



The Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations

August 2006 Issue:

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“The National Security Bureaucracy Made Me Do It”

A review of Gareth Porter’s, *Perils of Dominance* by Robert K. Brigham (Shirley Ecker Boskey Professor of History and International Relations, Vassar College)

For over three decades, Gareth Porter, an independent scholar, has been one of the leading authorities on the Vietnamese side of the Vietnam War. While earning his Ph.D. in political science at Cornell, he was also a co-director of the Indochina Resource Center, an organization that challenged Washington’s official justification and explanation for the war. He was active in the antiwar movement and used his knowledge of Vietnamese to challenge many commonly held assumptions.

In 1975, as the war entered its final deadly year, Porter published his first book, *A Peace Denied*, an in-depth look at the implementation of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords. This book was well received and soon became a standard for students looking at the flawed negotiations in Paris and the implementation of the agreement’s provisions. Even as he pursued these lines of inquiry, Porter was hard at work on a massive two-volume documentary history of the war. Published in 1979, this document collection provided an entire generation of scholars with their first glimpse into the corridors of power in Hanoi. In 1993, Porter published a path-breaking work, *Vietnam: The Politics of Bureaucratic Socialism*, that established him as one of the leading experts on postwar Vietnam.

In recent years, Porter’s scholarly activities have taken him in a variety of fascinating and fruitful directions. He has become increasingly interested in American Cold War foreign policy and the international diplomatic environment that surrounded it. With *Perils of Dominance*, Porter joins a growing list of scholars who challenge the dominant Cold War narrative. He seems particularly interested in debunking the notion that U.S. policymakers were driven by ideology and that the Cold War was a contest between two rival superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Porter argues instead that “strategic asymmetry” was the most important factor in the Cold War. He suggests that key policymakers inside the national security bureaucracy understood that the United States actually enjoyed “something approaching absolute strategic dominance” and that this belief in American superiority created adventurism—not fear—in Washington. He thus challenges a fundamental assumption about the Vietnam War. The United States did not wander unknowingly and unwillingly into the quagmire, he says, but purposefully chose war, thinking it could not lose. A major difference between Porter’s interpretation and those of others who challenge the quagmire thesis, however, is that he blames the “national security bureaucracy” and not U.S. presidents for the decision to go to war.

It is an equally important tenet of Porter’s thesis that Moscow and Beijing knew that Washington possessed military hegemony and did whatever they could to appease the United States. After the armistice in Korea, China and the Soviet Union—despite their growing rivalry with each other—agreed that neither should take any bold action that might lead the United States to cash in on its superiority. Their goal was to keep the United States out of Asia and focused on the Cold War in Europe. Porter sees Moscow and Beijing as having a more benign view of the world than most previous scholars have suggested. According to him, it was pragmatism, not adventurism, that dominated Soviet and Chinese foreign policy throughout the early years of the Cold War, because neither nation could afford a direct conflict with the United States.

Porter offers plenty of examples to prove his point. He suggests that Moscow and Beijing took Secretary of State John Foster Dulles at his word when he threatened to “retaliate instantly, by means and at places of our choosing” should Beijing or Moscow promote war on their periphery. Accordingly, China and the Soviet Union limited their commitments in several newly emerging post-colonial nations. Nowhere is this appeasement more apparent to Porter than in Vietnam. He recounts

the now infamous negotiations between Zhou En-lai, Molotov, and the Vietnamese delegation at Geneva, when Hanoi's communist allies promoted a divided Vietnam as a way to keep the Americans at bay. Zhou issued a prophetic warning in April 1954, when he apparently told Ho Chi Minh that Vietnam "could not count on China to assist it openly, much less participate directly in the war" should the United States intervene in Indochina. Zhou shared Mao's fear that Washington could effectively isolate China in a sea of anti-Chinese sentiment if Beijing threatened American interests.

Porter also shows how the Eisenhower administration used its position of strength to circumvent the Geneva Accords. For decades, historians have argued that Eisenhower was good at taking the pulse of Congress and knew that neither house wanted to go to war in Vietnam. Congressional caution forced him to reject French pleas for more forceful U.S. intervention. Indeed, Eisenhower historians have applauded the general's pragmatic attitude toward Vietnam, especially in light of subsequent events. Porter rejects this standard explanation for Eisenhower's cautious Vietnam policy, however, suggesting instead that the imbalance of power gave Washington all the cover it needed to resist bailing out the French and to undermine the Geneva Accords. Dulles and Eisenhower believed that Hanoi posed no real threat to American plans, so they made a series of what Porter calls "extreme demands" on North Vietnam. Ironically, because of strong Sino-Soviet pressure, Hanoi was willing to accept all the demands, among them allowing an independent state to develop south of the seventeenth parallel and suspending the national elections. Ultimately, Porter argues, it was Eisenhower's willingness to ignore and undermine the Geneva Accords that "created a ticking time bomb for future administrations" and eventually led to war in Vietnam.

Some of the more interesting moments in Porter's book occur when he returns to his long-held interest in Vietnamese politics. In his fourth chapter, he traces Hanoi's grudging acceptance of the Sino-Soviet appeasement line and argues that the Vietnamese Communist Party took great pains to reunify the country through the political struggle alone, even when the United States supported the state-sponsored terrorism of the South Vietnamese president, Ngo Dinh Diem, and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu. Despite the calls of many southern revolutionaries, including the party's secretary general, Le Duan, the military commission of the political bureau held the People's Army in check. In fact, regular main force infantry units did not get the green light to head south until after the party's ninth plenum in 1963. The first offensive infantry troops eventually made their way south in 1965: proof enough, Porter believes that Hanoi was a good appeaser. Eventually, however, Hanoi had few options but to match the Americanization of the war, and so it allowed a wider war in the South and sent infantry troops by the tens of thousands to support the southern revolution. Many of Porter's conclusions about Hanoi's actions rest on research in Vietnamese-language source material.

In the final chapters of the book, Porter takes his provocative thesis one step further. Armed with confidence born of personal arrogance and their faith in strategic dominance, key members of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations took the nation to war. In a plot line that has several twists, turns, and conspiracies, Porter traces the origins of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. He makes the case that Kennedy wanted to get out of Vietnam and that he used Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and General Maxwell Taylor as cover to promote that idea. In a passage that sounds too much like Oliver Stone for my taste, Porter suggests that Kennedy could not go through the normal channels of the national security bureaucracy because to reveal his plans to the National Security Council would be "too risky." According to Porter, Kennedy believed that Dean Rusk, his secretary of state, and McGeorge Bundy, his national security advisor, would not accept his secret plan to withdraw all American advisors from Vietnam by 1965. Accordingly, Kennedy promoted this policy through McNamara and Taylor, two family friends who could be counted on not to reveal that the president was actually behind the policy. While there is no hint that this secret plan led to Kennedy's death, Porter assumes that many people in the national security bureaucracy were pleased that the plans for withdrawal never materialized.

Ironically, Taylor and McNamara, who supported Kennedy's plans for a phased withdrawal, dramatically reversed themselves after the president's assassination. Once Kennedy was laid to rest, Taylor and McNamara began to lay the groundwork for American intervention, something Porter insists that they really wanted all along. Porter believes Taylor and McNamara were joined by others in the national security bureaucracy who were waiting in the shadows, hoping for a chance to take a more aggressive line against the Soviets. Porter's Lyndon Johnson was an unwilling participant in hawkish discussions on the war, but was eventually bullied into accepting the recommendations of McNamara, Taylor and the joint chiefs to introduce ground troops to South Vietnam and launch a deadly air war over North Vietnam. These hawks saw inaction as weakness and played on Johnson's fears about his own power and legitimacy to eventually convince him to take

a harder line in Vietnam.

In many ways, Porter's challenging book is trying to shift the paradigm on the Cold War and U.S. intervention in Vietnam. In my view, he is successful at marshaling the sources to make the argument that the United States did in fact enjoy strategic dominance in the Cold War. He is far less successful at making the case for the influence of this hegemony on U. S. policy. It is difficult for me to imagine, for instance, that the Vietnam War was actually the result of the national security bureaucracy's understanding of strategic dominance. If that were the case, why embrace Robert Osgood and Thomas Schelling's theories about limited war? Why fight a protracted war at all? Given what we know of Kennedy and Johnson's decision-making and their views on the Cold War, this interpretation makes little sense.

The overwhelming evidence on U.S. intervention in Vietnam indicates that many in what Porter calls the "national security bureaucracy"—an unfortunate term that he uses far too often—were pessimistic about military success in Vietnam from the very beginning. David Kaiser, George Herring, and Fred Logevall make this clear in their work. Why are they more convincing than Porter? For one, they conduct sustained historical research, uncovering many new sources. Porter relies primarily on the published record. For another, they engage the sources. Porter's work at times reads more like a legal brief than history. He makes points but does not engage the literature or the sources. He is also far too selective in his use of sources. Although there are plenty of sources that reveal Johnson's skepticism about the war, for example, there are plenty more that show his unwillingness to throw in the towel—even in 1964. Fred Logevall is far more convincing when he argues that the president chose war.

Porter is trying to convince readers that the president is not really in charge of national security affairs and that commanders-in-chief often find it difficult to hang on to decision-making power. He concludes that "the national security bureaucracy acted as an independent power center within the U.S. government with the right to pressure the president on matters of war and peace." Certainly advisors have the right to pressure the president on key matters of national security, but to say at this stage of the game that Kennedy allowed his advisors to take control of decision making or that Lyndon Johnson was intimidated by or could not control his national security staff is unsustainable. There is little if any documentary evidence for such a conclusion.

In the end, there is plenty of blame to go around for the tragedy in Vietnam. Why settle for casting stones at the "national security bureaucracy," however defined? Porter's book will make us think hard about the power dynamics of the Cold War, but it will probably do little to alter our understanding of America's path to war in Vietnam.

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A Review of Gareth Porter's *Perils of Dominance*

By Edwin E. Moise

Professor of History, Clemson University

Gareth Porter has long been a controversial figure in his field, and *Perils of Dominance* will not make him less so. It provides new and valuable information and interpretations, but it also has enough defects to provide plentiful ammunition for his detractors.

Large portions of the book center on an important insight: that the picture many of us have of a rough balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, each restrained in its behavior by the knowledge that an all-out conflict would destroy them both, is not really valid for the early part of the Cold War. Porter argues that in the 1950s and early 1960s the United States was clearly much stronger than the Soviet Union and China and that awareness of this fact helped shape the policies of all three powers and of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The Communist states restrained their actions in an effort to avoid direct conflicts with the United States, while the United States was confident enough to push its advantage and indeed, sometimes pretended to be more willing to fight than it actually was and in that way got the other side to back down. Porter says the Communist states' "appeasement" policies were "aimed at avoiding the risk of a clash with the United States at any cost," especially during the Eisenhower years (xi).

The broad outlines of this interpretation are clearly correct. The United States was the dominant power, and even those scholars who are aware of that fact (this reviewer included) have not given it the attention it deserves. This view of U. S. dominance has led Porter to reinterpret Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' policies toward Indochina in the first half of 1954, at the time of the Geneva Conference. Dulles was not nearly so ready as other authors have believed to use U.S. military power to block a Communist victory in Vietnam. Porter offers convincing evidence that Dulles did not think he would need to use force. Instead, he bluffed, exploiting the superior strength of the United States and using the threat of U. S. military intervention to intimidate China and the Soviet Union.

This interpretive lens works well when applied to some crucial decisions on Indochina in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but when Porter writes about the mid-1960s it becomes apparent that he is exaggerating the evidence on Communist restraint. A CIA intelligence memorandum dated March 18, 1963 [1], does not, as Porter claims, state "that the USSR had no interest in helping local Communists gain power anywhere in the world" (19). Farther on Porter makes the startling assertion that "Soviet archival sources and recently published Chinese accounts of the period both indicate that the USSR gave no military assistance to the North Vietnamese during the entire period from 1960 to early 1965, except for a few thousand World War II-era German weapons provided in 1962" (48). Neither of the two sources Porter cites for this statement supports it, and one obvious counterexample comes to mind. The PT boats involved in the Tonkin Gulf incident of August 2, 1964, were built in the Soviet Union in the 1950s and sent to North Vietnam in the early 1960s.

If Porter had used his view of American dominance to analyze the escalation decisions of 1965 he might have produced some really interesting results, but he does not apply it as much as he did for earlier periods. He discusses the realization of American officials, in June 1965, that despite the presence of American ground and air combat forces in Vietnam, the Communists might be about to win the war there (222). Yet he does not mention that the People's Republic of China began sending significant numbers of military personnel into North Vietnam at about that time. The Communist leaders' increased willingness to take strong action in Vietnam, despite the risks of confrontation with the United States, cries out for a much more detailed analysis, as does the process by which American leaders recognized that they were losing their ability to

intimidate their opponents.

The other major thread running through *Perils of Dominance* is the belief that Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson were all less inclined to adopt extreme Cold War policies than their principal advisers were. On this issue Porter makes some valid points, but he sometimes goes well beyond his evidence. His story of how and why Secretary Dulles decided to encourage Premier Ngo Dinh Diem not to meet with representatives of the Communist government in Hanoi to discuss holding elections for the reunification of Vietnam, as called for by the Geneva Accords, is new and extremely interesting. American officials had been planning to encourage Diem to meet Hanoi's representatives because they were confident that Hanoi would refuse to agree to conditions for a truly free election. It would then be clear to the world that Hanoi was blocking the elections. Toward the middle of 1955, however, Dulles became seriously concerned that Hanoi would make reasonable proposals in the meeting. He then decided to discourage Diem from going, and in July 1955 Diem announced that he would not attend. The documentation for most of this story seems very solid, although there does not appear to be much evidence for the assertion that Dulles did not consult President Eisenhower about his decision.

Porter paints an accurate picture of the hawks in the Kennedy administration who were pressing for U.S. military action in Vietnam, but his picture of Kennedy's resistance to that pressure is problematic. He says the president was determined to avoid an American war in Vietnam but for political reasons wanted to hide the fact, not only from the public, but to the extent he could, from his own national security bureaucracy. There are two problems with Porter's approach to this issue. One is the way he picks and chooses statements from the documentary record that support his argument or can be re-interpreted to support his argument. He says that in March 1962, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara proposed that plans be drawn up for the introduction of U.S. combat forces into Vietnam if a crisis should occur there. He quotes Kennedy's response to McNamara: "An important item in this planning . . . is the timing of a decision for US action *and the factors that go into such a decision* [emphasis added]." He interprets these words to mean that if there was a crisis in Vietnam, the United States should be planning not to send additional forces but to pull out the ones already there (167). This interpretation goes rather far beyond the apparent meaning of the words. Later on Porter writes that "on July 17, [Kennedy] began to define 'withdrawal' as *immediate* withdrawal, and expressed his opposition to it. 'For us to withdraw from that effort,' he said, 'would mean a collapse not only of South Viet-Nam, but Southeast Asia. So we are going to stay there'" (174). Kennedy said nothing about the immediateness of the withdrawal; Porter reads that into his statement.

In the last months of the Kennedy presidency, there was a series of meetings at which plans for withdrawing U.S. forces from Vietnam were discussed. Porter argues that Kennedy wanted the National Security Council to approve and publicly announce a withdrawal plan but did not want to support such a plan openly even within the NSC, fearing that this would make him vulnerable to accusations of being soft on communism. Apparently, Kennedy is supposed to have hoped that the United States could withdraw from Vietnam during his presidency without either the public or high officials ever thinking of the withdrawal as having been his policy. Porter quotes Secretary of Defense McNamara as saying that once such a plan was announced, "it would be in concrete," impossible to change (176). This logic is very strange. Changing such a plan would not have been difficult. Indeed, it is hard to think of any major decision the United States ever made in Vietnam that did not represent a reversal of some previously announced policy.

