The Origins of the Nuclear Triad: Bureaucratic Politics and the Evolution of American Nuclear Strategy*
By Matt Fay (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

In a June 19 speech in Berlin, President Barack Obama reaffirmed his desire for a world free of nuclear weapons and announced that a Defense Department review of American nuclear strategy found that additional cuts beyond the level of those in the 2010 New START treaty were possible.(1) Indeed, the Pentagon’s new Nuclear Employment Strategy asserts that the United States can cut an additional 450 nuclear warheads from its arsenal without affecting deterrence. Still, the new strategy does little to address the way the remaining weapons will be deployed. In fact, it specifically says that the United States should maintain the triad of nuclear delivery systems it developed during the Cold War while offering little reason for why the three systems remain necessary. The history of the nuclear triad, however, shows that it was never actually necessary, and that it came into being due to bureaucratic politics, rather than strategic design.

The nuclear triad consists of nuclear-armed bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Over the last several decades, its existence has become a sacrosanct feature of American nuclear strategy. Many people simply take for granted that the nuclear triad is a specifically designed, strategically calculated aspect of America’s Cold War nuclear deterrence posture. For example, the congressionally mandated Commission on the Strategic Posture, chaired by former Secretaries of Defense James Schlesinger and William Perry, began its analysis of the triad on the assumption that it had been “designed for a Cold War that has now receded into history.” (2) But the idea that the triad was “designed” at all ignores its actual history.

Inter-service rivalries, compromises, and eventually, cooperation, produced three different nuclear delivery vehicles and, ultimately, locked them in place. It was only after they were in place that the idea that deterrence required a nuclear triad became commonplace. Understanding the history of the nuclear triad demonstrates that the Obama administration can safely reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal, as it desires, and that it can do so in a way that saves American taxpayers money in the current fiscal environment.

The story of the nuclear triad goes back to the advent of the nuclear age. Early on, the Air Force controlled the nuclear arsenal because of its possession of long-range strategic bombers. The Navy tried to get into the nuclear business by building an aircraft carrier meant to base a nuclear-capable bomber. When President Harry S. Truman approved the Air Force’s B-36 bomber instead, the internal dispute went public—popularly known as the “Revolt of the Admirals”—and ultimately led to the firing or resignation of both the secretary of the navy and the chief of naval operations. While the Navy retained some token nuclear capable strike aircraft, the Air Force had decisively won near-complete control of the nuclear mission.

Air Force bombers would not remain the only means to deliver nuclear weapons for long though. In the early 1950s, it became clear that it was feasible to design a thermonuclear warhead small enough to place on a ballistic missile. The Air Force initially resisted integrating ballistic missiles into its nuclear strategy, persisting with its traditional emphasis on long-range bombers. Air Force leaders underwent a change of heart after civilian defense planners began seeing the utility of ballistic missiles and after the launch of Sputnik raised concerns that Soviet missiles could destroy U.S. bombers on the ground.

Meanwhile, the Navy began to reassert itself in the nuclear business, and the competition between it and the Air Force led to important doctrinal innovations. The Navy argued that placing ballistic missiles on submarines ensured their survivability, therefore guaranteeing retaliation in the event of Soviet aggression against the United States or Western Europe. Moreover, SLBMs reduced the use-it-or-lose-it pressure vulnerable, land-based forces created, therefore decreasing the chances of nuclear war because neither side could gain an advantage by striking first. The Navy couched its argument for SLBMs in a doctrine known as “finite deterrence”—which only required the United States to maintain the smallest number of warheads possible to ensure retaliation against a Soviet attack.

The Air Force demigrated finite deterrence, as well as the Polaris SLBM—claiming the sea-based missile’s lack of accuracy made it only good for destroying Soviet cities, unlike Air Force ICBMs, which were accurate enough to target Soviet nuclear forces. In response to the Navy’s efforts to reassert itself into American nuclear strategy, the Air Force—or more specifically, Air Force officers working at the RAND Corporation—developed a doctrine known as counterforce. Unlike the Eisenhower administration’s massive retaliatory strategy, counterforce called for using a nuclear first strike to destroy Soviet strategic forces on the ground.

The competition between the Air Force and Navy in the late 1950s and early 1960s proved fierce. At one point, as the services prepared for war games on the single integrated operational plan, or SIOP—the country’s plan for nuclear war against the Soviets—the Navy brass believed Air Force leaders at Strategic Air Command were going to rig the game in favor of their
Some doubted its feasibility, while others expressed horror that relegation to a secondary mission, with assured destruction beyond the United States was willing to maintain, and he therefore recognized that counterforce would require a far larger nuclear arsenal than it had been under Dwight D. Eisenhower. McNamara himself recognized that counterforce strategy would require a far larger nuclear arsenal than the United States was willing to maintain, and he therefore relegated it to a secondary mission, with assured destruction being the primary purpose of America’s nuclear arsenal.

The new strategy was controversial from the beginning. Some doubted its feasibility, while others expressed horror that the United States would need to conduct a nuclear first strike for counterforce strategy to work. But in many ways it was a bluff to reassure allies. In reality, nuclear strategy under both John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson changed little from what it had been under Dwight D. Eisenhower. McNamara himself recognized that counterforce would require a far larger nuclear arsenal than the United States was willing to maintain, and he therefore relegated it to a secondary mission, with assured destruction being the primary purpose of America’s nuclear arsenal.

