomatic realms that produced the atomic age, *A World Destroyed* carefully covered the story’s milestones—from the discovery of fission to the construction of the bomb in the Manhattan Project (and at Oppenheimer’s lab at Los Alamos); to the wartime Anglo-



American “interchange” dispute that signaled the future weapon’s capacity to stir tensions, even between allies; to Danish physicist Niels Bohr’s 1944 quest to alert Roosevelt and Churchill to the peril of a postwar nuclear arms race that could destroy civilization, and convince them to seek Stalin’s cooperation before using the bomb; to the thinking and decision-making at the top of the Truman Administration that, despite cautions from the atomic scientists, culminated in both the atomic attacks on Japan and the onset of a U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race.

Prior books on the atomic age’s origins had suffered from a dearth of declassified documentation. The first volume of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission’s official history, *A New World, 1939-1946*, published in 1962, was able to tap such records,

but mere uncleared scholars couldn’t. However, Marty was able to exploit the first tranche of “AEC historical documents” on the World War II period, as well as just-opened British records, to dig far more deeply than prior efforts. Memorably, he concluded by asserting that, “instead of promoting American postwar aims, wartime atomic energy policies had made them more difficult to achieve,” and, “As American-Soviet relations deteriorated, Hiroshima and Nagasaki rose as symbols of a new American barbarism, and as explanations for the origins of the cold war. A century before, Henry Adams had tersely phrased the truth that had now received a final, unequivocal confirmation: ‘Man has mounted science, and is now run away with.’”² The book won SHAFR’s Stuart L. Bernath Prize and was a finalist for a Pulitzer. (Nearly a half-century later, despite the proliferation of subsequent books and evidence, I still assign *A World Destroyed* in my classes as the best-written, most incisive introduction to the myriad questions, dilemmas, and controversies—and the fascinating personalities—involved in the advent of the atomic era.)

Together with journal articles by Stanford University historian Barton J. Bernstein, Sherwin’s *A World Destroyed* began the “post-revisionist” phase of a-bomb historiography, which to a considerable extent continues today. In contrast to the traditional/orthodox claims by officials such as Harry S. Truman, Henry L. Stimson, and Winston S. Churchill (echoed by historians like Herbert Feis) that the bomb was used solely for military reasons—to defeat Japan, save U.S. lives by avoiding a costly invasion, and end the war quickly—and, at the opposite extreme, Gar Alperovitz’s revisionist case in *Atomic Diplomacy* (1965), benefitting from Stimson’s just-opened diaries, that the postwar motive of intimidating Moscow drove the decision, Sherwin and Bernstein contended that a complex

mix of considerations, both wartime and postwar, evolving and differing for various figures, produced the decision. They also showed conclusively that, contrary to orthodox/traditional claims or insinuations, Truman's decision was not binary—use the atomic bomb *or else* invade Japan with massive U.S. casualties—but that Washington in fact had other alternatives available between the time the bomb was ready in early August and the start of the planned invasion nearly three months later (on November 1). These alternatives included modifying the demand for Japan's unconditional surrender by communicating that the emperor could stay in place (as in fact happened); awaiting the impact of the Soviet entry into the war against Japan (on August 8, between Hiroshima and Nagasaki); and continuing other effective, non-atomic, military actions that were ravaging Japan.

The “post-revisionist” arguments, and the evidence behind them, significantly influenced scholarly views of Truman's decision to use the bomb—though less so the general public, which largely stuck to the traditional/orthodox view, presuming that anyone who questioned or criticized the Hiroshima decision preferred a U.S. invasion that might have cost “over a million” American lives (as Stimson had suggested in a 1947 magazine article). That public, as opposed to many historians', perception of the decision became evident in the controversy over the National Air & Space Museum exhibition, planned to coincide with the event's 50th anniversary in 1995, of the Enola Gay B-29 airplane that was used to drop the uranium gun-type weapon (“Little Boy”) on Hiroshima. After it was leaked that the planned display included evidence suggesting that postwar Soviet-related motives, rather than purely wartime military goals, influenced the decision-making, public outrage forced it to be sharply curtailed (limited to the Enola Gay by itself). Sherwin and Bernstein, along with Kai Bird (his co-author on the Oppenheimer biography, then in progress), were among the many historians who sharply protested the prevailing view that questioning the atomic bombing, or its motives, constituted an unpatriotic attack on the military, and the smothering of what had become, in fact, a fairly mainstream scholarly view.