The other problem with Porter's approach to the Kennedy administration is that he ignores crucial parts of what the administration actually *did* while tracing Kennedy's policies though what various people said. He claims that from the mid-summer of 1962 onward, "a plan for phasing out the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam" had become Kennedy's "main policy line" for Vietnam (164). He does not appear to notice that the policy Kennedy actually implemented, from mid-summer of 1962 to the time of his death, increased the number of U.S. military personnel in South Vietnam by slightly more than 50 percent.

Porter's chapter on the Kennedy administration reads as if Kennedy sent only military advisers to South Vietnam. He refers to Kennedy's "consistent opposition to deployment of combat forces" (167). In an endnote he concedes that the Air Force pilots sent to Vietnam late in 1961 were flying combat missions, but he says "it is not clear whether Kennedy understood" this was occurring (331, n. 115). The documents in the *Vietnam 1962* volume of *Foreign Relations of the United States* contain enough references to the air strikes conducted by the "Jungle Jim" unit in South Vietnam to render most unlikely the notion that the president might have been unaware of what was going on. I do not see even in Porter's endnotes any

reference to the Army and Marine helicopter pilots who were flying combat missions or the Special Forces troops who were leading, not just advising, locally recruited troops in combat operations. President Kennedy had put considerable numbers of military personnel into combat in Vietnam, and he knew it.

Porter's picture of the Johnson administration is much like his picture of the Kennedy administration: he sees a coterie of hawks pushing a reluctant president toward war. But since that was indeed the situation in 1964, his evidence is considerably better. The argument for Porter's most extreme assertion, that Secretary of Defense McNamara concealed from President Johnson the weakness of the evidence for the second Tonkin Gulf incident when he was getting Johnson's approval for retaliatory air strikes, does not seem strong enough to justify the confidence with which the assertion is made. But Porter makes a better argument here than he does for similar assertions about the Kennedy administration.

Porter does not take the domino theory very seriously. In his view the senior policymakers believed too strongly in the superior strength of the United States and in their ability to intimidate the Communist powers to worry as much as they sometimes pretended they did about all of Southeast Asia falling to communism. Dwight Eisenhower and William Bundy sometimes talked as if they believed in the domino theory and sometimes talked as if they did not, but Porter makes a solid case that neither of them did. He is much less convincing about Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara, at times reading meanings into their statements that are not really there. For example, the record of a meeting at which McNamara was present in Honolulu on October 8-9, 1962, states that Thailand was "not an easy target" for Communist subversion and that "the real danger is Thailand's wavering confidence in US determination to beat the communists in SEA." The record does not go into the question of how the fall of South Vietnam to communism would or would not change the situation.[2] Porter's summary omits the second of these statements and treats the first as if it meant that Thailand would not be an easy target if *South Vietnam fell*:

At least one important piece of documentary evidence supports the view that McNamara, along with Taylor and McCone, understood that Thailand was not likely to be "gravely threatened" in the event of a Communist victory in South Vietnam, as Bundy's draft had suggested. In October 1962, McNamara and other participants in a conference on Vietnam in Honolulu discussed the situation in Thailand and registered a consensus that it would not be "an easy target" for Communist subversion, given the stability of the government of Sarit Thanarat (246-47).

At the end of his discussion of the domino theory, Porter makes an extremely interesting point: that when American officials worried about Southeast Asian governments falling to or reaching an accommodation with communism if South Vietnam were to fall, they were worrying about what might seem to us quite modest accommodations. The United States was determined to keep the People's Republic of China a pariah state isolated from the international community. The notion that the fall of South Vietnam was sure to cause Thailand to fall under Communist domination was silly. The notion that the fall of South Vietnam would prompt the Thais to adjust their international stance to the extent of establishing normal diplomatic relations with Beijing and exchanging ambassadors was not silly at all, and American officials felt this would represent a serious defeat for the United States.

Perils of Dominance is an important book, despite its serious flaws. I not only learned interesting new facts by reading it, I gained a significantly better understanding of some very important issues relating to a subject I thought I already understood pretty well. Although I felt obliged to exercise caution in places where he has been careless in his argument and his documentation, Porter has compensated for that by compelling me really to notice the fact that the United States was the world's dominant power throughout the years of the Vietnam War, and he has persuaded me to reevaluate my understanding of a number of issues, including the domino theory.

[1]*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. V, *Soviet Union* (Washington, DC, 1998), 645.

[2]*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XXIII, *Southeast Asia* (Washington, DC, 1995), 974.

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Review of Gareth Porter's Perils of Dominance

By Anne L. Foster, Indiana State University

At first I thought Gareth Porter's new book was going to be the latest entry in the long line of publications asking, essentially, "why Vietnam?" The title suggests as much, and the introductory material Porter presents reflects his sense that existing interpretations of the U.S. military commitment to Vietnam do not fit the facts as he understands them. Porter has also spent much of his career thinking and writing about the nature of the U.S. involvement with Vietnam. After reading the book, however, I began to think it is instead one of the first entries in what will probably be a long, although probably less long, line of "why Iraq?" publications. Given the book's lengthy period of gestation, it clearly began as an attempt to ask why the United States went to war in Vietnam, but Porter realized that his subject would be useful for understanding the decision to go to war in Iraq as well.

Each time a new article or book appears on the U.S. war in Vietnam or on the broader topic, increasingly popular now, of U.S.–Vietnamese relations, it occurs to me that there may be enough of these studies. We now have a wide range of approaches to the subject, profound knowledge about the creation and implementation of U.S. foreign and military policies, growing knowledge about the policies of U.S. allies and of Cold War rivals, and the beginnings of greater knowledge about what went on in the governments of Vietnam. A high percentage of the leading scholars in U.S. foreign relations currently research or have written seriously in the past on the Vietnam War era. An abbreviated list would include Lloyd Gardner, Fredrik Logevall, Robert Buzzanco, Robert Shulzinger, Robert McMahon, Marilyn Young, Mark Bradley, Robert Brigham, David Anderson, George Herring, Sandra Taylor, Seth Jacobs, Mark Lawrence, and Gary Hess. And the subject remains compelling to a new generation of scholars. Many of those listed above were born during the war and do not have the compelling personal connection to it that older scholars do.[1]

As I read each new study, however, I am struck by the vibrancy of the intellectual exchange in this field, which seems to attract able, creative scholars. These scholars have been in the forefront of some of the most exciting trends in the history of foreign relations: they have led the way in focusing attention on the international history of the war, in studying Vietnamese policies (once it became possible to conduct research in Vietnam), in exploring the cultural aspects of the relationship between the United States and Vietnam, and in thinking seriously about the effect of the war on the United States and about what the creation and implementation of U.S. policy reveals about the country more generally. Their scholarship has also been motivated by a hope that policymakers will learn from what most scholars believe was a tragic mistake, and many of them explicitly attempt to teach the lessons of the war while at the same time producing history of great integrity.

Porter's book shares some of these strengths. He has creatively used theory from international relations about the relationship between peace and the balance of power in the world and, as in the case of Vietnam, war and the imbalance of power. The argument he makes, briefly, is that the United States held vastly more military power than its rivals during the 1950s and 1960s, and this imbalance of power emboldened U.S. national security officials to call for war in Vietnam. They believed that the United States would win and that there would be no cost to intervention. Porter claims that, contrary to popular perception, what kept the United States from full military commitment until the mid-1960s were the fears of three successive presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, that military power would not be effective in Vietnam. He argues that these presidents did not desire war in Vietnam, but that the national security bureaucracy wanted it and maneuvered deftly and persistently to get it. On a broader level, he concludes that foreign policymaking in the United States is dysfunctional and undemocratic, since the elected leader of the country was unable, in three successive administrations, to get the bureaucracy to carry out his wishes. This dysfunction is directly linked to the global imbalance of power, since it gave (and in the post-Cold War era still gives) national security officials irrational

confidence. Clearly, Porter fits directly into that admirable tradition of creative and skilled Vietnam War scholars who are motivated by a strong desire to promote a more democratic and peaceful U.S. foreign policy.

The question of “why Vietnam?” still lingers, however. Porter persuasively argues that there was a global imbalance of military power during most of the 1950s and 1960s. He provides ample evidence that many U.S. policymakers were at least at times emboldened by this imbalance of power and shows that they applied analysis that was informed by their assessment of that imbalance to the situation in Vietnam. But does he shed light on “why Vietnam?”

Porter pursues what has now come to be a somewhat old-fashioned approach, focusing on what happened in offices in Washington, D.C., almost to the exclusion of what happened anywhere else in the world. And to the extent that Porter is interested in foreign capitals, those are Beijing and Moscow, not Hanoi and especially not Saigon. If he is correct, of course, there is little that either government in Vietnam could have done to change U.S. policy. Indeed, the government that receives the least attention in his book, that of the Republic of Vietnam, perhaps did the most to push the United States toward war, albeit inadvertently. Porter’s narrative demonstrates that whenever officials from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) explored possible negotiations or a neutralist solution, the U.S. national security bureaucracy went into high gear to do whatever it took to stop them.

Yet that example demonstrates one of the ways in which Porter does not help us better understand “why Vietnam?” All the participants in the conflict, but especially both governments in Vietnam, could have done more to shape the course of U.S. policy there. The RVN could have insisted on pursuing negotiations and could have invited the United States to leave, as many U.S. officials feared they would. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam could have pursued the case for the 1956 elections more strongly in the United Nations, creating a difficult public relations situation for the United States. I raise these examples not to engage in counterfactual speculation, but to show that whatever the thoughts of U.S. officials about the degree of U.S. military power, it had to be usable and effective in the eyes of the United States and, to a lesser degree, its allies and even its enemies.

Porter’s analysis of the nature of Cold War and post–Cold War foreign policy is incisive and disturbing in its implications. Yet while it does suggest why Vietnam was likely to become a military conflict, it does not show why it actually became a military conflict. Porter demonstrates convincingly, often using novel analysis and impressive research, that the national security bureaucracy believed war was a good solution in Vietnam. Was Vietnam the only place they perceived the benefits of military action? One suspects not, especially since covert military operations did take place around the world during these years. The U.S. operation in Indonesia in 1958 is one example. So the notion of a global imbalance of power and of a national security bureaucracy arguing for war does not help us understand “why Vietnam?” It helps us understand the likelihood that the United States would pursue military options when many in the nation and across the globe saw political and diplomatic solutions as possible and preferable.

Porter does not look for the answer to “why Vietnam?” in U.S. domestic politics or in Vietnam itself, although he does hint that both are more important than the space they have been allotted in the book would indicate. On the domestic front, he insists that Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson all wished to avoid war, based on their insightful analyses of the situation in Vietnam and their sense of the inappropriateness of military solutions for what was essentially a political problem. This will probably be the most controversial part of the book. It will be a rare reader who will be prepared to accept the argument for all three presidents. Many will agree about Eisenhower, though not all. Adherents will drop away as the story reaches Kennedy, and their numbers will shrink further in the Johnson era. Most readers will find it difficult to overlook the fact that each president acquiesced in, accepted, or even promoted a major expansion of the U.S. commitment, military and nonmilitary, to the Republic of Vietnam.

To the extent that Porter answers the question of why these presidents turned against their own ideas about the right policy for Vietnam, he argues that each president was outmaneuvered by his national security team. Perhaps so, but presidents can discipline unruly national security officials, even fire them. None of these presidents did that, partly because Vietnam was rarely their highest priority or even their highest foreign policy priority. More important, however, the presidents, especially Kennedy and Johnson, were afraid that they would be accused by political rivals (and maybe even some supporters) of being soft on communism and allowing another country to be “lost” to communism. The presidents sometimes talked about

the impact of the loss of Vietnam on allies, but more often those arguments were used by national security officials to persuade the presidents to take action. What the presidents feared was a domestic backlash. So Eisenhower allowed John Foster Dulles to undermine the Geneva Accords, John F. Kennedy approved a major commitment to the counterinsurgency war in South Vietnam, and Lyndon B. Johnson approved the bombing of North Vietnam and then committed U.S. ground troops to combat. Each time, the most convincing argument was not the one deployed by the national security officials about the effect that a failure to act would have on U.S. relations with countries in the region or close allies elsewhere. The most convincing argument was the one the presidents made to themselves about their political futures. It was particularly convincing for Kennedy, in the aftermath of accusations that he had not responded effectively to the Soviet presence in Cuba, and for Johnson, since Richard Nixon was already promising to hold his feet to the fire on Vietnam. The national security bureaucracy did not succeed because U.S. foreign policy was undemocratic. It succeeded because the presidents always had to think about the next election.

Vietnam itself provides another answer to “why Vietnam?” As Porter suggests in the last few pages of his book, the global imbalance of power may constrain the states that are a rung or two below the most powerful nation, but the least powerful nations do not feel the same constraints. They may have a lot to lose in a relative sense, but they also have more chances to succeed. Their absolute power is so minimal that they cannot make much difference as a part of the global power balance. More important, the global power imbalance that Porter analyzes so well is merely a military power balance. Small states like Vietnam understood well, and medium-rank states like the People’s Republic of China (PRC) understood even better, that military power is not the only efficacious kind in international relations. So Porter’s long and persuasive analysis about the effect of the global imbalance of power on the major powers, emboldening the United States and constraining the Soviet Union and the PRC, does not apply to either Vietnamese government. Vietnamese officials did have to analyze the effect of their actions on all the great powers and decide whether they could tolerate those effects, but they were not constrained by the global balance of power in the same way.

Vietnamese leaders, both North and South, understood that their struggle did not occur in isolation. As scholars like Mark Bradley have shown so convincingly, long before World War II, Vietnamese who wanted independence were weighing various ideologies and carefully considering which countries might support them and which might stand in their way, just as anticolonialists of all political persuasions were single-mindedly pursuing their goal. It is of course one of many ironies of the U.S. war in Vietnam that Soviet leaders had long considered Ho Chi Minh politically unreliable because they believed he was more committed to his nation than to the cause of international socialism. They understood that the developing Cold War had limited Ho’s options after 1945, but they understood equally well that he would pursue the course he believed would lead to a unified and independent Vietnam.[2] Ngo Dinh Diem also proved to be a less malleable client than the United States would have liked. His reputation as a nationalist is more compromised than Ho Chi Minh’s, but he too pursued policies that infuriated the United States when he believed they were for the good of his nation. Vietnamese leaders from both the North and the South were careful about not unnecessarily provoking the United States, especially in ways that might lead to military intervention, but they were not constrained from taking the necessary steps toward their goals in the way that the Soviet Union and the PRC were constrained by the global imbalance of power.

Why Vietnam? One could say that there are many answers. There was an unfortunate convergence of factors that contributed to the U.S. decision to go to war: domestic anticommunism, the global imbalance of power, Cold War ideologies, a lack of understanding of Vietnamese history and culture, the Vietnamese determination to have full independence, and each president’s powerful fear of stepping away from South Vietnam. At bottom, however, there is just one answer: the United States decided it could not tolerate an independent and unified Vietnam that had chosen its own form of government.

[1] Even by the typical standards for the field of U.S. foreign relations, the list includes remarkably few women.

[2] Ho Chi Minh was a dedicated communist but an even more dedicated nationalist.