By the mid-1960s though, the three nuclear delivery vehicles had been locked in place. The term “triad” itself, however, did not become part of the lexicon of nuclear strategy until the early 1970s. Around that time, the Air Force began to use the term when defending continued use of strategic bombers that ballistic missiles had made irrelevant the decade before. The Navy, with no incentive to denigrate Air Force weapons systems to increase its share of the budget, made no effort to counter the argument that bombers were necessary as part of a triad of nuclear delivery systems.

Publicly, the justification for the triad was survivability: maintaining three delivery systems ensured the Soviets could not destroy the U.S. nuclear deterrent with a first strike. Behind the scenes, and despite the fact that it was considered secondary at this point, counterforce remained the rationale. But a far larger nuclear arsenal was necessary for a counterforce strategy against a Soviet nuclear force that passed twenty-five thousand warheads in the mid-1970s. Survivability, though, could be achieved with a far smaller nuclear arsenal. The so-called “Window of Vulnerability” hyped by the Team B exercise and the Committee on the Present Danger never gave the Soviet Union a first strike capability against the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and there is little evidence that Moscow ever actually sought one. More importantly, survivability did not require a triad of nuclear delivery systems. Even at the height of the Cold War, Soviet antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capabilities were never close to locating the U.S. Navy’s ballistic missile submarines at sea.

Today, the case for the triad is even more dubious. SLBMs are no longer relegated to the “city-busting” mission that the Polaris was limited to due to its lack of accuracy. Even if counterforce is still considered a vital mission, the Navy’s Trident II D-5 Fleet Ballistic Missile has the range, accuracy, and payload to destroy hardened and buried targets nearly anywhere in the world. More importantly, the Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine (SSBNs) provides the survivable second-strike capability that is the key to nuclear deterrence. No potential adversary in the world has the ASW capabilities to track and destroy U.S. SSBNs. Even if a state did, moreover, it would have to track and destroy at least eight to nine ballistic missile submarines, and three to four in port on maintenance at any given time, to prevent a devastating American retaliatory strike.

As the Department of Defense grapples with a new era of fiscal austerity, each service will search for ways to preserve favored programs. For instance, the Navy is currently seeking ways for its next-generation ballistic missile submarine—also known as the SSBN(x). Recent estimates project its total cost as between $90 and $100 billion. As the SSBN(x) continues to eat away the Navy’s shipbuilding budget, the service has recently requested that Congress exempt it from the effects of sequestration. Instead of skirting the rules, the Navy should prioritize the new submarines over other programs and by arguing that the nuclear triad is not necessary for nuclear deterrence given that the SSBN(x) can handle the job itself.

President Obama wants to reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Given the current fiscal environment, he should do so in a way that saves money. Simply reducing the number of warheads in the arsenal saves very little. Amputating a leg of the nuclear triad—or better yet, two—can save up to $20 billion a year over the next decade. The nuclear triad was the product of bureaucratic politics, not strategic design. Continuing to claim that an anarchistic force posture is necessary for deterrence ignores the actual history of the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

1) New START refers to the 2010 U.S.-Russian Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. New START is a follow up to the 1991 START I treaty, which expired in 2009, and the proposed START II and III agreements, which never entered into force. Under New Start, both the United States and Russia agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads.


On Furlough in Washington
By Sarah Robey (ABD, Temple University)

These are strange times to be in Washington. On September 1, 2013, I moved to D.C. to begin a three-month predoctoral fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History. The paid fellowship gives me workspace in the Museum, free run of Smithsonian archival materials, and the resources to continue my dissertation research at other area repositories. My basement office is located down a meandering hallway lined with former exhibition materials and props. The wing is largely unused, unvisited, and a little eerie: it is perfect for a historian.

Within a few days of arriving in D.C., however, I began hearing murmurings of a possible shutdown. Within a few weeks, the roar was deafening. The radio wonks, the Hill staffers commuting on Metro, and colleagues at the Museum talked _ad nauseam_ about the odds. It became clear that if Congress could not pass the budget by October 1, staff and visitors alike would be locked out of the Museum indefinitely.

On the eve of the deadline, I received a flurry of Smithsonian Institution-wide emails, including directions to empty the staff refrigerators and turn off all computers. It felt oddly like evacuation, and I couldn’t help but draw parallels to my academic interest in civil defense and emergency management in an earlier era. But despite the frenzy, it felt like we would all be back to work after a few days of (what we hoped would be) paid vacation.

I remained in Washington for the first week of the shutdown, awaiting the all clear. As a scholar-in-residence at a federal institution, the lines were blurry as to whether my work was to be put on hold. Despite the sudden uselessness of my perfectly-organized research calendar, I decided that the show must go on. Dissertations, I have learned, do not write themselves.

I roamed from café to café to find temporary workspaces. My days were highly caffeinated but marginally productive. Furloughed workers, adrift with nothing much else to do, congested the wireless bandwidth hopelessly at local coffee houses. Businesses all around Washington offered free burgers, cupcakes, and drinks to shutdown victims – excluding members of Congress, naturally. But as the social media universe so astutely and vehemently pointed out, free beer couldn’t pay the rent, nor could free gym use distract from the stress and uncertainty of the situation. I became desperate to get back to work. Feeling utterly nonessential, I decided to go home to Philadelphia, where I had a desk, access to Temple’s library, and some semblance of routine. These were strange times, indeed.

The shutdown consumed three of my thirteen weeks at the Museum. By the time I returned to work in late October, the remainder of my fellowship time seemed impossibly condensed. Prior to the shutdown, I had discovered exciting leads at the Smithsonian and had blocked out time to spend at the National Archives. Since the shutdown, I have had to reconsider my priorities and shelve some research until a later date. For now, I am focusing on the Smithsonian’s collection while I still have access to it. But I still need to find time to dig through a long list of publications at the Library of Congress and get back to the National Archives.