When Sherwin began teaching at Princeton University in the mid-1970s, most courses dealing with nuclear weapons examined the subject through the lens of technology or political science/international relations theory—aimed at training potential practitioners of nuclear arms control. This was the era when the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, or “SALT,” dominated the U.S.-Soviet superpower rivalry, and such instruction frequently focused on the convoluted details of these negotiations (or nuclear strategies, equipment, and procurement). Sherwin, by contrast, was perhaps the first historian to teach the nuclear arms race (at least its origins and early years) *as history*, and to present the bomb's arrival as a tale with vibrant characters (led by Oppenheimer) and vital, ongoing legacies for U.S. foreign policy and world affairs—rather than the “bean counting” that he felt too often dominated the discourse.

In 1980 Sherwin moved from Princeton to a tenured position at Tufts University near Boston. The following year, as a Harvard College undergraduate, I was lucky enough to meet him. (I didn't know it, but I had already indirectly encountered his thinking when Prof. Everett Mendelsohn, in a history of science class, showed the just-released documentary, “The Day After Trinity,” about Oppenheimer and the bomb, for which Sherwin and Bernstein were consultants.³) In the fall of 1981, fishing for a topic for my senior history thesis, I discovered *A World Destroyed*—and that a key figure in the decisions to build and use the atomic bomb in World War II had been Harvard University president James B. Conant. (I also appreciated that he included the most important documents as appendices,

arousing a lust for primary source research.) I decided to call Prof. Sherwin to ask his opinion of writing a thesis on Conant and the atomic bomb—and then discovered, after multiple phone calls, that he was neither at Princeton nor Tufts, but spending a sabbatical year working on his “Oppie” bio as a fellow at Harvard's Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History. Crossing Massachusetts Avenue, I found Marty—he threatened to call me “Mr. Hershberg” until I stopped calling him “Prof. Sherwin”—and we hit it off. Bearded, casual, funny, unpretentious, he agreed to supervise my Conant thesis, and we cut a deal: he invited me to rummage through his research files for *A World Destroyed* in search of material on Conant (which I did in his basement, between games of ping pong), and I agreed to pass along any cool documents I found in my Conant research about Oppenheimer. I soon came to understand how fortunate I was: Marty treated students like colleagues rather than twerps, introducing us to colleagues, inviting us to meals at his house (where I met his wife, Susan, and kids Andrea and Alex) to partake in conversations that often included notable nuclear figures, encouraging us to lecture in his classes and participate in conferences.

At Tufts, Sherwin continued to expand the teaching of nuclear history. His undergraduate class, History 192A, “America in the Nuclear Age,” attracted more students as public interest in nuclear issues grew during the Ronald Reagan years, and creatively integrated emerging scholarship and popular culture. Students contemplated the apocalypse not only through *A World Destroyed* and other sober monographs but films like “On the Beach,” “Dr. Strangelove,” and “Mad Max,” and novels by E.L. Doctorow and Kurt Vonnegut. To build the community and enhance interest in nuclear studies, in 1986 he created the Nuclear Age History and Humanities Center (NAHHC), which organized seminars, granted fellowships to graduate students, and more. That fall, I was again fortunate to work with Marty when I came to Tufts to write a Ph.D. dissertation (an expansion of my earlier thesis on Conant) under his supervision. The timing proved fortuitous because it allowed me to witness, and participate in, his active engagement in U.S.-Soviet academic exchanges in response to the rise of *glasnost* under Mikhail Gorbachev, who had become the Soviet leader the previous year.

Although a serious, rigorous scholar, Marty also had passionate political views and used his historical knowledge to promote them, e.g., in articles in *The Nation*, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, and elsewhere—above all to expand awareness of nuclear dangers, which spiked in the early 1980s. I remember visiting Marty and his wife Susan at their home in Belmont, and finding a mug in the bathroom that said, approximately: “Things to do: 1. Stop nuclear arms race. 2. Floss.” (Or was it the other way around?) When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, Marty eagerly promoted the suddenly advancing efforts to limit or reverse the nuclear arms race, and exploited *glasnost* to promote U.S.-Soviet student and historical exchanges. He invited Russian scholars like Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov (who would co-author the first significant post-Soviet cold war history, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, 1996), finally able to discuss Soviet history candidly, to Tufts to meet students and colleagues and give talks to classes and NAHHC seminars.