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Review of Gareth Porter's *Perils of Dominance* By Fredrik Logevall, Cornell University

Gareth Porter advances two principal arguments in *Perils of Dominance*. The first is convincing, in my judgment, even if he stretches it too far; the second is not. Porter is not the first to see in the period 1953-1965 an imbalance of power between the United States and its main Communist adversaries that overwhelmingly favored the former, but he develops the argument more fully than any other scholar I know. He goes so far as to assert the existence in this period of a unipolar international system, in which both the Soviets and Chinese were acutely aware of Washington's strategic superiority and therefore disinclined to allow military action that would challenge U.S. interests—including, in this case, in Southeast Asia. American officials, meanwhile, fully aware of their advantage, developed an “extremely high level of confidence” that Washington “could assert its power in Vietnam without the risk of either a major war or a military confrontation with another major power” (259). They could act with impunity, that is to say, in working to keep South Vietnam from falling to Communism, at least as far as Nikita Khrushchev (and the Kosygin/Brezhnev team that followed him) and Mao Zedong were concerned.

The argument for a fundamental imbalance of power in these years is persuasive, and powerfully rendered, and it raises profoundly important questions for our understanding of the Cold War international system as a whole. Blithe references to a superpower rivalry between two giants of more or less equal stature, dubious enough before this book, will be harder to make after it. Porter is at his best here, and really very good, as he describes this strategic disparity and analyzes its meaning for the larger Cold War. With respect to Vietnam in the mid-1950s, he makes a strong case that U.S. strategic superiority decisively influenced Eisenhower's and Dulles's decision to subvert the 1954 Geneva Accords, confident as they were that neither the Chinese nor the Soviets would do more than issue empty protests. Porter misses the degree to which South Vietnamese leader Ngo Dinh Diem was the architect of his government's policy vis-à-vis the Accords, but the basic point stands: for U.S. leaders there was, in Cold War terms, “no serious downside to scrapping the elections called for by the Geneva Accords,” and to working to build up the Diem regime.

The question, though, is how much explanatory power this imbalance of power has for the American decision a decade later to wage large-scale war in Vietnam. Here Porter offers considerably less. He does not demonstrate that the U.S. superiority drove the decision to launch Rolling Thunder and commit ground troops, and he presents no real challenge to the prevailing view that concerns about the possible responses from Moscow and especially Beijing helped shape the nature and extent of the Americanization of the conflict in 1964-65 and thereafter—precluding, notably, an invasion of the North and a wholesale expansion of the war into Laos and Cambodia. He underplays, moreover, the degree to which some senior officials feared for how America's global “credibility” would be affected by the outcome in Vietnam, a concern based on perceived vulnerability, not overweening confidence.

The book's second major argument, which is connected to and ultimately overshadows the first—and which I will focus on here—is that what Porter calls the “national security bureaucracy” consistently advocated deeper U.S. military engagement in Vietnam, even in the face of opposition from Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. The three presidents, Porter doggedly insists, were the exceptions to the general rule of American hubris and hawkishness; the three men sought at all times, ultimately unsuccessfully, to prevent the outbreak of major war. But was this “national security bureaucracy” really the cohesive, undifferentiated mass Porter makes it out to be? In his telling it consistently speaks with one voice (“The national security bureaucracy believed...” [187]; “The national security bureaucracy was firmly opposed...” [208]), and consistently advocates one basic course of action, i.e. escalation. In fact, though, there were always important differences among national security officials over Vietnam policy. This was true at the beginning under Eisenhower and at the end under

Johnson; it was true among top and mid-level civilian officials at State, at the CIA, and in the Pentagon, and among their counterparts in the uniformed military. Even when principal advisers were united on the need for expanded military action, they often disagreed on why it was necessary, and on what form it ought to take.

Contrary to Porter's claim, for example, top advisers did not react to the 1961 Taylor-Rostow report with unanimity, and were not, as a group, "shocked" when JFK rejected some of its recommendations. Contrary to his claim, "Johnson's advisers" at the start of 1965 had not concluded that "he was holding off on the bombing in the hope that a neutralist regime would emerge in Saigon to negotiate a peace settlement with Hanoi" (208). (I doubt, indeed, that a single one of them had so concluded.) Far more than Porter allows, moreover, these advisers early in 1965 differed among themselves regarding the likely efficacy of air power, and the advisability of sending U.S. ground troops.

Like an attorney trying to present the clearest (though not necessarily the best) case possible before the jury, Porter time and again flattens out ambiguities. Thus one gets little sense that top and mid-level officials were themselves at times uncertain about the outlook for the conflict—even with the introduction of U.S. ground troops—and about the stakes involved. Dean Rusk, in my judgment, was a true believer on Vietnam, whereas Robert McNamara wasn't; both men, however, though ultimately champions of Americanization, often expressed uncertainty about the best course to follow. Already in October 1963 McNamara told his colleagues that "we need a way to get out of Vietnam," and at several points in 1964 he expressed deep concerns about the state of the war and the prospects for victory. Porter quotes the October 1963 line, but his McNamara becomes an über-hawk the minute Lyndon Johnson assumes office. Why? Because, Porter argues, McNamara did not feel constrained by loyalty to the new president. Really? It seems to me well-established that he had a profound sense of loyalty to Johnson, arguably as great as he had to Kennedy. This loyalty, which may have been to the office as much as to the two men, in my view goes a long way to explaining his advocacy in the lead-up to major war. Certainly, the defense secretary's attitude on the war was much more complex, more internally contradictory, than we see in this book.

The same smoothing out of rough edges occurs with the presidents. In *Perils of Dominance* each one is a dove, continually striving with all his might to prevent large-scale escalation—until February 1965, when Johnson, determining he can resist the bureaucracy's pressure no longer, gives up. Evidence for such an interpretation can be found in the vast published and archival material—for the Kennedy and especially the Johnson periods, in particular, the amount is now truly staggering—but the question is how it stacks up against the totality of that material. Too often in this book the author bases his claims on memoirs and oral histories, which, though certainly legitimate sources, are weak reeds upon which to build sweeping interpretive arguments.

Porter maintains, for example, that JFK made a serious effort to open a diplomatic channel with Hanoi in 1962. His main evidence: the memoir by Chester Bowles, a minor player in the administration who did not have the president's confidence and who was prone to writing long-winded memos seldom read by anyone who mattered. Porter then uses this abortive 1962 plan to buttress his argument that Kennedy in 1963 initiated a full withdrawal from Vietnam. Here again memoirs and oral histories figure prominently in the notes. Porter acknowledges that the president in the fall voiced reservations about a withdrawal, but he insists it was a ruse: "Kennedy's apparent skepticism about a withdrawal was political theater to complete the fiction that he was only responding to urging [sic] of his top national security advisers" (176). And later: "At the meeting, Kennedy was still pretending to be undecided" (176). How do we know he was pretending, in a political theater? Porter can't really tell us. He is not unpersuasive in portraying Kennedy as a skeptic on the war, as a flexible and pragmatic leader, and he is right to emphasize that JFK rejected aides' recommendations for a larger escalation on his watch. Too often, though, Porter reads inconclusive evidence only one way and imposes a clarity on the material that is not there.

The way I interpret a series of important White House meetings on October 2 and 5, for example, is that Kennedy at that late hour was still uncertain about which way to go, still postponing the tough decisions for the future, and moreover that he had not given the proposal for a 1000-man withdrawal from South Vietnam very much thought. He says at one point: "My only reservation about this [1000-man withdrawal] is that it commits to a kind of a...if the war doesn't continue to go well, it'll look like we were overly optimistic, and I don't—I'm not sure we—I'd like to know what benefit we get out [of] at this time announcing a thousand." [1] Could this be part of the ruse, as Porter maintains? Yes, but neither Porter nor others who have put forth this "incipient-withdrawal" thesis (as I have called it elsewhere) have been able to find persuasive evidence

to that effect.[2] A president determined to withdraw from Vietnam regardless of the state of the war would have taken care in the autumn of 1963 to speak more elliptically in public pronouncements, and would have been far less dismissive of exploring possibilities for a negotiated settlement of the conflict. He would have been more reticent about endorsing a showdown between Diem and dissident generals.

One also wonders about Kennedy's supposed need for total secrecy. Why the elaborate ruse? According to Porter, the president worried that public association with a withdrawal plan would risk serious political fallout for him if the war subsequently went sour. Maybe, but Porter uses an odd historical example to bolster the point: he writes that JFK endured a "fierce political attack" (166) in September-October 1962 for his failure to take forceful action against the Soviet military presence in Cuba. Some criticism he certainly suffered, but a fierce political attack seriously threatening his political position at home? Not remotely.

This issue of American domestic opinion is of critical importance to Porter's analysis, not merely with respect to Kennedy but Johnson as well. In his preface he refers to "the strongly interventionist cast of domestic opinion" the two men had to confront (x). Later, in a key passage in the conclusion, he writes that LBJ hoped for "an evolution of congressional sentiment that would make possible a negotiated exit from the war" (263). Each of these assertions is almost wholly unsubstantiated, however, for Porter has done no research to speak of on Congressional and public attitudes in the 1961-65 period—or even made use of the secondary literature on the subject. Few lawmakers ever appear in the text, and there is no systematic analysis of editorial opinion in U.S. newspapers, of the views of syndicated columnists, of opinion polls. Had Porter undertaken such research, I believe he would have found incontrovertible evidence that domestic opinion was never strongly interventionist in this period, certainly not in 1964-65. He would have found that the Senate Democratic leadership (and numerous other Democrats and moderate Republicans) in early 1965 expressed deep misgivings about the prospect of an Americanized war, and expressed those misgivings to Johnson—albeit more timidly than they might have. He would have found similar concerns in a broad cross-section of newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*, as well as among leading columnists. And he would have found that the general public, to the extent it paid attention at all, was ambivalent, not wanting to lose in Vietnam but also not wanting to send America's young men to fight and die there.[3]

Johnson's own vice president thought in terms of this domestic opinion in arguing forcefully against an expanded war. In two remarkable memos written precisely at the time the administration prepared to launch Rolling Thunder and commit the first ground troops, Hubert H. Humphrey, a savvy and seasoned politician with a deep understanding of Democratic precinct politics across the country, did not doubt that there were political risks in disengagement. But he argued that 1965 was the optimal time to incur those risks and—of central importance—that the risks of escalation were greater. "If we find ourselves leading from frustration to escalation and end up short of a war with China but embroiled deeper in fighting in Vietnam over the next few months," he warned Johnson, "political opposition will steadily mount."

It is always hard to cut losses. But the Johnson administration is in a stronger position to do so now than any administration in this century. Nineteen sixty-five is the year of minimum political risk for the Johnson administration. Indeed, it is the first year when we can face the Vietnam problem without being preoccupied with the political repercussions from the Republican right. As indicated earlier, our political problems are likely to come from new and different sources (Democratic liberals, independents, labor) if we pursue an enlarged war.[4]

Porter mentions neither of the two memos, nor does he tell us that Humphrey opposed an expanded war. Johnson's response perforce also goes unmentioned, but it's worth noting. "We don't need all these memos," he told Humphrey, before excluding the vice president from Vietnam meetings for the better part of a year.

The point is not that Porter had an obligation to refer to these Humphrey missives—or to any specific documents, for that matter. The point is that he needed to do much more to substantiate his claims regarding popular and Congressional attitudes in those fateful weeks in late 1964-early 1965. His thesis depends on it. His endnotes show that he's conversant with the recent scholarship on the war, and though he's largely uninterested in engaging that literature (beyond bland

reference to “mainstream” scholarship), he knows that some of it addresses public attitudes in the United States in the key months of decision. One would have expected him to offer more than hoary claims regarding a “strongly interventionist” domestic opinion.

If one considers that senior Democrats and powerful voices in the press had deep reservations regarding escalation, and that the bureaucracy itself was internally divided about the best way to proceed in Vietnam, it becomes hard to accept Porter’s depiction of a Lyndon Johnson heroically doing all he can to head off war. The author avers that LBJ hoped for the emergence of a neutralist regime in Saigon that would ask the U.S. to leave, and further that the president actively sought a negotiated settlement with Hanoi. The weight of the archival evidence points precisely in the opposite direction: to the conclusion that Johnson, from the time he took office through the summer of 1965, and beyond, wanted nothing to do with early negotiations, except those involving the particulars of Hanoi’s surrender. He was a hawk on Vietnam, not because he was eager for war or because he was optimistic about the prospects (he was neither), but because he “associated negotiations with compromise and compromise with defeat” (218). That last phrase is from Porter, who uses it to describe the top advisers; it’s at least as apt in reference to their boss.

Porter asserts that the bureaucracy worked incessantly to compel Johnson to expand the war. He lists a dozen such attempts, and declares: “There is surely no parallel in modern history to the twelve separate attempts by the national security bureaucracy over a fourteen-month period [November 1963 to January 1965] to get Johnson to authorize the use of military force against the same state” (267-68). Strong words, indeed. Even a cursory glance at the list of twelve, however, reveals that most of them cannot be construed as attempts to get LBJ to approve military action; they belong in the category of contingency planning for possible future use of force. Several, moreover, had Johnson’s tacit support, while others were backed by some advisers but not others. Not one involved what Porter clearly implies all twelve involved: an all-out effort by the bureaucracy to force the president’s hand.[5]

Were Vietnam War presidents subject to bureaucratic pressures that reduced their maneuverability in policy terms? Unquestionably. But it won’t do to argue, as Gareth Porter does, that John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson were forced by such pressures to effectively give up the reins of authority on Vietnam. That argument misrepresents the attitudes both in the Oval Office and in the bureaucracy—and in the country as a whole. As an examination of America’s strategic dominance vis-à-vis the Chinese and the Soviets in the years after Korea *Perils of Dominance* has much to teach us. As a study of American decision-making on Vietnam in the lead-up to major war, it falls well short of the mark.

[1]Recordings and transcripts of these October 1963 meetings can be found under “Transcript and Audio Highlight Clips” at www.whitehousetapes.org; last accessed on January 27, 2006.

[2]Fredrik Logevall, “Vietnam and the Question of What Might Have Been,” in Mark J. White, ed., *Kennedy: The New Frontier Revisited* (London: Macmillan, 1998). Porter’s argument here echoes James K. Galbraith, “Exit Strategy,” *Boston Review*, October/November 2003, 29-34; and John M. Newman, *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle of Power* (New York: Warner Books, 1992).

[3]See Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

[4]The memorandum is reprinted in full in Hubert H. Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man: My Life and Politics* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1976), 320-24. For Johnson’s response, see Carl Solberg, *Hubert Humphrey: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 287-88; and Humphrey, 327.

[5]For detailed examinations of this fourteen-month period, relying heavily on primary sources, see David Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 284-411; and Logevall, *Choosing War*, pp. 75-374.

[6]See here Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

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Perils and Paradigms: A Response to the Reviewers By Gareth Porter

I. The Power Imbalance Paradigm

In writing *Perils of Dominance*, my aspiration was to “shift the paradigm” on Cold War politics and U.S. intervention in Vietnam from the dominant paradigm, with its emphasis on Cold War doctrines and belief systems as driving forces in U.S. policymaking, to one that acknowledges U.S. dominance in the East-West power relationship and recognizes its significance in shaping the pattern of Cold War policies. I did not expect widespread acceptance of the new paradigm from older historians of the Cold War or from historians who had written on the Vietnam War themselves. So I was not surprised that the four reviews compiled here all reject, in varying degrees, my interpretation of the policymaking process on Vietnam during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. What did surprise me was the degree to which three of the reviewers accept my thesis that the Cold War was governed by U.S. military dominance and that the power imbalance dynamic did indeed shape U.S. policymaking on Vietnam—at least up to the early 1960s.