By necessity, I feel more intimately connected to national politics than ever before. I am at a point in my graduate career where funding is competitively sought-after, and anything but guaranteed. I, like so many of my peers, face a difficult job market and hulking student debt. During graduate school, I have been uninsured and may be again – the Affordable Care Act is near and dear to my heart. I currently work for a public organization that suffered from the shutdown, but also faces the longer-term challenges of sequestration, budget cuts, and continued furloughs. More broadly, I am a federally-funded humanities researcher, well aware that positions such as mine are rare, contingent, and constantly on the chopping block.

One of the central themes of my dissertation is how individual American citizens articulated their relationship to the federal government and the national community during the Cold War. As the shutdown played out, I saw an increasing number of Americans who feel as though the reciprocal relationship between citizens and the federal state has weakened. Federal workers were only the first to feel the tangible consequences of this shift, but the effects could have a much wider, longer-term resonance. Yet the optimist in me wants to believe that the experience of the shutdown will reinvigorate Americans’ stakes in their governance.

Experiencing the shut-down first hand has made me even more aware of how essential federal resources are for scholars like me. Beyond funding and office space and the archives themselves, the intellectual community at the Smithsonian has fundamentally enriched my dissertation. Aside from the research interruption, the most disappointing aspect of being furloughed was being away from the scholarly culture here. Every archivist, curator, fellow, and volunteer I have met has cast new light on my research. Every behind-the-scenes tour, every meeting of the Museum’s colloquium workshop series, every after-hours lecture has reinvigorated my excitement for my project. It has been thrilling. For the remainder of my time at the Museum I am working to make up for lost research time. But I am also trying to make up for missed experiences and soak up as much of the intellectual culture in Washington as I can.

Finally, this I know: a twenty-minute afternoon IMAX at the National Museum of Natural History is unquestionably the best kind of writing or research break. And to my thesis committee: don’t worry - I’m sure I can find a way to include woolly mammoths in my dissertation.

CENFAD presents a Symposium on the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Fall 2013
By Carly Beth Goodman (ABD, Temple University)

In early October 2013, CENFAD brought together a group of distinguished scholars and teachers for a symposium on the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The symposium did something all too rare: it asked historians to think critically and explicitly about current issues – as they are still unfolding – in order to bridge the gaps between policy, scholarship, and teaching. While the government shutdown prevented many colleagues from the Army War College from attending, the symposium carried on with stimulating discussion and debate.

The conference was the brainchild of Temple University professors Richard H. Immerman and Beth Bailey, director and last year’s acting director of CENFAD, respectively. The objective was to hold an intimate conference about how historians and other scholars teach the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Very few scholars, including those at the military academies, currently teach these conflicts. Bailey and Immerman thus saw an opportunity not only to bring people together to discuss how to teach
the wars, but also to work collaboratively on an edited volume that will provide educators with material they can use in the classroom. New York University Press will publish this volume. *Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* will offer expert analysis of these conflicts, appealing to readers who wish to better understand the wars’ origins, consequences, and legacies, and to educators who seek to incorporate the wars, which were pivotal to American foreign policy in the last decade, into their courses.

The symposium itself was lively and productive. On Friday, October 4, Stephen Biddle (George Washington University) kicked off the event with a keynote address on what “success” might look like in Afghanistan. Biddle gave a clear assessment of what is at stake for the United States in Afghanistan, what is possible, what has happened thus far, and the prognosis for the future. Biddle argued convincingly that the U.S. has real but limited interests in Afghanistan, and suggested that the U.S. must bring its war aims in line with its interests – and its capabilities. While hardly optimistic – “success” is steeped in human tragedy – Biddle’s address served as a terrific opening event for the symposium, clearly demonstrating the potential benefits of involving thoughtful scholars, especially historians, in serious policy debates.

On Saturday morning, participants regrouped for a day of panels, each devoted to a specific topic. The first panel focused on the possibilities and limits of U.S. strategy and the wars’ outcomes. Terry Anderson (Texas A&M University) set the stage for the day’s discussion with his presentation on President Bush’s response to 9/11, the “War on Terror,” the Bush Doctrine, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Michael Reynolds (Princeton University) discussed the history and politics of the Middle East, and the persistent challenge Iran presented to the United States in the years before and after 2003. Finally, Richard Immerman discussed the role of intelligence in the wars, tracing the shift from intelligence informing foreign policy, to serving as an instrument of foreign policy.

The second panel of the day asked how the U.S. fought the wars. Conrad C. Crane (U.S. Army War College) compared and contrasted the U.S. military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Michael Doidge (Defense Centers of Excellence) spoke about the American use of Female Engagement Teams (FETs) as cultural ambassadors on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. Lisa Mundey (University of St. Thomas) presented on combatants’ experiences in the first extended wars fought with an all-volunteer force.

After lunch, the third panel focused on the domestic politics of the wars. Sam Lebovic (George Mason University) discussed the media overreliance on official sources and the resulting framing of the wars. Despite media saturation, the American public remained poorly informed about aims and progress of the wars. David Farber (Temple University) discussed the relative inefficacy of anti-Iraq War protest, and the power of the “War on Terror” war framework.