Convinced that discussions between Soviet and American students and scholars on subjects formerly taboo in the USSR were now possible, Marty launched the Global Classroom Project (GCP) to hold video “space-bridges” (or “tele-mosts” as they were known in Russian) on nuclear issues between Soviet and American experts for joint classes for students from Tufts University and Lomonosov Moscow State University (MGU).⁴ In early 1987 Sherwin recruited Tufts University president Jean Mayer, to propose his scheme directly to Gorbachev. A positive response

soon arrived from nuclear physicist Evgeny P. Velikhov, a senior figure at the Soviet Academy of Sciences and a reformist advisor to Gorbachev on nuclear and strategic issues. Velikhov would become Sherwin's main Soviet counterpart throughout the project, aided by his deputy, another physicist, strategic commentator, and informal Gorby advisor, Andrei A. Kokoshin (later post-Soviet Russian Deputy Defense Minister).

After Marty overcame an eleventh-hour logistical-bureaucratic crisis, the first Tufts-MGU *telemost* was held in early March 1988, dealing with the nuclear arms race's origins and featuring both U.S. and Soviet atomic scientists. While, on the American side, Los Alamos veterans Philip Morison and Victor Weisskopf had volubly commented on nuclear issues for more than three decades, the USSR side epitomized the expanding Soviet discourse with an unprecedented presentation by Yuli Khariton, a leader of Stalin's project which shattered the U.S. atomic monopoly in 1949.

Later that March, Marty brought about 70 undergraduates taking "America in the Nuclear Age" (chaperoned by TAs, including me) to Moscow for an in-person joint class at MGU. After remarks by Sherwin and Velikhov, the class was shown—probably for the first time ever in public in Moscow or the USSR—"Dr. Strangelove," capably and simultaneously translated by TA Hans Fenstermacher. During that trip and another a year later, in March 1989—which coincided with the elections for the new "Congress of People's Deputies" (to replace the rubber-stamping Supreme Soviet)—Marty organized, to gauge the fast-moving scene, meetings for the students with Soviet officials, scholars, and journalists as well as U.S. observers such as the resident *New York Times* correspondent. Later 1988 "space-bridge" classes looked at strategic issues and the Cuban Missile Crisis, although—as the Soviet Union collapsed and the superpower nuclear arms race ebbed—the GCP shifted its focus to environmental issues, reflecting Sherwin's broad approach (and variable funding sources!).

In 1989, as the communist world convulsed, Marty organized a Cold War history conference in Moscow, hosted in early June by the Soviet Academy of Sciences' Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada, and attended by prominent Cold War historians (a bit more left-leaning than the more mainstream group that had attended a comparable conference hosted by John Lewis Gaddis at Ohio University the previous fall).⁵ Amid tumultuous events ranging from the Congress of People's Deputies' inaugural meeting (and nightly protests in Moscow) to the massacre of pro-democracy protesters in Beijing to the semi-free elections in Poland to Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral in Tehran, the conference featured frank, *glasnost*-enabled provocative discussions of various Cold War events and topics previously smothered in censorship and communist orthodoxy (Pleshakov led the Soviet side, standing in for many missing "Iskan" colleagues).

Though the GCP ended in 1992, Sherwin followed up the exchanges with Russian nuclear historians by co-executive producing a documentary on Igor Kurchatov, one of the leading scientists behind the creation of the Soviet atomic bomb. *Citizen Kurchatov: Stalin's Bomb Maker*, which appeared in 1999, a half-century after "Joe One" (as the Americans code-named it) shattered the U.S. atomic monopoly, posed questions comparable to those involved in his Oppie inquiry about the moral dilemmas which arise when scientists offer their talents to political and military leaderships.