Fred Logevall and Edwin E. Moise appear to agree with me that U.S. dominance decisively influenced a series of policy decisions on Vietnam from 1954 through the late 1950s. Robert Brigham’s summary of my argument on Eisenhower administration policy and the policies of Moscow, Beijing and Hanoi implies that he does not have any significant objections to my interpretation of that period either. It is puzzling, however, that while accepting that the imbalance of power shaped the general policies of major powers during that period of the Cold War, Anne L. Foster seems to doubt that the pattern applied to Vietnam. Equally puzzling is her assertion that I had scant interest in Hanoi’s policies toward the war. I devoted an entire chapter exclusively to how the imbalance of power constrained the North Vietnamese and forced them to remain open to a negotiated compromise to end the war.

All these reviewers sharply differentiate, however, between the Kennedy-Johnson era and the earlier period when it comes to the applicability of the power imbalance thesis. Although they are prepared to accept the idea that the East-West power imbalance could explain U.S. policy short of the use of force, both Logevall and Brigham reject my thesis that the imbalance profoundly influenced actual decisions for war. Echoing a major assumption running through the literature, Logevall argues that the “nature and extent of Americanization of the conflict in 1964-65” was shaped by “possible responses from Moscow and especially Beijing” and thus cannot be seen as wholly or primarily a decision made from the perspective of U.S. dominance. Taking a somewhat different angle on the same issue, Brigham suggests that if the national security bureaucracy was convinced of U.S. strategic dominance, the United States would not have fought a limited, protracted war at all.

I argue that the actual relationship between dominance and the choice of strategy during that period of the Cold War was not so simple. Project Solarium, the Eisenhower administration’s mid-1953 strategy review exercise, generated alternative Cold War strategies aimed at taking advantage of the strategic dominance that the United States was generally recognized as possessing at that juncture. One of the strategies advanced in that exercise was that the United States should take as its foreign policy objective the “overthrow of the Communist regime in China” and the “reduction of Soviet power and militance [sic] and the elimination of the Communist conspiracy.” Despite their undeniable conviction that the United States held a decisive strategic advantage over the Soviets, however, Eisenhower and Dulles rejected that strategy as too risky. They favored using the threat of “massive retaliation” to block any Communist political-military expansion while exploiting U.S. strategic dominance to pursue low-cost, low-risk actions to improve U.S. political-military positions around

the world at the expense of the Soviet Union and its allies. It was that strategy, I suggest, that led to the sequence of U.S. policy decisions on Vietnam in 1954-55.

The same logic obviously applies to the decisions to use limited force in South Vietnam and against North Vietnam. The policymakers who advocated that policy wanted to exploit the U.S. military position to enhance American power in East and Southeast Asia without risking a major war with Communist states. They had no interest in fighting a war with China, much less with the Soviet Union. I emphasize that it was precisely the low-cost, low-risk aspect of this strategy that appealed to national security bureaucrats in 1961 and again in 1964 and early 1965. The absence of more expansionary military goals through three administrations is therefore not an argument against the relevance of the power imbalance to U.S. policymaking, nor is the fact that the carefully targeted bombing in North Vietnam was aimed at reducing the likelihood of direct Chinese involvement in a war.

Another objection Logevall raises to the applicability of the imbalance of power thesis to the Kennedy and Johnson administration decisions to wage war is that it slights the linkage between Vietnam policymaking and the needs of the United States in its global power competition with the Soviet Union. According to Logevall the power imbalance interpretation “underplays . . . the degree to which some senior officials feared for how Americans’ global credibility would be affected by the outcome in Vietnam, a concern based on perceived vulnerability, not overweening confidence.” If the national security bureaucracy believed the U.S. position in the world was so weak and feared a loss of credibility so much that it felt compelled to use force in Vietnam, however, one would expect to find intelligence analysis, policy papers and arguments in policy meetings expounding on that theme and providing examples of where policymakers feared credibility would be harmed. In fact, there is no such evidence, whereas there is considerable evidence that national security advisers were making the domino and bandwagon arguments, especially in the Johnson administration. We know from Johnson’s complaint to Richard Russell in May 1964, for example, that his advisers were pushing the domino theory, not the “credibility doctrine,” as the rationale for using force against North Vietnam.

To support his emphasis on credibility as a driving force in Vietnam policy, Logevall cites a memo in his book *Choosing War* (491, n. 66) that he (along with George Kahin and George Herring) attributes to John F. Kennedy. As I document in *Perils* (325-26, n.56), however, this document was actually a page from a memo from Walt Rostow to Kennedy making a final pitch for sending troops to South Vietnam on November 14, 1961. It was somehow inserted (but clearly not integrated by the president) into the Kennedy memo of the same date. It is worth noting that in these memos Kennedy and Rostow came to opposite conclusions about negotiating on Vietnam. It is time to withdraw this supposed Kennedy document from the debate about Kennedy’s views on Vietnam and to concede that Kennedy was not as preoccupied with credibility in the case of South Vietnam as historians once thought.

Moise claims that when I write about the mid-1960s, I am “exaggerating the evidence of Communist restraint.” He writes that an intelligence memorandum I cite, dated March 18, 1963, does not state “that the USSR had no interest in helping local Communists gain power anywhere in the world.” I was not writing about “Communist restraint” on those pages (18-19), but about official U. S. perceptions of the power balance and, in that specific paragraph, about intelligence estimates that recognized Soviet “defensiveness and respect for the status quo.” In this context, Moise is correct that the March 1963 memo did not actually make the point that the USSR had no interest in helping local Communists gain power. Instead, it emphasized Khrushchev’s worry that the power balance had shifted decisively against Moscow. The point about the Soviets’ lack of interest in helping Communists gain power was made in the more important document I cite in that paragraph: the National Intelligence Estimate on Soviet foreign policy for 1963. Although I did not quote the conclusion of that NIE, it stated flatly that Moscow regarded attempts by Communist parties to gain power in capitalist countries as “prejudicial to Soviet interests.” My point, therefore, was indeed supported by the evidence, and that I was not “exaggerating the evidence of [U.S. perceptions of] Communist restraint.”

Finally, Moise appears to suggest that the decisive power imbalance I cite as the basis for U.S. policy in Vietnam had already eroded by mid-1965. He writes that I fail to mention the dispatch of significant numbers of Chinese personnel to North Vietnam in June 1965 and adds that “the Communist leaders’ increased willingness to take strong action in Vietnam, despite the risks of confrontation with the United States, cries out for a much more detailed analysis, as does the process by which the American leaders recognized that they were losing their ability to intimidate their opponents.”

It is not clear why the arrival of large numbers of Chinese troops in North Vietnam in 1965 is relevant to the question of power imbalance. I cited the Chinese intention to dispatch troops to the North to deter a U.S. ground invasion of North Vietnam in chapter 2. There is no reason to believe that the Johnson administration was surprised that Chinese troops were deployed in North Vietnamese provinces bordering China. Moreover, in light of the preference of civilian policymakers for limited objectives in relation to Vietnam, the Chinese troops did not significantly affect the Johnson administration's plans for North Vietnam. Although some in the military certainly favored a ground invasion of North Vietnam, civilian policymakers had never been attracted to that option.

II. JFK: Literal vs. Contextual Interpretation

My reinterpretation of John F. Kennedy's Vietnam policy is the subject of particularly acute criticism from Logevall and Moise. Before dealing with their arguments, however, I want to examine the peculiar methodological problem associated with interpreting Kennedy's Vietnam policy. My argument that Kennedy deceived not only the public but much of his own administration on his policy toward Vietnam challenges some of the most basic premises of diplomatic history. Official records are considered the main source for documenting a president's policies, and the absence of administration records detailing Kennedy's personal role in Vietnam policy during the last eighteen months of his life has been enough for most historians to dismiss that theory as unfounded.

Relying on official records and on their literal meaning is a reasonable way to approach presidential policymaking under "normal" historical circumstances. But there are some historical episodes that demand a different approach, and Kennedy's Vietnam policymaking is one of them. The problem confronting historians in this case is that in May 1962, McNamara presented the JCS with a proposal to be used as the basis for planning that called for withdrawing all U.S. military personnel by the end of 1965, except for the 680 allowed under the Geneva Accords. He reiterated the plan the following year in specific and forceful terms and added a proposal for withdrawing the first 1,000 troops by the end of 1963. The plan was not for public relations purposes, nor was it contingent upon the success of the counterinsurgency war, and it was regarded by the military as going too far too fast. In October 1963, both of those deadlines were adopted as official administration policy by the National Security Council, based on the recommendations of the Taylor-McNamara mission to South Vietnam.

The question that historians are forced to address, therefore, is whether this withdrawal policy was carried out from May 1962 to October 1963 without Kennedy's personal authorization. If Kennedy authorized it from beginning to end, then the historian must reinterpret the public statements Kennedy made in 1962 and 1963, which everyone agrees suggested a different policy, in order to square them with his direction of the withdrawal policy.

In their criticisms of my interpretation of Kennedy's policy Logevall and Moise are completely indifferent to the central issue of whether Kennedy was actually behind the policy or not. Logevall takes aim at my interpretation of Kennedy's behavior at two meetings on October 2, 1963, in which McNamara's and Taylor's recommendations for withdrawal were discussed. He asks, "How do we know . . . [that Kennedy's skepticism was] political theater? Porter can't really tell us. . . . Too often . . . Porter reads inconclusive evidence only one way and imposes a clarity on material that is not there."

I argue in *Perils* that Kennedy's attitude of studied skepticism at the two meetings with advisers on October 2 was "political theater" because of the body of evidence I developed that Kennedy had been behind the withdrawal scheme from the beginning. Thus I am not "imposing clarity" on a single piece of inherently unclear evidence, as Logevall suggests, but rather making sense of an entire pattern of evidence. The proper focus of a review of my treatment of this and related episodes, I submit, is the broad pattern of evidence on the overarching question of Kennedy's authorship of the withdrawal policy. If Kennedy's policy was a backchannel operation, historians should not expect to find any "smoking gun" document showing Kennedy's hand in it. Rather, their task is to piece together the most likely reasonable interpretation of the overall pattern shown by the documentation rather than to provide only literal interpretations of an incomplete and contradictory documentary record.

Both Logevall and Moise seem committed to the proposition that each piece of evidence can be interpreted in isolation from

the rest. Moise takes me to task for interpretations of public and private statements by Kennedy in 1962 that go beyond the apparent meaning of his words. For example, in a meeting with the JCS on March 1, 1962, Kennedy made this tortuous statement: “An important item in this planning is the timing of a decision for U.S. action *and the factors that go into such a decision.*” I suggest that he was referring to his previous insistence that any U.S. combat intervention in South Vietnam would have to be supported by the British and the French. Kennedy had resorted to similarly circuitous wording in May 1961, using the phrase “diplomatic setting within which this action might be taken” to refer to his requirement for British and French support for any introduction of combat troops.

Moise’s criticism of my interpretation would be valid if he could show that I had misunderstood Kennedy’s May 1961 statement, but he ignores the contextual argument entirely. When he writes that my interpretation “goes rather far beyond the apparent meaning of the words” Moise fails to comprehend the proper role of the historian in dealing with a situation in which the words in a document are clearly not the same as the meaning intended by the historical figure in question.

Moise then attacks my suggestion about interpreting Kennedy’s July 17, 1962 speech in which he expressed opposition to withdrawing from South Vietnam and said “we are going to stay there” even as the process of planning for a withdrawal by the end of 1965 was proceeding. By suggesting that he was defining withdrawal to mean only immediate withdrawal, I was suggesting that Kennedy was saying something different from what he expected the public to understand. My main point was that Kennedy was being highly misleading in taking a hard line in public on South Vietnam. But again Moise treats this as going beyond the literal interpretation of the meaning of the words. “Kennedy said nothing about the immediateness of the withdrawal,” he complains. “Porter reads that into his statement.”

Logevall minimizes the risk Kennedy and Johnson were taking in opposing top national security advisers who were committed to victory in South Vietnam. He takes me to task for suggesting that there was an interventionist cast of opinion, complaining that I did not do the kind of in-depth research into press and congressional opinion that he did for *Choosing War*, in which he argues that public opinion was quite open to conceding South Vietnam. I concede that I could have made my case stronger by dealing with that issue in greater depth. But I cannot agree with his dismissal of the 1962 political assault on Kennedy as inconsequential politically or having no bearing on Kennedy’s and Johnson’s domestic political calculations about Vietnam policy. Bundy recalled later that the administration felt compelled to draw a line against missiles in Cuba during that campaign against Kennedy’s inaction, because it felt it had no choice but to do so in light of the political climate.

Logevall also charges that I rely “too often” on memoirs and oral histories, which he suggests are “weak reeds upon which to build sweeping interpretive arguments.” He cites as an example of this over-reliance my having based my case about JFK’s attempt to open a diplomatic channel to Hanoi in 1962 on Chester Bowles’s memoir. In fact, however, I relied not on Bowles’s memoir but on primary documents found in Averell Harriman’s papers in the Library of Congress. They show that JFK had ordered Harriman in mid-April 1962 to send a cable to Ambassador Galbraith in New Delhi to begin opening a channel through the Indian foreign ministry and that Harriman had sandbagged JFK’s initiative. Bowles’s memoir was cited in regard to a related but wholly different diplomatic initiative on neutralism in Southeast Asia.

III. LBJ and the National Security Bureaucracy

Logevall asserts flatly that I do not “demonstrate that U.S. superiority drove the decision to launch Rolling Thunder and commit ground troops.” Readers of *Perils* will find that I go into considerable detail, in two full pages (186-88), to make the case that the CIA, the Department of Defense, the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff all agreed that the overwhelming U.S. power advantage in East Asia and vis-à-vis the Soviet Union constrained the ability and willingness of Hanoi and Beijing to respond to a U.S. bombing campaign with any military initiative and that those views were directly reflected in McNamara’s initial effort, through Bundy, to sell the idea of a bombing campaign against North Vietnam to LBJ.

I then return to that question (203-205) to explain the thinking of LBJ’s senior advisers in preparing the recommendation for a “phase 2” bombing program in November 1964. The unanimous recommendation that was made to Johnson for the bombing campaign in November was based on the assumption that, as William Bundy later put it, “the cost of carrying on

seemed moderate” because it would not “include the possibility that large U.S. ground forces would be needed.”

As for the commitment of ground troops, I show (218-19) that the decision in April to commit an additional 82,000 troops to South Vietnam was heavily influenced by McNamara and Bundy, as well as the intelligence community. All believed that the United States could raise the ante in South Vietnam, and thus strengthen its bargaining position in eventual negotiations, without a major commitment of ground forces in the South by Hanoi. I do not argue that the final commitment to an open-ended ground war was influenced by the imbalance of power. I argue explicitly that the final decision was a matter of internal bureaucratic politics, colored by broader domestic political considerations.

By using terms (“decision-making power,” “reins of authority”) that go well beyond anything I use, Logevall and Brigham attempt to make my argument about the role of the national security advisers in pushing Kennedy and Johnson toward war appear extreme. But I state the problem clearly: national security advisers were able to use the political power inherent in their socio-political status to make it difficult for a president to reject their advice to use force. Furthermore, my argument in Kennedy’s case is not that he gave in to his national security team, but that he resorted to extraordinary means to keep control over his Vietnam policy. However, he did so in a way that implicitly recognized that his national security advisers had the power to pressure him to adopt their policy preferences and to obstruct policy initiatives that went in a different direction.