The day’s final panel addressed the legacies of the wars. Aaron O’Connell (U.S. Naval Academy) offered a sober assessment of the lessons learned from the war in Afghanistan, arguing that there is an inherent contradiction in attempting to remake a society into a modern sovereign state using military tools. Robert Brigham (Vassar College) discussed the limits of American power, in particular the power to transform the societies in Iraq and Afghanistan to U.S. officials’ liking. David Kieran (Franklin & Marshall University) spoke about the efforts of the United States to serve veterans that failed to meet the new and various needs of an all-volunteer force that includes older Americans, women, and soldiers from rural areas, in ongoing wars that have required multiple deployments. Finally, Drew McKevitt (Louisiana Tech University), formerly a Davis Fellow at CENFAD, presented on video games that address the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, arguing that these games are a genre of cultural production that illuminate societal attitudes toward the wars and thus merit scholarly analysis.

Underlying all the panels were questions about how to organize the edited volume that will emerge from the symposium. What do students already know about the wars? How should instructors contextualize the wars, knowing that many undergraduate students can barely remember American political life before 9/11? How can scholars help readers understand the impact the 9/11 tragedy had on the American consciousness, an impact that helped to shape the U.S. official response? The hope is that the essays that emerge from this lively symposium retain its spirit and energy, and that they can be incorporated into military and international history courses, as well as the U.S. history survey itself.

**Further reading**


**Book Reviews:**


By Silke Victoria Zoller (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

_The Global Offensive_ is international history at its finest. It follows the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as it rose to become the world’s first global insurgency. Paul Chamberlin, assistant professor at the University of Kentucky, showcases how the PLO became the first non-state actor to be recognized by the international community of states. At the same time, Chamberlin describes how the PLO’s rise to power was a watershed event for insurgency in twentieth-century history. The PLO proved extremely effective in garnering worldwide support through a combination of military, terrorist, and diplomatic measures, as well as propaganda and aggressive networking. Antagonistic powers such as Israel and the United States developed a range of counter-tactics, especially military unilateralism and diplomatic containment. Chamberlin shows that Richard Nixon’s _détente_ was a conservative movement bent on excluding non-state actors and smaller nations out of global influence. Though major states accepted the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, they established a range of anti-insurgency tactics which could be applied to other guerilla movements worldwide. As a result, no subsequent insurgency has replicated the PLO’s success. The PLO marked both the culmination and the end of successful insurgencies in the twentieth century.

Chamberlin’s stated goal is to write a history of the PLO...
that moves beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Middle East. Toward this end, he follows a wide range of actors: the component groups of the PLO; the United States and the Soviet Union superpowers; Israel; Arab nations such as Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan; revolutionary movements such as the Viet Cong; human rights organizations; and terrorist organizations. Chamberlin explores the manifold strategies which the PLO employed to rise in power, including regional and global attacks (using military and terrorist tactics), international propaganda, relations with other revolutionary movements, and diplomatic tactics in the United Nations and other international forums. Chamberlin also examines how regional and global powers such as Israel and the United States tried in turn to suppress the PLO’s rising influence.

Chamberlin’s narrative begins with the 1967 war against Israel. The Arab defeat separated the PLO from Nasser’s Egyptian control, and caused leaders such as Yassir Arafat and George Habash to turn away from Arab nationalism. Inspired by revolutionary movements in Cuba and Vietnam, they adopted a transnational revolutionary ideology. The PLO proved its viability at the battle of Al Karama in 1968. Subsequently, it began to advocate its cause to Third-World international networks outside of the Soviet-American rivalry.

When Israel allied itself with the Nixon administration, the PLO grew more politically moderate in order to exert greater influence on otherwise neutral states. This moderation prompted a radical fringe of the PLO to break off. The radical group began a wave of airplane hijackings, thus exporting their armed struggle to the international stage as well. The United States placed substantial pressure on Jordan and Lebanon to stop PLO operatives within their borders, but Israeli attacks and popular support for the PLO caused near-collapse for both nations. Meanwhile, the PLO moderated its ideology more and more. After the attack on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic Games, the world community responded and blamed extremists, not the PLO. The United Nations General Assembly recognized the PLO diplomatically after the Yom Kippur War. Popular worldwide support for the PLO isolated the United States and Israel. As a consequence, these countries formulated harsh unilateral counter-insurgency programs and developed forces specially trained for low-intensity conflict. At the same time, they blocked the PLO diplomatically where possible, leading to a stalemate that continues to the present day.

Chamberlin succeeds in creating a history of the PLO that goes beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict. He places the PLO in the larger context of global insurgencies in the twentieth century. Its rise came on the heels of the last major state-building insurgency of the century in Vietnam. However, the United States and Israel developed counterstrategies to the PLO which eventually halted its progress, and forced the PLO to accept a stalemate from which it has never escaped. Chamberlin also shows how the PLO’s tactics decisively influenced global politics in the 1970s, especially in regard to the international debate about insurgencies at the United Nations.

A major strength of Chamberlin’s book is his use of multinational archives and sources. Fluent in Arabic, he is one of the few scholars capable of utilizing Palestinian newspapers and archival material. As a result, he is able to include many local actors in his narrative, many of whom do not appear in the English language sources used by historians such as Geoffrey Wawro. (1) This incorporation of local actors becomes a great strength as Chamberlin fluidly moves between local, regional, and global actors.

Yet Chamberlin’s immersion in the indigenous sources is a liability as well as an asset. His conclusions often seem to mirror the worldview of his PLO subjects. Several of his chapters are critical of Israel and the United States to the extent that they feel polemical. Chamberlin calls for a rational analysis of the situation and explicitly distances himself from polemics in his introduction (p. 10). At times, however, he seems to have disregarded his own advice.