Meanwhile, he kept chasing Oppenheimer materials—hitting archives, requesting documents through the Freedom of Information Act, interviewing associates. Drowning in these sources, he wisely recruited as a collaborator his friend Kai Bird, author of acclaimed biographies of John McCloy and the Bundy brothers

(McGeorge and William) and remarkably talented at distilling information to a manageable manuscript. Marty and Kai shared critical views of the Hiroshima decision and the removal of Oppenheimer's security clearance in 1954 at the height of McCarthyism, motivated in large part by his opposition to a crash program to build the hydrogen bomb. Consolidating a quarter-century of Marty's research (about 50,000 pages, Bird estimated⁶), the collaboration worked smoothly, and produced *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (New York: Knopf, 2005), which won the Pulitzer Prize for biography, National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography, and more.

Retiring from Tufts, Marty then left for the Washington, DC area, where he taught, for the rest of his career at George Mason University. The Sherwins lived in apartments in Georgetown and then, the Watergate, and often summered in Colorado thanks to Susan's work with the Aspen Institute; Marty also visited Italy to participate in annual nuclear history summer "boot camps" organized by the Wilson Center's Nuclear Proliferation International History Project. Enduring the saddest event of his family life—the premature loss, from cancer, of his daughter Andrea in 2010—he worked on his last major book project, a study on the early atomic age. He originally hoped to complete it by the 50th anniversary of the missile crisis in 2012, but inevitably the project lengthened as he delved deeper and deeper into the sources and battled health troubles, including lung cancer. In 2020 Knopf published *Gambling With Armageddon: Nuclear Roulette from Hiroshima to the Cuban Missile Crisis* (dedicated to Andrea) which permitted Marty to incorporate fresh sources and scholarship on the nuclear events that most preoccupied him. Recalling his Navy experience, he wrote: "I did not know until I researched this book how close to death we had come."⁷ In *Gambling*, he also gave his valedictory analysis of nuclear weapons, arguing that the acute risks they (still) posed overwhelmed any conceivable transitory advantages. Though Marty would've raised his eyebrow at such effusive praise, *The New York Times* reviewer called *Gambling With Armageddon* "the definitive account" of the nuclear story from 1945 to 1962.⁸

We will miss Marty, a unique presence, but will read, savor, and learn from his works for as long as nuclear weapons threaten catastrophe.

—James G. Hershberg

Notes:

1. Martin J. Sherwin, *Gambling With Armageddon: Nuclear Roulette from Hiroshima to the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020), xiii-xiv.
2. Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and Its Legacies* (3rd edition, Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 238.
3. In the mid-1980s, Sherwin advised PBS on the documentary series, "War and Peace in the Nuclear Age."
4. On the GCP, see Aidan J. Demsky, "'Hello Moscow!': Planetary Collapse, Television, and the Tufts Global Classroom (1988-1992)," History thesis, Tufts University, 2021.
5. On both conferences, which I was fortunate to attend thanks to Marty, see James G. Hershberg, "The End of the Cold War and the Transformation of Cold War History: A Tale of Two Conferences, 1988-89," in Mark Kramer and Vit Smetana, eds., *Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945-1989*, Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), pp. 533-50.
6. Harrison Smith, "Martin J. Sherwin, whose Oppenheimer biography won a Pulitzer, dies at 84," *Washington Post*, 8 October 2021.
7. *Gambling With Armageddon*, p. xiv.
8. Talmage Boston, "Nuclear Nightmare," *New York Times Book Review*, December 27, 2020, p.19.

The Last Word: Thinking About the “Cost of War”

Kara Dixon Vuic

On October 6, 2021, the Texas Christian University community gathered together to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of former student and Marine Lance Corporal Benjamin Whetstone Schmidt. The event had been planned for months, intended to provide the campus with an opportunity to pause and reflect on the life of a student who left an indelible legacy in the TCU History Department. That legacy is incredibly complex, born of both tragedy and privilege, testament to the unyielding costs of war and the enduring attempt to learn from it.

Benjamin's story is but one of many, many thousands. In the wake of the American withdrawal from Afghanistan at the end of August and the subsequent desperate attempts of many Afghans to escape the country, it often felt selfish to focus only on his story, as if we were prioritizing him at the expense of others whose stories need to be told. Benjamin's story is only his own. It, alone, cannot capture the larger meanings of centuries of war, or even of the nuances of the most recent U.S. endeavors. Certainly, it can tell us very little, if anything at all, about the ways that Afghans suffered the costs of the very war that Benjamin fought. Nor can his story speak for others who wore the same uniform.