Both Kennedy and Johnson, I argue, would have been taking extraordinary political risks in rejecting their adviser’s recommendations on Vietnam completely, because they could be accused of having “lost” a country to the Communists. They both perceived a need to reduce their own political risk by avoiding a situation in which key national security advisers were fundamentally at odds with them on Vietnam. Their national security advisers had real leverage to force concessions to their preference for war, leverage they exerted in part through bureaucratic maneuvering but more particularly by forming a united front against the president’s policy.

Logevall attacks a straw man (“Was this ‘national security bureaucracy’ really the cohesive, undifferentiated mass Porter makes it out to be?”) to counter my argument about the “national security bureaucracy.” But I make it very clear from the beginning (x) that I am not arguing that the bureaucracy was “uniform in its policy preferences regarding the use of military force in Vietnam.” Obviously the JCS consistently advocated escalating the bombing in 1964-65. The issue is not whether all major national security officials were in agreement on every subject at all times, but whether they achieved broad consensus on the fundamental question of using force to prevail in South Vietnam, especially when opportunities arose to make a formal case to the president. Logevall cites the reaction of JFK’s top advisers to the Taylor-Rostow report as an example of the supposed pluralism of views among the ranking national security officials. It is well known, of course, that the recommendation to send 8,000 combat troops to South Vietnam generated immediate disagreement between the authors of the report and those in the Pentagon who thought 8,000 was not nearly enough. Not a single high-ranking official suggested that the recommendation was too warlike.

But the real test of my thesis lies not in the initial reactions to the report, but in whether Kennedy’s principal advisers, along with the heads of the special mission to South Vietnam, arrived at a unanimous recommendation. They did in fact call unanimously for approving a military commitment to win in South Vietnam, with U.S. troops to be deployed as necessary. Furthermore, immediately after Kennedy rejected their advice, he was reminded of that unanimity by McGeorge Bundy. Bundy’s memo, I submit, did reflect the view that the rejection of unanimous advice on the use of military power against a Communist movement was irresponsible.

It was not the only time there was such a show of unanimity on the part of the principal national security advisers. In November 1964, McNamara, Rusk, Bundy and CIA Director John McCone unanimously agreed on the systematic bombing of North Vietnam. That consensus led to the November 29, 1964 draft action paper calling for a “second phase program . . . of graduated military pressures against the DRV” beyond retaliation for major Viet Cong actions in the South.

Logevall seems to suggest that even such a specific consensus is not enough to demonstrate that the national security bureaucracy’s preference for war influenced policy. “Even when principal advisers were united on the need for expanded military action,” he asserts, “they often disagreed on why it was necessary, and on what form it ought to take.” One

wonders what level of agreement on the “form” of the bombing Logevall would require for it to count it as effective pressure on the president and how any disagreements on why military action was necessary would be relevant to the impact of the advisers’ recommendation.

Logevall challenges my assertion that LBJ’s advisers tried to get him to commit to using military force on twelve different occasions in fourteen months. He suggests that a “cursory glance” reveals that most of these were not really attempts to get LBJ to approve military action. Instead, he argues, they were “in the category of contingency planning for possible future use of force.” He concludes that none of them involved “an all-out effort by the bureaucracy to force the president’s hand” and that several of them even “had Johnson’s tacit support.”

This is a curious reading of the record. In fact, not a single one of these attempts involved the mere drafting of contingency plans. In only one instance—the changing of the wording of NSAM 273 to include the preparation of plans for covert actions that would include U.S. air attacks on North Vietnam—could the formal purpose be interpreted as the preparation of contingency plans. And it is unambiguously clear from the record that McNamara, Taylor, Bundy and Rusk actively intended to use that change in wording as a springboard to establish a new policy that would escalate the conflict to ensure victory in South Vietnam and that McNamara and Bundy tried to get the plans referred to the “303 Committee,” which was under McGeorge Bundy’s direct control and which could make decisions on some covert operations without consulting the president.

As for the other eleven episodes detailed in the book, every move by LBJ’s advisers was aimed either at committing the president to the use of force against North Vietnam or at getting him to carry out bombing immediately or within a matter of weeks. I cannot imagine how any of them could be construed as having LBJ’s “tacit support,” much less “several” of them. And certainly the November 28, 1964 action paper qualifies as “an all-out effort by the bureaucracy to force the president’s hand.”

I am even more mystified by Logevall’s refusal to acknowledge the documented fact that Johnson’s advisers concluded in January 1965 that he was refusing to go ahead with the bombing of North Vietnam because he hoped that a neutralist regime would emerge in Saigon that would ask the United States to leave. In his unpublished manuscript, William Bundy writes that LBJ’s insistence in January 1965 that no bombing of the North could begin as long as it would expose American women and children in the South to possible harm “could be interpreted and indeed did strike some of us at the time, as a stalling tactic, in effect a repeated demand . . . that he knew would tie up the situation until he could sort it out or until a dramatic new event gave him a new handle.”

It is true that Bundy does not say explicitly that this “stalling tactic” was meant to delay the bombing until a neutralist regime could come to power. But in light of the constant reiteration by Bundy and other advisers that a failure to carry out their bombing project quickly enough would almost certainly result in just such a neutralist regime that would ask for U.S. withdrawal, it is difficult to interpret these statements in any other way. Furthermore, McGeorge Bundy was more explicit in his own recollection of that period, telling one interviewer that he concluded the president was “coming to a decision, a decision to lose.”

Logevall portrays me as an attorney-like partisan who “time and again flattens out ambiguities.” The reader, he complains, “gets little sense that top- and mid-level officials were themselves at times uncertain about the outlook for the conflict—even with the introduction of U.S. ground troops—and about the stakes involved.” Yet in my account of the process leading to the final decision on an open-ended commitment of ground troops, I note that in early to mid-June, “Johnson, McGeorge Bundy and McNamara were all aware of the real possibility of an early Communist victory over the Saigon government” (222), and I suggest that only Rusk believed that limited combat deployment was capable of preventing a U.S. defeat.

However, the issue here is not whether these officials developed serious doubts about the efficacy of the project in the late spring and early summer of 1965, but whether they pushed Johnson systematically to accept their preference for bombing throughout 1964 and early 1965. Logevall is particularly protective of McNamara. In his own book he argues that McNamara really wanted to avoid escalation in 1964-65 but was drawn deeper into war by his loyalty to LBJ, whose

personality was, Logevall believes, inherently warlike. The record now available, however, provides no support whatever for such a view of McNamara, who emerges as the leading advocate of a bombing strategy from the very first days of LBJ's presidency. I cite episode after episode in which McNamara led the way in pushing for a bombing program against North Vietnam. There is further evidence, moreover, that LBJ became increasingly opposed to the idea of bombing through the course of 1964 and was far more determined after his election to avoid that course than he had been months earlier. On this evidence Logevall is silent.

Despite his criticisms of my treatment of the national security advisers' role, Logevall seems to concede my central argument that they worked together to bring effective pressure the president in regard to the use force in Vietnam. He asks, "Were Vietnam War presidents subject to bureaucratic pressures that reduced their maneuverability in policy terms?" and answers "Unquestionably." He may feel that he is maintaining some vitally important distinction between this conclusion and my interpretation, but I suspect that most readers will find it hard to discern the difference.

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August 2006 Newsletter

History, Stamp Collecting, and the U.S. Embargo against Cuba

by

Thomas G. Paterson*

What in the world? An article on stamp collecting in SHAFR's newsletter? Well, I am both a stamp collector and an historian of U.S.-Cuba relations, and there is a story here about how the two roles intertwine. Postage stamps can help us fill in blanks in our knowledge of the past, and they can teach us much about the history, leaders, identity, goals, culture, language, and geography of other peoples.

One learns, for example, a good deal about U.S. imperialism and a small island nation's loss of sovereignty in the discovery that after U.S. forces and officials invaded Cuba in the late 1890s, they seized the postal system and replaced Cuban stamps with United States stamps. [PLACE IMAGE #1 NEAR THIS SPOT] Depicting great Americans, with prices in cents, these stamps were overprinted with "CUBA" and "de PESO." To cite another example: William McKinley, the very president who had denied the Philippines independence, appeared in 1906 on that country's stamps, emblazoned with "Philippine Islands/United States of America." Filipino nationalists must have bristled.

[PLACE IMAGE #2 NEAR THIS SPOT]

An avid student of history and geography, President Franklin D. Roosevelt enthusiastically collected stamps, as Brian C. Baur notes in his book, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Stamp Collecting President* (1999). Roosevelt once showed Prime Minister Winston Churchill a favorite stamp "from one of your colonies." "Which one?" the imperious Englishman wondered. "One of your last.... You won't have them much longer, you know." Churchill was not amused.

[PLACE IMAGE #3 NEAR THIS SPOT]

Unlike FDR, I am only an amateur collector, but with some purpose. When I was young, a thoughtful elderly lady in my Seaside, Oregon, neighborhood handed me hundreds of stamps from Germany and Japan, perhaps given to her by relatives or friends returning from abroad after military service in the Second World War. Like most collectors, to avoid being overwhelmed by stamps from every part of the globe, I eventually decided to specialize in a manageable number of countries: places where the United States had intervened. Such a focus had to change, of course, because that group grew tremendously as the Cold War and the rise of the Third World unsettled the international system, spawning more U.S. interventions. Cuba had long been on my list, but as I began to research (including two trips to the island) and to write on U.S.-Cuba relations, especially my book *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (1994), that Caribbean nation moved to the top of my philatelic interests.

Simón Bolívar, José Martí, V. I. Lenin, Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh—one might expect to find these champions of revolution or communism adorning Cuban postage stamps after Fidel Castro toppled Fulgencio Batista's regime in 1959. But George Washington? Benjamin Franklin? Abraham Lincoln? Martin Luther King, Jr.? Ernest Hemingway? Marilyn Monroe? [PLACE IMAGE #4 NEAR THIS SPOT] Cuban stamps have not only trumpeted the history of *beisbol*, victory at the Bay of Pigs, socialist solidarity with Vietnam, Soviet space exploration, national art treasures, and flora and fauna; they have also celebrated U.S. heroes and heroines. Why? Although many Caribbean nations have printed mounds of stamps sporting U.S. popular-culture images, high-profile individuals, and "topicals," such as trains and butterflies, to attract U.S.

stamp buyers and hence raise revenue, the Cuban case suggests intensely cultural and political motives.

Through their postage stamps, Cuban officials are both acknowledging a shared cultural heritage and sticking it to North Americans and their economic embargo, a cruel imperial device, they argue, designed to subjugate a small neighbor and starve its eleven million people. Remember, they seem to be saying in their stamps, Washington and Franklin rebelled against empire. Lincoln and King helped free enslaved peoples.[PLACE IMAGE #5 NEAR THIS SPOT] Hemingway, who often resided at his estate overlooking Havana beginning in the 1930s and used the island as the setting for novels such as *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), wrote on a theme *fidelistas* admired: the underdog in struggle.

[PLACE IMAGE #6 NEAR THIS SPOT]

And Monroe? Well, she is Marilyn. Who in Cuba could “rival the glitter of Marilyn Monroe’s lips,” the Cuban writer Pablo Medina wondered in his autobiography, *Exiled Memories* (1990). Hollywood films have always been popular in Cuba. A 2001 set of stamps, including Rita Hayworth and Rock Hudson, and again, Marilyn Monroe, even portrays “Film Stars Who Never Won Oscars.” [PLACE IMAGE #7 NEAR THIS SPOT] As Louis A. Pérez, Jr. amply demonstrates in his impressive book, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (1999), U.S. and Cuban cultures have long intersected and the U.S. cultural imprint on the island persists, in this case through pictures on stamps.

But for many years it was difficult to collect Cuban stamps because the U.S. embargo against the island prohibited their importation. On July 8, 1963, the Kennedy Administration issued Cuban Assets Control Regulations (CACR, Title 31 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Part 515), under the Trading with the Enemy Act. Those regulations read: “Goods and services of Cuban origin may not be imported into the United States either directly or through third countries, such as Canada or Mexico. The only exceptions are publications, artwork, or other informational materials.” The U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has administered and enforced the regulations. (See <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac> for OFAC, CACR, and “What You Need to Know About the U.S. Embargo.”) U.S. officials considered Cuban stamps dangerous, not so much because the stamps displayed anti-yanqui messages, or because their revolutionary banners challenged world order, or because they showcased Fidel Castro (actually there are few stamps picturing el jefe), but rather because the Cuban government might earn dollars from their sale and thus sustain itself in the face of the U.S. campaign to dethrone it.

OFAC had long ruled that Cuban stamps did not qualify for exemption. Cuban stamps were merchandise and thus could not be imported. But, in a letter to a private U.S. stamp company in 2001, OFAC redefined *used* or *cancelled stamps* from Cuba as “informational materials” and declared that they could be imported and sold. More, OFAC stated that it would issue specific licenses for the importation into the United States of *new* or *uncancelled* Cuban stamps, so long as they were for personal use and would not be resold. Not until the *Scott Stamp Monthly* announced the change did many collectors hear of this breach in the embargo.

Soon dealers began to advertise special offers of used Cuban stamps in the Scott magazine. One company hailed “Once Forbidden” stamps that provided “a unique glimpse into the Cuban propaganda machine,” asserting that the illustrations on the stamps proved that “the Cuba of Fidel Castro has been influenced by American culture in spite of itself.” Another company touted stamps of “alluring Latino dancers” and revolutionaries. One ad exuberantly claimed that “each stamp is a direct connection to Fidel Castro’s Cuba, one of the last Communist nations.” Now, collectors of stamps from Cuba did not have to fear prosecution for violating the embargo by obtaining their stamps from friends in Canada or from colleagues who traveled to Cuba and then risked fines and confiscation when they returned through U.S. customs inspection stations with a mere packet of Cuba stamps.

For historians of foreign relations, the enduring U.S. embargo against Cuba has much in common with the obstructive U.S. government regulations on the declassification of documents and the recent reprehensible reclassification program. The latter two prevent scholars from writing thorough history. The first, which includes restrictions on travel to and research in Cuba, prevents Americans from learning about another people and place. All three deny us the freedom to explore and understand. In the case of Cuba today, the nation’s stamps provide us with one of the few ways to narrow our ignorance of its life and past.

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affiliated with Southern Oregon University. He can be reached at tgpaterson@worldnet.att.net. He thanks Deborah Kisatsky, Garry Clifford, Roxanne Rae, Shane Maddock, and Frank Costigliola for their suggestions on this piece.
Captions:

For image #1: 1899 U.S. stamp of George Washington overprinted with Cuba

For image #2: 1906 Philippines stamp of William McKinley

For image #3: 1950 Philippines stamp of Franklin D. Roosevelt as stamp collector

For image #4: 1965 Cuba stamp of Abraham Lincoln

For image #5: 1986 Cuba stamp of Martin Luther King, Jr.

For image #6: 1963 Cuba stamp of Ernest Hemingway as author of *The Old Man and the Sea*

For image #7: 2001 Cuba stamp of Marilyn Monroe

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August 2006 Newsletter

A Night to Remember: Walt LaFeber's Last Waltz

Douglas Little, Clark University

Although the atmosphere in Broadway's Beacon Theater on April 25, 2006, was reminiscent of an opening night, the evening's events actually brought to a close Walter LaFeber's remarkable forty-seven-year run teaching American diplomatic history high above Cayuga's waters. The setting would have been familiar to anyone who has heard Walt lecture over the years—a table, a podium, and a blackboard with a brief outline chalked in his distinctive scrawl. Over 2500 friends, colleagues, and former students had gathered in the Beacon (which looked like a jumbo version of Bailey Hall, the largest auditorium on the Cornell campus) to hear their favorite teacher's long goodbye, delivered as always without notes.