Chamberlin’s Palestinian actors are the PLO, Fatah, and the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine. These groups were mostly secular. Chamberlin’s work does not take religious fundamentalism or ordinary Palestinian people into account. He is a political historian, which draws his attention away from important cultural aspects such as religion.

All in all, The Global Offensive is a well-written, well-researched book that covers both local and international actors, and places the rise of a single national liberation movement into the context of its time and place, and into a greater narrative about insurgency in the twentieth century.


By Paul Braff (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

Nick Cullather’s, The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia, explores development policy, focusing on the Green Revolution’s agricultural advances between the 1940s and 1960s designed to help poor nations feed themselves. Cullather, a professor of history at Indiana University, examines case studies illustrating the development approaches taken by private foundations, U.S. officials, and foreign elites. He argues that these groups agreed on the centrality of fighting global hunger, both out of humanitarian concern and Cold War national interest; hunger, they argued, caused national and global instability, which was bad for American national security as well as its Cold War aims. While the Green Revolution produced more food at times, American efforts to ramp up Asian agricultural production also caused unemployment and unrest, failed to redistribute wealth, and encouraged governments to use repressive tactics against citizens. Cullather finds the roots for these unhappy outcomes in unbending American faith in its model of development, and an emphasis on the well-being and stability of Asian nation-states over their people. American experts applied their scientifically-tested practices universally, and ignored local differences, often to tragic effect. This well-researched book persuasively challenges the traditional portrayal of the Green Revolution’s success and innovatively asserts its significance in the international history of development policy.

Cullather’s story begins with Wilbur Atwater’s 1896 invention, the calorimeter, which measured energy output and food intake. This device allowed scientists to discuss food uniformly using the calorie as a standard unit of energy. The invention of the calorie laid the foundation for the Green Revolution by making hunger quantifiable and measurable – and immune to
regional or cultural differences. The ability to quantify hunger, combined with rising interest in international welfare among Americans during the early twentieth century, prompted scientists and philanthropists to examine how they might harness the power of agriculture and food production to promote global stability and end world hunger.

In the 1940s, Americans tested this idea in Mexico. Working for the Rockefeller Foundation’s Mexican Agricultural Program, Norman Borlaug created a hardy and fast-growing super-wheat. The Rockefeller Foundation celebrated this strain of wheat and promoted it as a way for Mexico to feed itself and to liberate farmers from their farms, freeing them up to pursue industrial work. American development experts focused on creating and improving on agricultural technology, and they believed this was a more humane and efficient approach to human development, strongly in contrast to the Soviet Union’s hard focus on industrialization. However, Borlaug’s super-wheat produced some unintended consequences. It depended on chemical fertilizers, which meant that commercial agriculture companies could adopt it much more easily and cheaply than small farmers who could not afford to buy chemical fertilizers. This meant that big agricultural companies became much more competitive than small farms which could not keep up. The increased production of super-wheat drove wheat prices down, displacing small farmers and preventing them from earning a living. These small farmers moved to urban slums or emigrated to the U.S. because Mexico lacked the industrial base to employ them as workers. While Mexico’s urban areas decayed, and a way of life for small-scale Mexican farmers was wiped out, Americans pointed to Mexico’s increased wheat production as evidence of success.

The U.S. also experimented with social development models, which attempted to directly address the needs of peasants. Unfortunately, Alfred Mayer’s community development project in India failed to account for local customs or increase crop production, and Wolf Ladejinsky’s land reform proposals required the potentially loyal elites to transfer their land to inexperienced landowners. U.S. and Afghan officials promoted a dam-building program in Afghanistan modeled after the Tennessee Valley Authority; they embraced the national prestige and modernity the dams represented, while overlooking the devastating environmental effects of the dams, such as soil change. The Afghan dams not only failed to increase agricultural output, but also salinized the soil, making it useful for growing opium and little else.

In the Philippines, the International Rice Research Institute created IR-8—a faster growing, greener, and commercially viable strain of rice—to force peasants to change from traditional agricultural methods. Americans hoped that by adopting modern rice, and farming it with modern agricultural techniques, Asian peasant farmers would question other social norms and become more receptive to American ideas. In South Vietnam, the U.S. introduced this “miracle” rice to reward their allies and outline Southern and Northern areas, but the National Liberation Front adopted IR-8 and spoiled this tactic.

India’s proximity to communist China made it an important site for American development during the Cold War. Concerned about Indian peasants’ reliance on traditional agricultural techniques, which they considered backward, the American Congress passed the Food for Peace program, to give U.S. food stockpiles to India. They also introduced super-wheat, but many Indian farmers avoided planting it due to easy access to donated U.S. wheat. This refusal concerned U.S. government officials, but President Lyndon B. Johnson reenergized support by using statistical analysis to declare an impending Indian famine. This state of emergency enabled the Indian government to exercise emergency powers to seize greater control over its resources and enforce super-wheat planting.

Cullather draws on U.S. government archives, including congressional committee reports, the archives of philanthropic organizations around the world, and published journal and newspapers articles from various nations to help him assign agency to American state and non-state actors, as well as to non-American actors. He adopts a measured tone in his assessment of the intentions of the actors under discussion. American officials—and private citizens—exhibited both naïveté and arrogance by assuming they could harness scientific technology to alleviate suffering. But they could also be conniving, manipulative, and willfully ignorant about the social effects of their development programs, when gaining support of Asian nations in the Cold War was the priority. Cullather also faults local elites who used American development priorities to consolidate their own power—at the expense of their countrymen. It is a powerful argument, but Cullather’s focus on the Green Revolution inflates its importance—and obscures the role of other American development projects in this era. Michael Latham’s work on the history of modernization projects provides a broader view of the breadth of American development. Finally, I would have appreciated a more direct analysis of how the Green Revolution, in Cullather’s view, fits into the literature on cultural transfer.