Still, on the anniversary of his death, we tried to tell his story in a way that, we hoped, honored without romanticizing it. We will always tell Benjamin's story, and not just because his life mattered. We tell his story in part because it is so very difficult to do so, because it raises hard questions about the nature and legacies of American war-making and militarism. Those questions need asking, even if we do not have the answers. And, fundamentally, we ask these questions because his legacy not only demands it but also provides us the means to do so.

Benjamin Schmidt came to TCU in the fall of 2006. A San Antonio native, he had played high school football and loved to hunt and fish in the nearby Hill County. By all accounts, he had a very good time at TCU. He declared a major in History, made many good friends, loved going to football games, and joined a fraternity. Yet, as his father later remarked, Benjamin probably loved college “too much.” After three semesters, he was failing out, having earned a GPA that was so low, his mother later joked, that she didn't believe it was possible.

Reluctantly, Benjamin returned home to San Antonio with plans to get himself back on track before retuning to TCU. But, in the spring of 2008, he surprised his family by announcing that he had joined the Marine Corps. He left for basic training in San Diego on Mother's Day.

Benjamin relished being a Marine. He excelled, beginning in boot camp where he graduated as the platoon Honor graduate. He then attended infantry training and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment at Camp Pendleton. One day, he saw an advertisement for sniper school and—always on the lookout for a new challenge—decided to apply. He thought of the snipers as the cream of the crop, the best of the best, and he stood out among them. After completing sniper school, he went on to graduate from four additional, advanced sniper training

courses, along the way demonstrating a talent for teaching and training other snipers like himself.

In 2009, Benjamin deployed on the *USS Bonhomme Richard* to Yemen and other locations in South Asia, but he described the time as little more than five months of boredom. He very much wanted to feel that he was doing something useful and told his superiors that he wanted to go to Afghanistan. Only a month after returning home from sea, he got his wish.

It would be an understatement to say that Benjamin was not a standout student in his time at TCU, but he had a deep love for military history, and he took a book with him on his deployment. While stationed in Afghanistan, Benjamin read *The Anglo-Afghan Wars, 1839-1919*, by Gregory Fremont-Barnes, which examines three successive British wars in the country, none of which ended in what the Britons considered victory. That history informed Benjamin's growing frustrations with the U.S. war nearly a century later.

After he returned from his tour in Afghanistan, he began to make plans for life after the Marine Corps. He had fallen in love, and he wanted to return to TCU to finish his degree in History before pursuing graduate work to become a professor of military history. Before he could do so, however, Benjamin learned that his battalion was being ordered to Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the U.S. assassination of Osama bin Ladin and with public approval of the war plummeting, many expected that the American engagement would end, or at least drawdown considerably. Indeed, President Obama had followed through on his promise to begin withdrawing many of the forces he had ordered to the country in his 2009 “surge,” but even as many troops returned home, others continued to deploy.

With Benjamin's enlistment set to end during the scheduled deployment, he did not have to go. But he knew that none of the snipers in the platoon had been in combat before, and he thought they needed someone with experience to go with them. Despite his misgivings about the war and his desire to move on with his life, Benjamin extended his enlistment and volunteered to go. He left in August 2011.

On October 6, the eve of the 10th anniversary of the start of the U.S. war, Benjamin was on patrol near the village of Lwar Julji in Helmand Province, where he was killed in a friendly fire accident. He is one of an undisclosed number of American and allied forces to have died by fratricide in our nation's most recent war, victim of a deadly combination of precise technology, human fallibility, and the fog of war. He was laid to rest at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in his hometown of San Antonio.

Benjamin was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Valor Device, the Combat Action Ribbon, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with two Bronze Stars, and the Purple Heart. All of these ribbons and medals hang on the wall in the TCU History Department to remind us daily of both the selflessness of

a 24-year old young man, and the profound costs of war.