Walt did not disappoint. Calling his valedictory lecture “Half a Century of Friends, Foreign Policy, and Great Losers,” he offered a primer on the perils of American exceptionalism for the born-again Wilsonians who sent the United States on a fool's errand to Iraq in 2003. In the beginning, there was John Quincy Adams, whom Walt has always regarded as America's greatest secretary of state. (This may be the only point on which Walt and Samuel Flagg Bemis agree.) JQA was great not just because he loved opera and swam nude in the Potomac, but because he was committed to the U.S. national interest while appreciating both the limits of power and the power of ideas. “America, with the same voice which spoke herself into existence as a nation, proclaimed to mankind the inextinguishable rights of human nature,” Adams remarked in 1821. “But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy.” In not so many words, John Quincy Adams was saying that exporting democracy was a risky business in places like Latin America, where wars of independence had unleashed radical social forces that were proving difficult to control.

Had Woodrow Wilson heeded JQA's warning, Walt suggested, he might not have been so quick to try to make the world safe for democracy a century later. Perhaps because Wilson was a political scientist rather than a historian (or perhaps because he attended Princeton rather than Cornell), he never really understood that democracy doesn't travel well. Wilson's famous prescription for bringing order out of chaos in revolutionary Mexico--“we must teach the South Americans to elect good men”--might have made a nice sound bite in 1914, but his decision to send Black Jack Pershing and 6000 U.S. troops south of the Rio Grande two years later led many Mexicans to charge that America was trying to export democracy at gunpoint. When left-wing radicals translated national self-determination into revolutionary nationalism in China, Russia, and parts of Europe during and after World War I, Wilson was not amused, and he aligned himself with some decidedly undemocratic forces to combat Bolshevism, which he came to see as the biggest threat to democracy, American-style. The self-righteous Wilson, of course, failed to see the irony in employing undemocratic means to promote democracy, but his pragmatic secretary of state, Robert Lansing, was very well aware that the Presbyterian in the White House was “playing with dynamite” by preaching self-determination to peoples whose political and economic objectives were very different from those of the United States.

Nowhere, Walt emphasized, was the gap between the rhetoric and reality of Wilsonian self-determination greater than in the Middle East, where the Fourteen Points publicly promised democracy to Arabs, Kurds, and other subject peoples liberated from Ottoman rule while France and Britain, with America's blessing, ruthlessly carved out spheres of influence behind closed doors at Versailles. Despite strong objections from Arab nationalists, the French established protectorates over Lebanon and Syria while the British made similar arrangements in Palestine and Transjordan. And after occupying oil-rich

Mesopotamia at the end of World War I, Whitehall fused three Ottoman provinces--Kurdish Mosul in the north, Sunni Baghdad in the center, and Shiite Basra in the south--into Iraq, a new nation-state headed by a king whose vocabulary did not include words like democracy or free elections. In short, having set out to make the world safe for democracy in 1917, Woodrow Wilson helped make Iraq safe from democracy three years later.

Walt closed the lecture by retelling a story that most of his audience had heard in one form or another in History 314, his legendary survey of U.S. Foreign Relations since 1914. Among the young progressives who accompanied Woodrow Wilson to Versailles was William Christian Bullitt, a Yale-educated action intellectual from a main-line Philadelphia family who was committed to exporting democracy to the world. Deeply disillusioned by what he regarded as Wilson's sell-out of American principles at the conference table, Bullitt and several of his friends very publicly resigned from the U.S. delegation. When a startled reporter asked, "Now what are you going to do?" Bullitt replied, "I'm going to lie in the sands of the Riviera and watch the world go to hell." Walt brought the house down with his own laconic quip: "He went, and it did." The "great losers" were not only Woodrow Wilson and William Bullitt but, more important, the Arabs, Asians, and Africans who were foolish enough to believe that American leaders meant what they said about self-determination.

Although Walt remains quite critical of U.S. military intervention in Iraq, his lecture was not a Jonathan Edwards-style fire and brimstone sermon but rather a Reinhold Niebuhr-style meditation on the irony of American history. This came as no surprise to his students, because Walt has always been a teacher, not a preacher. Walt LaFeber has to be the only former president of SHAFR who can claim to have taught two National Security Advisers. One of them, Sandy Berger, was seated in the front row at the Beacon Theater and, like the rest of us, gave Walt a standing ovation. The other National Security Adviser was a last minute no-show. The pressure of making policy on Iraq and elsewhere prevented Stephen Hadley, who currently sits in the West Wing a few doors from the Oval Office, from making the trip from Washington to New York City to hear his old teacher. I have never met Stephen Hadley, but my hope is that had he been able to be at the Beacon Theater on April 25, he would have recognized that the realism of John Quincy Adams, the irony of Reinhold Niebuhr, and the gentle wisdom of Walt LaFeber made quite a compelling case for rethinking the Bush administration's approach to the Middle East.

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August 2006 Newsletter

The Case of the Disappearing Documents*

William Burr

Scholars who have visited the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park in the last six or seven years to conduct research on Cold War-era foreign relations may have copies of some newly reclassified documents in their files. Unbeknownst to them, while they were turning on their laptops and opening archival boxes, personnel from a number of federal agencies were working behind the scenes to reclassify over 25,000 documents.

Fortunately, Matthew Aid, an independent scholar who was researching a project on secret intelligence and Cold War crises, was a bit uncertain about some documents he had already seen. As many readers know, Aid revisited some collections at the Archives and discovered an unusual pattern.[1] He found that many documents fifty years old or older from files in the Defense and State Departments that had been reviewed and released in the 1980s and 1990s had been pulled, and in their place were red-bordered “pull” sheets dated from 2002 through 2005. That some documents were being reclassified was not a surprise. It was well known that, under the Kyl-Lott Amendments, the Department of Energy was impounding “inadvertently” released documents that included “Restricted Data.” But Aid could tell that “Restricted Data” was not the issue in the documents that had been pulled. During the 1990s, he had done research in State Department Intelligence and Research (INR) files and had copied some of the documents that had been recently withdrawn. Through a painstaking and complex process of comparison he discovered that some of the pulled documents, mainly from State Department INR files, had been published in the State Department’s *Foreign Relations* series (FRUS) or declassified under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). These documents were so innocuous that it was hard to understand why they had been reclassified. Could researchers no longer trust the integrity of the declassification process at the National Archives?

Other researchers, including this writer, were also troubled by the withdrawal of documents but had not done recent research in the older records that Aid was reviewing and were not sure whether recently pulled records had been reclassified because of the Department of Energy Kyl-Lott review or NARA’s post-9/11 “records of concern” program.[2] However, when they questioned NARA staffers about withdrawn documents they could not get satisfactory answers. Little did they know that Archives employees were under a virtual gag order forbidding them to discuss the disappearing records in their contacts with the public.

This story and its immediate aftermath will be familiar to newspaper and newsletter readers. While pressing NARA for a meeting to disclose what had happened, Matthew Aid reached out to staffers at the National Security Archive, who in turn contacted Public Citizen and the National Coalition for History. NARA officials agreed to a meeting and on January 27, 2006, they gave a briefing which brought out preliminary details. More than 9,000 documents (over 55,000 pages) had been returned to the vaults, and the officials intimated that there had been formal understandings with government agencies concerning the withdrawal of records. They explained to the group that what had driven this effort was the assertion by the CIA and other agencies that NARA and the State Department had disregarded these agencies’ legitimate right to review documents that contained their information when State opened up historical files at NARA under the twenty-five-year automatic declassification rule contained in Executive Order 12958. The conviction that the State Department had ignored their “equities” led the CIA and the Air Force to insist that NARA make the open files available to them so that they could then impound inadvertently released documents that contained sensitive intelligence information. Although E. O. 12958

includes specific requirements for the reclassification of documents, the CIA believed that those provisions applied only to documents that had been properly declassified in the first place.

During the January 27 briefing, staffers from NARA's Declassification Office acknowledged that they had raised questions about the reclassifications in the early stages, even pointing out to the CIA that some of the withdrawn items had already been published in *FRUS*. It was evident, however, that they largely accepted the arguments and authority of the agencies that sought reclassification. Indeed, the Declassification Office facilitated the process, providing staffers to insert withdrawal sheets in the files.

Whatever the merits of the CIA's arguments about equities, Aid and representatives of SHAFR, the National Security Archive, the National Coalition for History, and Public Citizen questioned the integrity of the reclassification process. Troubled by the sheer number of reclassified pages and by NARA's complicity with the secret review program, those organizations wrote to NARA's Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO) on February 17 to raise questions about the lack of "clear and transparent standards" for reclassification and to ask the ISOO to "exercise its authority" and audit the "withdrawn records to determine whether they are properly subject to classification." They also questioned the failure of the CIA and the Air Force to follow the formal reclassification procedures of E.O. 12958 because they were not convinced that the procedures required by that order were irrelevant.[3]

A few days later, on February 21, the *New York Times* put the emerging controversy on the front page with a story by Scott Shane entitled "U.S. Reclassifies Many Documents in Secret Review." Shane's story and the simultaneous publication on the National Security Archive's web-site of Matthew Aid's findings and the letter to the ISOO created a flood of newspaper stories and editorials, not only in the major media, but in the local and regional press, as well as on late-night comedy and talk shows. For example, the *Washington Post* opined that "you don't need to be a classification expert to know that at least some of this reclassification wasn't only inappropriate—it was just plain dumb." A Florida newspaper, the *Daytona Beach News*, argued that the reclassification program showed that the "culture of secrecy" had become "absurd," while the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* declared that "declassifying material after 25 years should remain the default policy, and once made public, documents should remain so. This is a cornerstone of self-governance."

The *New York Times* story got the attention of Archivist of the United States Allen Weinstein, who later testified before a congressional committee that he had not been aware of the reclassification program until he read about it in the newspaper. [4] At best, his deputies had given him a vague briefing about the scale and scope of the program. Once he was in the loop, Weinstein announced on February 22 that in response to the earlier inquiries the ISOO had already begun an audit. But that was a preliminary response (and a barely adequate one at that). Weinstein understood that the revelation of a clandestine reclassification program was a challenge to NARA's integrity and that more had to be said and done. To show that NARA had some control over its own house, he announced interim actions on March 2. There would be a reclassification moratorium until the completion of the ISOO audit; a "summit" with the agencies involved in reclassification; restoration to the public shelves of the reclassified documents to the extent possible; "clear and concise standardized guidance" with "an appropriately high threshold" for any future reclassifications; a review of NARA's internal procedures for "implementing agency classification/declassification decisions"; and a reassessment of the steps needed to ensure "timely public access" to declassified records.

Some government officials and interested researchers believed that the controversy presented an opportunity to modernize the review processes for historical records. While agencies had the right to review inadvertently released documents to justify reclassification, it was this assertion of equities by a multitude of agencies that had needlessly complicated and delayed the release of older records under E.O. 12958. The 1997 recommendation of the Moynihan Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy for assigning policy control over classification and declassification policy to an independent executive body—a National Declassification Center—had been very much on the mind of participants in the controversy.[5] Indeed, on March 6, 2006, when Weinstein and ISOO director J. William Leonard presided over the summit of federal agencies, they supported the concept of a "National Declassification Initiative" (NDI) to replace the "agency-centric approach to declassification." The experience of the past brought credibility to that proposal. In the 1990s an interagency working group had declassified thousands of pages of documents on U.S. policy toward Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and in the 1980s a similar group had reviewed thousands of pages of material on the Iran-Contra scandal.

Those examples showed that a cooperative review effort could be productive and efficient.

At the agency summit, the CIA and other agencies professed to support “new procedures” for declassification, but they also claimed that they had more important priorities, such as meeting the December 2006 deadline for automatically declassifying non-exempt records under E.O. 12958.[6] The CIA did not say whether the agency would willingly accept any outside control over its declassification policies and practices. That remains an open question. Congress responded to the controversy on March 21. The House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, chaired by Christopher Shays (R-CT), held hearings that were entitled “Drowning in a Sea of Faux Secrets.” Matthew Aid, Anna Nelson, and Thomas Blanton testified. Sparks flew during the aggressive questioning of Weinstein by Congressman Shays and by Henry Waxman (D-CA).[7] Weinstein acknowledged that reading about the reclassification program on the front page of the *New York Times* was an “impossible and absurd way” for him to have found out about it. During his testimony some mysterious records that had been the subject of a number of FOIA requests—the rumored memoranda of understandings (MOU) that NARA had signed with federal agencies—became central to the controversy. However, the wrangling over the status of one MOU that the Archives had signed with an unspecified component of the Defense Department generated more heat than light. Citing its classified nature, Weinstein declared that he could not discuss it in an open session. Shays insisted that the Archives declassify the document, and Weinstein agreed to seek its release.

Responding to congressional pressure and FOIA requests, on April 11, 2006, the National Archives released, in excised form, the MOU that it had signed with the Air Force in March 2002. The MOU shows that a supposedly sensitive Air Force intelligence activity had been a factor in the drive to remove documents from open files that may have shed light on that program. While the nature of the intelligence activity led to some head-scratching, that excision was not as troubling as the discovery that both parties had agreed that it was in their interest to manage the reclassification program on a clandestine basis. NARA promised that it would “not disclose the true reason for the presence of [excised agency] ... personnel at the Archives,” and both parties agreed that it was important to avoid “the attention and researcher complaints that may arise from removing material that has already been made publicly available.” More may be learned about this MOU if the Archives and the Air Force respond positively to FOIA appeals to restore the excisions. The next shoe dropped that same week. Some observers believed the MOU with the Air Force was only part of the story. They thought it likely that the CIA had played an instigating role in the reclassification program and surmised that even if there was only an informal understanding between the agency and NARA, some paperwork memorializing it had to exist. Indeed, in mid-April, ISOO staffers conducting the reclassification audit discovered another secret MOU which the assistant archivist of the United States had signed with the CIA in the fall of 2001, partly to ensure that the agency followed an orderly procedure when it reviewed documents. (The CIA had already disarranged some documents in State Department INR files.) The document had not surfaced previously because NARA staffers claimed that it was “generic and procedural” and not “part of the reclassification program.” The MOU with CIA could not have been more relevant, however, and when Weinstein learned about the discovery on April 13 he insisted that the document be declassified immediately. It must have taken a call to former CIA director Porter Goss, but the MOU was declassified within twenty-four hours—possibly record time.

Weinstein released the document on April 17 with a note decrying the previous secret understandings. “There can never be a classified aspect of our mission,” he wrote, adding that “classified agreements are the antithesis of our reason for being.” The previous archivist, John Carlin, would go on record expressing his “shock” about the secret agreements, but senior archives officials told members of the historical and public interest community that they had in fact briefed him about the MOUs when he was in office.[8]

On April 26, ISOO director J. William Leonard released the reclassification audit, “Withdrawal of Records from Public Access at the National Archives and Records Administration for Reclassification Purposes.” The thirty-page report is remarkable as a factual account. It shows, for example, that the reclassification effort actually involved over 25,000 documents (including some DOE withdrawals), more than twice as many as had been suggested earlier. The Air Force had taken the lead by withdrawing over 17,000 records. The ISOO report is a tough critique of agency conduct in impounding publicly available material.[9] One of the ISOO’s key conclusions, from its sampling of 1,353 records, is that only 64 percent—around two-thirds—had been properly classified. Most of the others were “clearly inappropriate for continued classification.” Moreover, even in the instances where the documents remained legitimately subject to classification the

report concludes that “insufficient judgment was applied to the decision to withdraw the record from public access.” Not only had NARA “acquiesced too readily to the re-review efforts or withdrawal decisions,” the entire process was characterized “by the absence of standards.”