These shortcomings do not detract from Cullather’s engaging prose and his innovative argument that draws connections between state and private actors, and between agriculture, development, and Cold War ideology. Cullather’s work urges policy reconsideration, and should serve as a warning to American officials—as well as international development experts—that development models are not an exact science. The problem of hunger requires more than technological innovation and good intentions.


By Kaete M. O’Connell (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

As most Americans can attest, where disaster strikes, the American Red Cross is quick to follow. In the midst of ruin, the organization’s ubiquitous symbol stands out. Bombarded by televised, and recently Internet-based, campaigns to give food, clothing, and blood, Americans donate their dollars while celebrities pledge their time and talents to secure future funds. When events occur outside American borders, U.S. relief efforts often take center stage, as evinced by the recent devastation of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. The American Red Cross is synonymous with disaster relief both abroad and at home, but this was not always the case, as Julia Irwin deftly shows in Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation’s Humanitarian Awakening.

Tracing the development of the American Red Cross (ARC) from its nineteenth-century origins through World War II, Irwin provides a history of American relief and assistance abroad, focusing on the cultural and diplomatic significance of humanitarian efforts in Europe during and after the Great War.
World Safe traces two stories—the ARC’s entry into foreign civilian aid and Americans’ increasing interest in international humanitarianism—arguing that the history of ARC civilian relief is essential to understanding how Americans engaged with the world. The bulk of Irwin’s text focuses on the period from 1914 through the 1920s, and explores how wartime relief provided the context and momentum for the ARC’s rise to the nation’s official relief agency. The ARC offered a platform for civilian engagement in global events and channeled Americans’ increasing concerns for the health and well-being of the people of the world.

Irwin convincingly argues that it was during the early twentieth century that the U.S. government recognized the value of overseas aid, with World War I acting as the key catalyst for the ascendancy of the ARC. The State Department relied upon this civilian relief in a number of crises before 1914. However, it was the ARC’s efforts in Europe during the Great War that catapulted the organization to the fore of U.S. diplomatic efforts, where it garnered widespread enthusiasm and support from the American public. The Red Cross was essential to Wilson’s humanitarian intervention in World War I, and continued to be deployed as a diplomatic tool of the U.S. government for the duration of the conflict.

Irwin’s narrative forgos a focus on the usual suspects: female Red Cross volunteers and upper-level politicos. Instead, she presents a story about a diverse group of civic leaders, philanthropists, and health and science professionals engaging with one another and the world. Yes, government officials played a large role, but so too did private citizens. Irwin emphasizes their symbiotic relationship, with the government relying on the ARC to administer American relief, and the ARC depending on what Irwin terms “governmental boosterism.” Government officials and ARC leadership worked together to present support for the ARC, “as a new American civic obligation and urged every American citizen to embrace this new international responsibility” (p. 10). While support for the ARC was widespread, not all Americans accepted foreign assistance as their responsibility. Irwin convincingly identifies a “host of cultural impulses” that accounted for resistance to the ARC, including one’s ethnic background, regional differences, and personal beliefs on social reform.

Rather than focus solely on the agendas of ARC leadership and government officials, Irwin demonstrates the conviction of relief workers themselves. In addition to those motivated by patriotic or altruistic impulses, many volunteered out of a desire for adventure—much to the chagrin of leadership who never maintained full control over their organization’s public face and could do little to combat charges of insubordination and drunken debauchery. Volunteers were acutely aware of their dual mission to provide material assistance and relief, while simultaneously teaching European civilians the “virtues of America,” but not everyone accepted this perceived government manipulation. Irwin includes commentary from workers who wrote home lamenting the ARC’s attempt to win public affection, as well as ARC leaders, like National Director Ernest Bicknell, who voiced concern over staged events and procedural deviations that favored publicity.

Particularly strong is Irwin’s discussion of the evolution of the Junior Red Cross (JRC), based on the notion of children helping children. Irwin demonstrates that children were more than just victims of war, and highlights the significance of the involvement of American children both in the war effort and its aftermath. JRC activities were open to both boys and girls, “engaging American children in foreign aid and…nurturing the international humanitarian commitments of future generations” (p. 78). Although membership in the JRC fell sharply following the Armistice, the organization remained a success, providing an easy way to address issues of childhood suffering and connect American children to their European counterparts.

Irwin aptly weaves multiple perspectives into a coherent and forceful narrative. Her nuanced presentation of the ARC, as a quasi-private yet quasi-state organization with a dual national and international identity, is invaluable. My criticisms are minor. The pace of the text and Irwin’s interventions into the historiography might be highlighted more effectively by a more concise portrayal of humanitarian aid during the interwar years. As a result, the final chapter, which covers the mid-1920s through World War II, offers fascinating insights, but ultimately feels rushed. Streamlining the interwar discussion would have provided more room for an ample discussion of relief efforts at the outset of World War II.

Regardless, this is a versatile work of interest to historians from a variety of fields. Too often the history of American international humanitarian assistance is only told within the framework of the Cold War. By exploring the involvement of the iconic American Red Cross in civilian relief during and after World War I, Irwin establishes the origins of this movement in the early twentieth century and provides a logical bridge between nineteenth-century benevolent social reform and twentieth-century international humanitarianism. This is a major contribution to the literature on Americans’ engagement with and understanding of humanitarian aid.