In his now classic work *In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s*, Michael S. Sherry traces the entangling webs of militarization that defined American politics, culture, and society for much of the twentieth century. Wars, he argues, cast long shadows. Benjamin's family and friends live in that shadow every day, as do the thousands of other families and friends who lives have been disrupted and torn apart by war. Those shadows have long covered the lands and people of Afghanistan, where wars waged by outside nations and internal groups have consumed the lives of Afghans for centuries.

On October 6, only weeks after all American forces withdrew from Afghanistan, Afghans were just beginning to see how the shadows of war might or might not change as one war ended and a new period of uncertainty began. In Fort Worth, Texas, far from the immediate physical dangers that continued to plague Afghanistan, the sun shone down on a group of family and friends who had gathered to remember Benjamin, bringing light to a somber memorial.

The remembrance service took place at TCU's Veterans Plaza, a space where, for nearly one hundred years, the campus community has come to remember those students who have served and died in our nation's wars. The idea for this space began with a student veteran, Edwin Elliott, who had served in World War I before attending TCU and becoming president of the class of 1923. He and his classmates raised the funds for a memorial arch, the pillars of which remain today as the entrance to the plaza. In June 1923 they dedicated the arch in memory of their three classmates who had died in the war.

Since its dedication, the memorial arch has been changed and adapted many times, testament to the continuing shadows of war on one university campus. Students learned soon enough that the "war to end all wars" had done no such thing, and they added a memorial plaque with the names of sixty-four students who had died in another world war. They later added another memorial plaque with the names of seventeen students who had died in the Vietnam War, followed by five who have died in the wars since. The last name added to this memorial is Benjamin Schmidt.

Today, those memorial plaques stand just behind the original pillars, surrounded by a grove of small trees. The architect who redesigned the plaza in 2005 explained that he intended these trees to represent a supportive community encircling the void of trees where the plaques stand. That void of trees mirrors the absence of the eighty-nine students whose names are inscribed on the memorial plaques, but it also allows space for the sun to shine down on their names.

At the most recent of memorial ceremonies to have taken place in that space, a crowd of people gathered to remember Benjamin. A TCU alumnus shared his memories of Benjamin from their time together in the Marine Corps, described how Benjamin had trained him to be a scout sniper, recounted how he had decided to enroll at TCU after learning about Benjamin's connection to the school, and lamented that he would be the last Horned Frog student to have known Benjamin. A retired sergeant major traveled halfway across the country because he had made a promise ten years earlier that he would always remember Benjamin. That Marine had been in Afghanistan with Benjamin when he died, and he came to do one more, final roll call for Lance Corporal Benjamin Whetstone Schmidt.

Even the brightest sun can never entirely outshine the shadow of war, but at TCU, Benjamin ensured that there will always be light. Before he deployed to Afghanistan in 2011, he told his family that if he did not come home, he wanted to bequeath half of his life insurance to the History Department to create a scholarship for a graduate student. Not any student, mind you, but a graduate student, because he said he did not want to support an unfocused undergraduate like himself. Every year since 2012, the department has awarded the LCpl. Benjamin W. Schmidt Dissertation Fellowship to a PhD candidate finishing her or his dissertation. It is the highest award the department bestows on a student.

Inspired by his son's generosity, Benjamin's father launched an endowment campaign to honor his son's plans to become a professor of military history. (In 2015, I was honored to become the first LCpl. Benjamin W. Schmidt Professorship of War, Conflict, and Society in Twentieth-Century America.) This position ensures that TCU students will always have the opportunity to study how wars and the military shape their society. Graduate students in history take their courses in a seminar room dedicated in Benjamin's memory. And, they attend an annual symposium named in his honor. Generously funded by Benjamin's father, the symposia bring noted scholars to our campus to examine the relationships among wars, conflict, and societies. In March 2022, we will gather to consider the histories and consequences of the many wars in Afghanistan.

Several years ago, at that symposium, Benjamin's father addressed the audience. "I know the cost of war," he stated simply, "and I want others to think about that cost as well." At TCU, we are fortunate and humbled to have these opportunities to consider the costs of war. We do so with and for our students, most of whom have lived their entire lives in war's shadow, some of whom know its cost intimately. Grateful to those whose lives remain darkened by it, we hope that our efforts will shine a light on the costs of war, while honoring the legacy of one who knew it well.

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