For the CIA and the Air Force, 64 percent was a vindication of their efforts. It showed they were right about most of the documents that had been pulled. But some ISOO officials disagreed. They argued privately that the agencies only called attention to the documents by withdrawing them. It would have been wiser to leave them alone. They also indicated that many of the withdrawals showed poor judgment. For example, some documents were withdrawn simply because they had a cc: to a CIA official. More important, ISOO officials pointed out that under E.O. 12958 hundreds of millions of pages had been declassified. The release of 16,000 or so still-sensitive documents (some two-thirds of the 25,000) represented a tiny and wholly acceptable error rate.

In his important “Director’s Message,” Leonard expressed his disappointment that “trained classifiers” had failed to get it right, but he argued that the “deliberate decisions highlighted in this audit ... constitute a misuse of the classification system.”[10] He was referring to one of the most striking findings of the audit: that a CIA deception operation had shaped many of the reclassification actions. According to the ISOO report, the “CIA withdrew a considerable number of purely unclassified records in order to obfuscate the classified equity that they agency was intent on protecting.” The CIA action made it difficult for ISOO staffers to differentiate between the withdrawn documents that were legitimately classified and those had been reclassified only to “obfuscate other, more sensitive equities.” Leonard stressed that “the damage such practices can inflict on the integrity of the classification system cannot be denied.”

The ISOO report highlights the many problems revealed by the reclassification process: violations of the Executive Order, poor judgment, quality control problems, the absence of standards, the lack of documentation to track the process, and the inadequacy of the current complex referrals process for declassifying documents. An important finding for those concerned about NARA’s role in the events is that, compared to other agencies, the Archives devoted insufficient resources to implementing the historical declassification requirements of E.O. 12958. The resulting “mismatch in capabilities” meant that NARA is always lagging in opening up processed records to researchers. “Access delayed can equate to access denied.”

But the complex referral process created by multiple agency equities also complicates and delays access. In light of that assessment, consideration of a National Declassification Initiative is all the more imperative.

One of the most important recommendations in the ISOO audit, alluded to in the “Director’s Note,” is one that Leonard had made many times in the past. The agencies that took the lead in reclassification had studiously ignored a basic assumption embodied in E. O. 12958: declassification of historical records should follow “risk management” principles. When historical records are declassified, there will inevitably be some inadvertent releases. It would be better for the agencies to accept that risk and let the inadvertent releases stay buried in the files than to call attention to them by withdrawing them. By implicitly following “risk averse” principles, the agencies had created a controversy that brought the entire declassification system into disrepute. When the ISOO released its audit, Weinstein announced the end of the reclassification moratorium, but at the same time he declared that there would be no return to the status quo pro ante. Weinstein approved interim guidelines that require greater transparency for further withdrawal of records. Meanwhile, the ISOO continues its audit, and even as NARA works to restore improperly withheld records to the open stacks and analyze its procedures for processing classified records, the Archives will take the lead in establishing a “pilot” National Declassification Initiative as a step toward creating a “more reliable executive-branch wide declassification program.”

The ISOO audit report represents an important first step. However, the sampling of documents was relatively small, and the exercise was conducted in a hurry, so it is possible that a more thorough review encompassing more documents might produce different results. The guidelines that the agencies use for declassification review of historical documents should also be reviewed to make sure they are up-to-date and not unnecessarily stringent, since the conclusion that some two-thirds of the documents were properly classified flows from the assumption that the guidelines that CIA and other agencies follow are justifiable. Only government officials at the ISOO level are in a position to determine whether the guidelines are appropriate.

Those cavils aside, the high quality of the audit report reflects well on the integrity of the ISOO's leadership. However, the ISOO has more moral than political authority. Getting the agencies to de-reclassify impounded documents will not be an easy process, not least because it is likely to involve costly page-by-page review, and the agencies will fight over whose budgets will fund the review. Moreover, it may be beyond the ISOO's power to get the agencies to support a meaningful NDI proposal and to accept Leonard's view that "risk management" is an appropriate standard for reviewing and releasing classified historical files. In addition, even if the agencies agree to a sound plan for an NDI, the new arrangements could founder unless NARA allocates more resources to process the expanded flow of declassified records.

On May 9, 2006, the recently constituted federal advisory committee, the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB), held its first public meeting, which included discussions of the reclassification controversy and the prospective National Declassification Initiative. William J. Bosanko, a representative from the ISOO who is conducting a major study on a "more viable and reliable executive-branch wide declassification program," briefed the PIDB on a program to expedite a massive backlog of 450 million pages slated for declassification review under E.O. 12958. The PIDB also heard testimony from Public Citizen attorney Adina Rosenbaum, National Security Archive director Thomas Blanton, and National Coalition for History director Bruce Craig, all of whom spoke in favor of reform of the declassification system. Blanton emphasized the need for legislation and according to Bruce Craig's account of the meeting, some PIDB members and audience members had also drawn the conclusion that executive orders were not enough to establish a better declassification system.[11]

Although the need for a well-funded and effective declassification system is obviously pressing, the situation is not likely to improve in the short term. Many of the reclassified documents may not be seen for years. The current leadership in Congress and the White House is unlikely to take an interest in, much less support, the necessary changes to the declassification system. Getting a better system will require political pressure and political will. To the extent that the archivist of the United States has political connections on the Hill that are worth something, it will take active lobbying on his part on behalf of an NDI to secure even modest funding for declassification at NARA. To get real improvement in arrangements for historical declassification, SHAFR and other organizations will need to support a concerted campaign against the "agency-centric" system that now hinders openness in the archival record of U.S. foreign relations.

* Thanks for Anna K. Nelson, Thomas Blanton, and Meredith Fuchs for helpful comments.

[1] See Matthew M. Aid, ed., "Declassification in Reverse: The U.S. Intelligence Community's Secret Historical Document Reclassification Program," 21 February 2006, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB179/index.htm>. See also Christopher Lee, "The Amateur Sleuth Who Gave the Archives a Red Face," *Washington Post*, 8 June 2006.

[2] The latter refers to the post-9/11 effort to locate in archival holdings and then impound such documents as blueprints of U.S. government buildings that could point to vulnerabilities in the federal infrastructure.

[3] See Aid et al to J. William Leonard, 17 February 2006, at http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB179/Aid-3-Letter_to_ISOO.pdf. Besides Aid, the letter was signed by SHAFR president Randall Woods, National Coalition for History director R. Bruce Craig, National Security Archive director Thomas Blanton and general counsel Meredith Fuchs, and Public Citizen staff attorney Adina Rosenbaum.

[4] For Weinstein's statements and press releases from the National Archives on reclassification, see <http://www.archives.gov/declassification/>.

[5] Report of the Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy, Pursuant to Public Law 236 103d Congress, Appendix C-1; available on-line at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/library/moynihan/index.html>.

[6] Barring some last-minute reprieve from the White House, all classified file series that are over twenty-five years old that federal agencies have not already designated as exempt from automatic declassification will, in theory, be declassified as of 1 January 2007. The agencies have had ten years to prepare for this deadline.

[7] For a partial, unofficial, transcript of the exchange, see <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20060411/>

Shays_hearing_3-14_transcript_excerpt.pdf. An official transcript of the hearings is not yet available but for statements by Christopher Shays, Allen Weinstein, J. William Leonard, Matthew Aid, Anna Nelson, Thomas Blanton, and others see: <http://reform.house.gov/NSETIR/Hearings/EventSingle.aspx?EventID=40820>

[8] For “shocked,” see “National Archives Pact Let C.I.A. Withdraw Public Documents,” *New York Times*, 18 April 2006.

[9] For the report, see <http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2006/nr06-96.html>.

[10] For the Director’s message, see <http://www.archives.gov/isoo/reports/2006-audit-report-attach-1.pdf>.

[11] For a full report on the PIDB meeting, see NCH WASHINGTON UPDATE (Vol. 12, #22; 11 May 2006), Item 2, at [http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-NCH&month=0605&week=b&msg=i6Z43B7y%2b2GcJhgWeihLBQ&user=&pw=.](http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-NCH&month=0605&week=b&msg=i6Z43B7y%2b2GcJhgWeihLBQ&user=&pw=)

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August 2006 Newsletter

The Sixth Edition of *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*: An Appreciation, a Critique, and Some Suggestions

Robert Shaffer, Shippensburg University

The latest revision of *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations*, published approximately five years after the last edition, brings students important and challenging primary sources from the makers and critics of U.S. foreign policy, along with well-chosen excerpts from secondary works of diverse perspectives that are focused around key events and themes in that history. Spanning almost four hundred years in two volumes, this collection, originally edited solely by Thomas Paterson and co-edited since the 1995 fourth edition by Dennis Merrill, is indispensable in teaching survey classes in the history of U.S. foreign relations.

Paterson, who is professor emeritus at the University of Connecticut and former president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, is the lead author of a popular narrative textbook in U.S. foreign relations, a co-author of a major survey textbook in U.S. history, and the editor of important collections of essays in diplomatic history.[1] He is also general editor of the "Major Problems in American History" series, which Houghton Mifflin took over from D.C. Heath, and which now includes over twenty titles. Merrill, of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, is a former student of Paterson's who has written on U.S. policy toward India and who supervised a major documentary editing project on the Truman administration.[2] Paterson's first edition of the present collection, itself an update of Heath's 1964 one-volume *Major Problems in American Diplomatic History*, edited by Daniel Smith, appeared in 1978. Paterson may have drawn some inspiration as well from a similar collection edited by William Appleman Williams, originally published in 1956, with a second edition in 1970.[3]

Each volume of *Major Problems* begins with an introductory chapter presenting a range of overviews of key themes in U.S. diplomatic history. In volume one these include, for example, extracts from Williams on U.S. economic expansionism and the problems arising from American efforts to remake the world. Williams's account is contrasted with Norman Graebner's analysis of early American diplomacy as an effort to maximize U.S. interests in the world by utilizing "balance of power" politics in and with regard to Europe. Excerpts from works by Bradford Perkins, Mary Renda, and Andrew Rotter round out this chapter. Each subsequent chapter begins with an overview of the topic by the editors, including major questions of history and historiography. A set of primary source documents follows, representing a range of political viewpoints, with one or two from abroad. Finally, each chapter includes excerpts from two or three essays representing divergent perspectives. Generally, these essays draw from one or more of the documents included, so that students can evaluate the historiographical debates and see how historians use evidence. Many of the documents and essays illustrate or challenge the overview essays in the introductory chapters, thus encouraging students to be aware of themes that resonate throughout the history of U.S. foreign policy and to develop their own worldviews about this history.

The primary source documents illustrate not only actions, decisions, and perspectives on issues facing the United States, but also attitudes and assumptions about American society and its interactions with others. For example, the vitriolic attack on Jay's Treaty by a Democratic-Republican society in South Carolina in 1795 exemplifies the partisan passions of the 1790s and the fears of many Americans that the ascendant power of the national government and the secrecy surrounding Senate negotiation of the proposed treaty compromised the republicanism of the revolutionary era (vol. 1, 64-65).[4] These

defenders of republicanism were also demanding free access to West Indian and European ports for American ships, however, so in their attack on the treaty students can see a colorful piece of evidence to support Williams, while Jay's Treaty itself might be used to support Graebner.

Similarly, comparing documents from different periods allows students to identify continuing themes of American thought. For example, in his 1812 war message James Madison declared that warfare by Indian "savages . . . a warfare which is known to spare neither age nor sex and to be distinguished by features peculiarly shocking to humanity" was outside the bounds of civilization (vol. 1, 113). Sam Houston's 1835 call for the independence of Texas combined the fear of slave revolts with antipathy to irregular warfare (see vol. 1, 195). Students may also note the dichotomy between "civilization" and "savagery" in Andrew Jackson's call for the removal of the Cherokees (vol. 1, 165-67), in Theodore Roosevelt's justification of U.S. intervention in Latin American affairs (vol. 1, 404), and in the way current U.S. leaders have framed the issues in the "war on terror." The recurrence of such rhetoric can have a powerful impact on student thinking and helps build the case for the perspectives on U.S. foreign policy outlined in the introductory essays by Andrew Rotter ("Gender, Expansionism, and Imperialism") and Mary Renda ("Paternalism and Imperial Culture").

The foreign documents in the collection, especially those from Latin America, will stimulate students' critical thinking and help them understand the challenges the United States faces in the realm of global public opinion.[5] In volume one, there are contrasting responses to the Monroe Doctrine from Colombia, and Argentina. José Martí's warning in 1895 about U.S. intentions towards Cuba helps explain statements U.S. leaders will make three years later and sheds light on the continuing conflict between these nations. Students might be asked to refer to these documents when they consider one of the newest documents in this edition, the speech by George W. Bush in which he asked, "Why do they hate us?"

Some documents from antagonists of the United States serve as counterpoints to American views. Some show surprising commonalities. Soviet Ambassador Nikolai Novikov's 1946 telegram to his government about American aggression after World War II is paired with George F. Kennan's 1946 telegram about Soviet expansionism. Ronald Reagan's thoughts on his Strategic Defense Initiative are contrasted with those of Mikhail Gorbachev. Nikita Khrushchev's view of the arms race of the 1950s is paired with a surprisingly similar statement from Dwight Eisenhower.

The presentation of clashing historiographical perspectives will help students evaluate issues that are still subject to debate, as policymakers use the past to make sense of the present. In the chapter on World War II in volume two Warren Kimball defends Franklin Roosevelt's diplomacy as essential to the successful prosecution of the war in Europe and portrays Roosevelt as attempting despite difficult circumstances and a lack of leverage to balance a range of interests for the post-war world. Meanwhile, Joseph Harper attributes the failure of the alliance to endure into the post-war world to FDR's refusal to fully commit the United States to stay involved in European affairs and to his rejection of Winston Churchill's warnings about the Soviets.[6] Among the documents used by both historians and included in this chapter are statements by FDR and Joseph Stalin on the "second front," Churchill's account of his "percentages deal" with Stalin, and extracts from the Yalta proceedings. Other chapters that are particularly useful for students evaluating still-vital issues are the Cuban missile crisis chapter, in which Paterson squares off against Robert Dallek, and the chapter on Theodore Roosevelt's "Big Stick" policy in the Caribbean, in which Mark Gilderhus and Emily Rosenberg offer criticisms while Richard Collin provides a defense.

This edition includes a number of improvements. A different selection by Peter Onuf and Leonard Sadosky about diplomacy in the revolutionary era exemplifies the internationalization of American history by showing how developments in the United States arose in conjunction with and response to similar developments elsewhere. An excellent excerpt from Joyce Appleby's new study of Thomas Jefferson replaces essays on the Louisiana Purchase by Alexander DeConde and Drew McCoy. Appleby shows Jefferson as a shrewd diplomat and a determined empire builder "for the white families of the United States" (vol. 1, 103). Garry Wills's hard-hitting critique of Madison's policy in the War of 1812 replaces Bradford Perkins's more leisurely analysis. Walter LaFeber's narrative of "the origins of the U.S.–Japanese clash," which replaces a fine but overly long essay by Kenneth Shewmaker on Daniel Webster's Asia diplomacy, emphasizes Japanese actions as much as American actions and thus exemplifies recent trends in our field.