By Thomas A. Reinstein (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

Laos presented John F. Kennedy with his first foreign policy crisis. When JFK took office, the newly-formed state suffered from a civil war between the conservative Royal Lao Government (RLG), the Pathet Lao Communist insurgency, and an armed neutralist force. Eisenhowser warned Kennedy that the Laos Crisis posed a major threat to Southeast Asia; if the Pathet Lao overthrew the RLG, Communism could spread throughout Indochina, which would isolate South Vietnam. The United States had supported the RLG during Eisenhower’s tenure, while the USSR, China and North Vietnam supported the Pathet Lao. Instead of sending troops to Laos, however, Kennedy sought a political settlement. In 1962, Averell Harriman forged a coalition government between the royalists, neutralists and Communists.

Previous scholars of the crisis have argued that the U.S. did not send troops because of logistical difficulties stemming from Laos’ mountainous, heavily forested terrain, as well as its lack of deep-draft harbors and a modern infrastructure. But in The Universe Unraveling, Seth Jacobs argues that American cultural conceptions of Laotians were also consequential in the decision not to send troops. The Laotians, according to American statesmen and media figures of the 1950s and early 1960s, were lazy and unwarlike, making them poor allies. U.S. interests would be ill-served if America defended a nation that did not want to defend itself.

An associate professor of history at Boston College, Seth Jacobs previously examined how American cultural percep-
tions of Indochinese people influenced U.S. policy in his 2005 book *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam*. For *The Universe Unraveling*, he relies on diplomatic correspondence and other U.S. government archival documents, as well as portrayals of Laos from contemporary media sources. As in *America’s Miracle Man*, Jacobs places particular importance on the works of Tom Dooley, a humanitarian who styled himself the “jungle doctor of Asia.”

According to Jacobs, Dooley, along with many American journalists, contributed to negative cultural depictions of Laotians that found a receptive audience among U.S. policymakers. Dooley’s bestselling books, *The Edge of Tomorrow* and *The Night They Burned The Mountain*, portray Laotians in infantile terms. Journalists such as Stanley Karnow reinforced this perception, describing Laos as a land populated by lethargic half-wits uninterested in hard work or fighting Communism. Jacobs shows that many American policymakers thought similarly about Laos, ascribing incompetence within the royalist forces to cultural defects and a religion (Buddhism) that celebrates pacifism. That the Pathet Lao fought with skill and determination seemed evidence that they were North Vietnamese cadres in disguise. These beliefs betrayed a misunderstanding of Laos among many Americans.

Jacobs argues that prejudicial perceptions of Laotians stemmed from many Americans’ tendency to approach Laos through a Western mindset. Lao politicians like neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma tended to be soft-spoken and conciliatory, which did not comport with the forceful, decisive temperament that Americans expected from their allies. And while American policymakers did recognize that the leader of the royalist forces, General Phoumi Nosavan, was incompetent and corrupt, they did not understand that royalist ineptitude stemmed from his poor leadership rather than cultural factors. Americans in Laos tended to live in enclosed communities, segregating themselves from Lao society. The idea that Laos had always been a placid backwater went largely unchallenged within the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, even though, as Jacobs establishes, Laos was once a regional hegemon, and its history is replete with martial heroes. To be sure, Jacobs argues that not all U.S. policymakers viewed Laotians as carefree. For example, while Graham Parsons, the U.S. Ambassador to Laos from 1956 through 1958, held Laotians in absolute contempt, his successor, Winthrop Brown, was much less prejudiced, and pressed for increased cooperation between Kennedy and Lao leaders.

In the end, Kennedy chose to fight Communism in Vietnam. After all, Vietnamese troops were, in diplomat William Sullivan’s ironic words, “tigers and real fighters” (p. 269), as opposed to the seemingly indolent Lao. Jacobs argues that although American policymakers considered Vietnamese people infantile, they also thought that the Vietnamese were more trainable than the Lao and more capable of eventual self-rule. Moreover, there was no firmly anticommunist Laotian equivalent of South Vietnam’s President Ngo Dinh Diem. Jacobs concludes that these factors, combined with Laotians’ logistical problems, led Kennedy to focus on Vietnam instead.

*The Universe Unraveling* is a valuable study of the Laos Crisis. Jacobs shows that portrayals of Laotians as pacific and lazy were widespread among American journalists, policymakers and other public figures of the 1950s and 1960s. Though he does not demonstrate a causal link between many negative cultural portrayals of Laos and U.S. policy there, he does show that many U.S. policymakers believed that Laotians were so infantile that they were not worth defending. Further, Jacobs establishes that for many members of the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations, negative cultural constructions about Laotians dominated American foreign policy in Cold War Laos. *The Universe Unraveling* is a useful example of how cultural history can augment our understanding of U.S. foreign relations by showing how cultural biases inform policymakers’ decisions. Overall, Jacobs’ work is well worth reading for scholars of American foreign policy.

**News from Faculty, Students, and Alumni**

**Faculty:**

Beth Bailey is working on her new research project on the U.S. Army and the Problem of Race, 1965-1985. This fall she and Richard Immerman put together a CENFAD symposium on Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, assembling the authors of a book-in-progress they are co-editing for New York University Press for what turned out to be very productive discussions. Her piece on the U.S. All-Volunteer Force is coming out in the international, comparative collection *War, Work and the Soldier: A History of Military Employment in Europe, America, the Middle East and Asia*, 1600-2000 in early 2014, and she recently published an article on the arguments over Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell in the *Journal of Policy History*. More than anything else, she enjoyed teaching a new graduate course on the U.S. Military and Society last spring.


Petra Goedde contributed a multi-chapter section, entitled “Globale Kulturen,” to the 6th volume of *Geschichte der Welt: 1945 bis Heute, Die Globalisierte Welt*, edited by Jürgen Osterhammel and Akira Iriye (C.H. Beck, October 2013). Harvard University Press will publish the English version, entitled *Global Interdependence: The World After 1945*, in December. She spent part of her summer as a visiting fellow at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She is on leave this fall to complete her manuscript on the International Discourse on Peace from the 1940 to the 1970s (still working on a good title). She is also suffering from conference burnout after commenting, chairing, or presenting at the most recent AHA, AALS, OAH, SHAFR, and ASA meetings in New Orleans, San Francisco, Arlington VA, and Washington, D.C. respectively.

Richard H. Immerman is delighted to be back directing
Jay B. Lockenour is honored to serve as the Distinguished Visiting Professor in the history department at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It has been a great learning experience and a real pleasure to be part of the mission to create “leaders of character”: second lieutenants who understand a little history. Being at the Academy during the government shutdown was surreal. The Saturday Night Live Weekend Update skit hit the nail on the head! Dr. Lockenour can understand a little history. Being at the Academy during the government shutdown was surreal. The Saturday Night Live Weekend Update skit hit the nail on the head! Dr. Lockenour can also announce the appearance of his essay, “The Demilitarization of Germany, 1945-2010,” in the volume, *Demilitarization in the Contemporary World* (University of Illinois Press, 2013) edited by Peter Stearns.

Gregory J. W. Urwin, professor of history, has settled into his role as president of the Society for Military History (SMH), filling committee vacancies and launching the new SMH-George C. Marshall Foundation Prize for the Use of Digital Technology in International Relations and Security and Strategy.

Students:

Matt Fay co-authored a policy paper for the Cato Institute, along with Christopher Preble, a Temple PhD, and Benjamin Friedman. Titled, "The End of Overkill?: Reassessing U.S. Nuclear Weapons Policy," the paper focuses on the U.S. nuclear arsenal and the evolution of American nuclear strategy. Drawing on the argument from the paper, Fay also co-authored an op-ed with Chris Preble on the U.S. Navy's search for its next-generation ballistic missile submarine. He also spoke on a panel at a policy forum that the Cato Institute organized to mark the paper's release. In late October he traveled to Austin, Texas to conduct archival research at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library for a project on the of the intelligence community in the making of American nuclear non-proliferation policy in the 1960s. And early this month, he presented a paper on Robert S. McNamara and the Nike-X missile defense deployment decision at a Cold War history conference at West Chester University.

Carly Beth Goodman presented her work at a History Project Conference on Commerce, Corporations, and the Law at Princeton University, as well as at the American Society for Legal History conference in Miami, Florida. She also attended the first-ever African Immigrant Policy Forum at the White House in Washington, D.C. Carly also received notice that she has received a Samuel Flagg Bemis dissertation grant from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations for her dissertation project, “The World’s Most Popular Game of Chance: The U.S. Diversity Visa Lottery and the Dynamics of Citizenship and Immigration in Africa.” Look for Carly at the AHA, presenting on an immigration-themed panel.

Michael Lynch, soon to be Ph.D., was named Carlisle Barracks Civilian Employee of the Quarter for the period April through June for a study about the actions the Army has taken over time to deal with sexual harassment and assault. His work has been circulated throughout the Army staff and used in courses at the Army War College. He is a research historian working for the Army Heritage and Education Center. He is finishing his dissertation, "Sic 'Em, Ned: Edward M. Almond and his Army, 1916-1953” under the direction of Dr. Gregory J.W. Urwin, with defense expected in late fall or early spring.

Tom Reinstein successfully passed his comps in October. He celebrated by presenting a paper at the West Chester University Cold War Conference. The paper examined the Kennedy Administration's reaction to the downfall of the 1962 Geneva Accords on the Neutralization of Laos. The conference occurred in conjunction with West Chester's *Die Wende* Film Festival, which dealt with German reunification.
Tim Sayle is writing up his dissertation on NATO with the support of a College of Liberal Arts Advanced Graduate Scholar Award (Fall 2013) and a Dissertation Completion Grant awarded by the Graduate School (Spring 2014). In 2013, he has presented papers in Calgary and at the SHAFR conference, and enthusiastically accepted an invitation to Canberra to speak at a conference comparing Canadian and Australian decision-making and participation in the Iraq War. In Australia, Tim was disappointed not to see a live kangaroo, but made up for it by eating a kangaroo steak. He recently published an article, “Canada, NATO and the Berlin Crisis, 1961-1962: ‘Slow-Boil’ or ‘Pressure Cooker’?” in the International Journal, as well as reviews in the Journal of European Integration History and for H-Diplo.

Silke Zoller presented at the Temple University-Tuebingen University Transatlantic Graduate Student Colloquium in Tuebingen, Germany in September 2013. The colloquium brings together German and American graduate students to comment and learn from one another’s research.

Alumni

Matthew Shannon’s article “'One of Our Greatest Psychological Assets:' The New Frontier, Cold War Public Diplomacy, and Robert Kennedy's 1962 Goodwill Tour,” was published by the International History Review in October. He also presented a chapter from the dissertation at the History of Education Society in Nashville, TN in October, and will be presenting the same chapter at the AHA in January.