An essay by Kristin Hoganson on the global roots of certain American consumption patterns in the late 1800s continues a trend in *Major Problems* to place more emphasis on culture and the manifestations of foreign relations in daily life. The essay is accompanied by an 1892 magazine article about the international origins of American interior design trends. Excerpts from Leila Rupp's *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (1997) show the editors' continuing efforts to explore transnational identities and integrate non-state actors and women into the story of American foreign relations. Rupp's essay on the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in the United States and Europe in the 1920s is accompanied by Jane Addams's laudatory 1922 article on the League of Nations. These essays join Jane Hunter's now-classic exploration of American female Protestant missionaries in China.

Other new essays include Arnold Offner's excellent critique of Truman's Cold War policies, which provides a counterpoint to John Lewis Gaddis's determined defense of the United States in that conflict. The three essays in the chapter on the Vietnam War replace essays by George Herring and Gabriel Kolko and represent some of the best work of a new generation of scholars on that conflict. All three are critical of U.S. goals and methods in Vietnam. Robert Buzzanco provides a more sophisticated view than did Kolko of how Vietnam's struggle for independence challenged international capitalism, and he includes the economic consequences of the war on the U.S. and global economies. Frederick Logevall, in a long essay that may be too dry for undergraduates, shows how Johnson administration officials had some freedom of action on Vietnam but nevertheless "chose war." Supporting documents include memoranda and position papers from the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy. Robert Brigham, an associate of Robert McNamara on *Argument Without End* (1999), uses North Vietnamese and Chinese sources to show convincingly that alternative military strategies, such as those proposed by military strategist Harry Summers, would not have led to U.S. victory. Mao Zedong's advice to the North Vietnamese in 1965 to keep fighting supports Brigham's contention that if the United States had invaded the North, China might have entered the war.

There is one new chapter in each volume of this edition. The chapter on the Civil War and foreign policy is welcome: the war is of great interest to students, and it is important to show them its international context. The first document of this chapter, South Carolina Senator James Hammond's 1858 speech, "Cotton is King," is an inspired choice. Hammond's argument that the North, Britain, and "the whole civilized world" (vol. 1, 263) were dependent upon the South economically mirrors the overly optimistic assertions during the American Revolution about the colonists' superior bargaining position with European powers. Other documents focus on Lincoln's efforts to prevent British recognition of and aid to the Confederacy. James McPherson and Howard Jones agree that public opinion in Britain played a role in that government's response to the Civil War, although they evaluate British conduct differently. It might have been helpful to include a document from one of the British mass meetings championing Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation or even from one of Karl Marx's wartime dispatches in the *New York Tribune*.

The second new chapter, "Cold War Culture and the 'Third World,'" broadens the postwar coverage both geographically and conceptually. In previous editions, discussion of the Third World was based either on high-level diplomacy (non-recognition of China, the Cuban missile crisis) or war (Korea, Vietnam). This chapter contains three essays, each accompanied by two or three documents, on discrete case studies. Mary Ann Heiss writes on the U.S. response to the nationalization of oil in Iran in the 1950s, Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman discusses the Peace Corps in the 1960s in Ghana, and Dennis Merrill describes the building of an infrastructure for tourism in Puerto Rico. The editors summarize the analyses of the three historians as "culture clash" (Heiss), "cultural cooperation" (Ghana), and "cultural negotiation" (Merrill), and thus present to students a range of ways in which the United States interacted with the world.[7]

The chapter is worthwhile but unwieldy. The case studies and the concept of culture differ too much. Moreover, two of the documents included to illustrate the impact of tourism are not particularly successful. A cartoon from a pro-independence Puerto Rican newspaper criticizing the insensitivity of American tourists is poorly reproduced in the original Spanish (vol. 2, 339), with a partial, paraphrased translation eleven pages away (vol. 2, 328). The photograph of the Caribe Hilton Hotel in San Juan (vol. 2, 338), which is intended to show how tourism embodied "modernity," should be coupled with photos of old San Juan.

When I used the book in the fall of 2004, I linked Heiss's discussion of Iran with a book on the 1954 coup in Guatemala[8] to show that U.S. participation in the overthrow of elected leaders constituted a pattern. I used Cobbs Hoffman's positive portrait of the Kennedy administration's actions in West Africa as a counterpoint to the more ambiguous portrait by Thomas

Borstelmann of the international dimensions of that administration's racial policies.[9] And I contrasted Merrill's nuanced picture of tourism in Puerto Rico with the more negative impact of 1950s U.S. tourism on Cuba and the "dependent independence" (in Stanley Karnow's words) of the Philippines.[10]

The changes in the sixth edition are not all positive. The editors missed the opportunity to make corrections.[11] The edition is more expensive than previous editions, even though it is significantly shorter (in part because of stronger editing or the substitution of more succinct essays for longer ones). There are only a handful of new documents, apart from the ones that illustrate new chapters, some documents have been eliminated, and some chapters have been pared from three essays to two. For example, the 1783 speech by Yale president Ezra Stiles incorporating the Protestant idea that America fulfilled a providential design is gone. It was a valuable link between John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" sermon of 1630 and John O'Sullivan's invocation of "manifest destiny" in 1839. It also served as a religious variant on Tom Paine's view of American promise in *Common Sense* and as background for the Christian discourse of the current president, and it contained prescient references to U.S. trade with Asia. Given the editors' efforts to show how non-diplomats participated in foreign relations, this elimination is disappointing.

Other excised documents also leave gaps. The removal of a 1790s statement by James Madison leaves the Charleston Democratic-Republicans as the sole opponents of Jay's Treaty. Rev. Josiah Strong's 1891 statement melding the Protestant "chosen people" theme with Anglo-American racism helped outline the cultural context of the U.S. rise to world power. A 1916 debate between U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing and German Ambassador Johann-Heinrich Bernstorff on submarine warfare worked well to help students think about past and present innovations in warfare, such as aerial bombardment and even suicide bombing. Also helpful in class was the dialogue between presidential advisor Harry Hopkins and Joseph Stalin in May 1945 about Soviet actions in Eastern Europe. Senator William Borah's 1931 plea for diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union, already eliminated from the fifth edition, highlighted the U.S. response to revolutions, illustrated an underappreciated aspect of so-called isolationists, and demonstrated that economic motives could underpin both opposition to and accommodation with foreign radicalism. A description of a 1957 nuclear test in which GI's were exposed to atomic radiation was also dropped after the fourth edition, although it provided a tangible look at the impact on Americans of Eisenhower's focus on nuclear over conventional warfare and provided a backdrop for discussion of the more recent use of Agent Orange and depleted uranium.

Most puzzling is the elimination of two documents that constituted important evidence for the chapters they accompanied. Missing from the chapter on the Cuban missile crisis is the Cuban government's October 8, 1962 protest at the United Nations against U.S. aggression, which provided a crucial perspective on the crisis. The chapter on the Vietnam War no longer includes Eisenhower's 1954 statement about Vietnam's importance to the free world, in which he enunciated the domino theory and spoke about the region's economic importance, with its tin, tungsten, and rubber. While this chapter now focuses on Johnson's decision-making, Eisenhower's statement provided perspective on the U.S. commitment and correlates directly with Buzzanco's argument.

Why eliminate documents? They are already typeset, and most are in the public domain, so the cost of keeping them is marginal. They do not make students' workloads more difficult, as overly long essays might do. But the elimination of documents does add to professors' workloads, since they must either revise lessons or provide documents on library reserve. The editors might have been justified in cutting documents to provide new sources and perspectives, but not solely to reduce total pages.

While many of the essay substitutions are helpful in including new perspectives or presenting important views more clearly, others are less successful. The elimination of Reginald Stuart's sympathetic account of Madison's policy in the War of 1812 as one of "defensive expansionism" leaves that chapter with two essays, both critical of the United States. Stuart provides a useful counterpoint to Williams and other critics of U.S. expansionism writing on other episodes in U.S. history, from the Mexican War to the annexation of the Philippines and beyond. His account also has contemporary reverberations, since Bush's argument for war in Iraq resembles "defensive expansionism." Also unfortunate is the elimination from the introductory chapter of volume one of Michael Hunt's essay on racism as a continuing theme in U.S. foreign relations in favor of an excerpt on paternalism and imperial culture from Mary Renda's book on the U.S. occupation of Haiti. The clarity, accessibility, and breadth of Hunt's explanation of racial dynamics in foreign relations make it more appropriate as

an overview to which students can return as they consider other documents and essays.

The elimination after the fourth edition of C. Vann Woodward's sympathetic overview of U.S. foreign relations also leaves a gap for teachers. Woodward identified the important theme of "free security," meaning that the United States had a relatively free hand in national development for much of its history because of its distance from Europe. That idea strongly influenced policymakers and historians, as they tended to conflate foreign relations with interaction with Europe. Also, while few historians today would present with so little critical analysis what Woodward called the "national myth that America is an innocent nation in a wicked world," many of our leaders and our students do. In order to help students analyze the platitudes they have heard from politicians or accepted without challenge in high school, we must present and discuss such views, as well as contrast them with contrary perspectives from Williams, Hunt, and others. Similarly, a judiciously edited version of Samuel Flagg Bemis's stridently ideological Kennedy-era AHA presidential address,[12] which students should take seriously and evaluate critically against the work of Williams, Hunt, and Graebner, would be a welcome addition to this collection.

Publishers would undoubtedly argue that adding new chapters requires eliminating others, but including an additional chapter in volume one (while keeping the World War I chapter in both volumes for teachers who divide their two-semester courses differently) would have been preferable. As it is, what had been two separate chapters on the turn-of-the-century wars in Cuba and the Philippines is now one, with all the essays focused on Cuba and only two documents on the Philippines. While survey textbooks and lectures could supplement the material on the Philippines, much is lost here. The three contrasting essays on the Philippines raised important themes barely addressed elsewhere. In particular, Stanley Karnow's essay on the intentions behind and consequences of U.S. intervention in the Philippines concretely illustrated William A. Williams's ideas. Robert Rydell's dissection of the cultural and racial politics of the display of Philippine ethnic groups at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair was both a stunning example of how racism was dressed up as benevolence and a reminder of how Americans used the memory of the Louisiana Purchase in the construction of an overseas empire. In an era when Americans are debating the unorthodox treatment of wartime prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and in Afghanistan, documents describing the torture of Filipinos one hundred years ago are essential reading for students, along with Glenn May's reexamination of the reasons for the high mortality rate of Philippine civilians during the war.[13]

To make room for the new chapter on culture and the Cold War in volume two, the editors combined the chapter on U.S. resistance to recognition of the People's Republic of China with that on the Korean War. But six of the eight documents in the new chapter, and two of the three essays, are on Korea. For a reader on diplomatic rather than military history, a focus on China would have been preferable, with added material on the impact of non-recognition on later events, including the Korean War. The communication in the late 1940s between U.S. diplomats in China, the State Department, and President Truman, along with documents from China, provided an excellent case study of foreign policy decision-making and enabled students to evaluate the evidence in the historiographic debate about the "lost chance" thesis. Also, the case study showed students how the United States responds to the emergence of revolutionary regimes abroad, a theme which is touched on in other chapters but is not the focus of any particular chapter. Moreover, the question of non-recognition of the People's Republic of China illuminates the connection between White House policy-making, domestic political pressures, and non-governmental interest groups. The editors say they want to highlight that connection, but it is not present in the new Korean War chapter. Material on the decision not to recognize the PRC is also indispensable to an analysis of the foreign policy of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the 1970s, which is, appropriately, the subject of a later chapter. One last complaint about this chapter: most of the documents do not illustrate the essays. There are no documents to accompany Bruce Cumings's important but here quite isolated analysis of "Korea's civil war and the roots of U.S. intervention," and there is no essay focused on the largest number of documents in the chapter, which illustrate U.S. military policy on the peninsula.

While many of the changes in the sixth edition have been positive, the editors missed the opportunity to broaden coverage of several issues. They added Renda's analysis of American "imperialist culture" in Haiti in the early twentieth century, but there is virtually no mention of the importance of the Haitian revolution of the 1790s or Haitian independence for U.S. foreign policy. Jefferson's horror at events in Haiti, in particular, demonstrates the complex interconnections among race, slavery, economics, foreign and domestic policy, and typifies U.S. reactions to revolution. Historian Thomas Bender addressed this subject in an essay in the *New York Times* in 2001, while David Brion Davis, Winthrop Jordan, Tim

Matthewson, and Donald Hickey, among others, have written on the issue in scholarly books and essays.[14] Primary sources are available from Abraham Bishop and Theodore Dwight, who urged support for the Haitian rebels, and from Jefferson and South Carolina Governor Charles Pinckney, who feared that the Haitian slave revolt would lead to similar uprisings in the United States.[15] Over one hundred years ago, W.E.B. DuBois wrote that "the role which the great Negro Toussaint, called L'Ouverture, played in the history of the United States has seldom been fully appreciated." [16] It is high time diplomatic historians recognized that role. Similarly, the importance of Haiti to the abolitionist movement, which Edward Crapol has written about,[17] is worth a document in the Civil War chapter, either on unsuccessful antebellum efforts to gain diplomatic recognition or on Lincoln's granting of recognition during the war.

Other documents might also be added. The Ostend Manifesto, which showed how intertwined were sectionalism, slavery, foreign expansionism, and the coming of the Civil War, deserves space. In the chapter on open door diplomacy in China, Merrill and Paterson might borrow a page from the older reader by Williams and include material on reactions in China and Japan to the efforts to close American doors to immigration.[18] The Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War lends itself to illustration by political cartoons from a variety of viewpoints.[19] Finally, in addition to the material on Theodore Roosevelt and the Caribbean there should be documents on Wilson's intervention in the region. The 1920 report by African-American diplomat and writer James Weldon Johnson on the U.S. occupation of Haiti, which emphasizes the racism of American troops, would be useful.[20]

That report might also prove relevant in a reconceptualized chapter on Wilson and World War I that scrutinizes Wilsonian internationalism from a truly global perspective. Paul Gordon Lauren's devastating critique[21] of Wilson's dismissal of Japan's plea for an endorsement of the principle of racial equality would complement Tony Smith's defense of Wilson and Jan Wilhelm Schulte-Nordholt's critique, which are included in the chapter, as would material from Elizabeth McKillen on the reservations that many Irish-Americans had about the League of Nations.[22] Williams's 1970 reader had framed a chapter on Wilson and the League of Nations around the theme of "Making Peace in the Midst of Revolutions," thus including Russia, China, and Mexico as well.[23]

Merrill and Paterson might respond that this edition deals with race and diplomacy through Gerald Horne's essay in the first chapter of volume two, which surveys the relationship of African Americans to U.S. foreign policy in the twentieth century. But Horne's essay, while useful, will only be meaningful to students if it is reinforced with supporting documents. The two most important African-Americans whose works must be represented are DuBois, whose work is relevant to many chapters in both volumes, and Martin Luther King, Jr., whose April 1967 declaration of opposition to the war in Vietnam is among the most cogent expressions of the antiwar movement.[24]

The chapter on the origins of the Cold War could also benefit from a more global perspective. As presented, the conflict appears to derive almost entirely from disputes over Europe. Many contemporaries saw U.S.–Soviet conflict as deriving from clashes around the world, from China to Indonesia to the Middle East. While some of these areas are addressed in later chapters, the fact that they are later chapters signals students that they are somehow subsidiary to actions in Europe. Two primary sources on Indonesia would be good additions, because they appeal to a long-range historical perspective. In late 1945, the editors of the *Christian Century* described how British troops with American lend-lease equipment were "taking a leading part in refastening the shackles of imperialism on a major portion of the southwest Pacific." The Indonesians, seeing the United States side with European imperialism, appealed to the Soviet Union for aid. "Think that over," the editors wrote. "It may have a lot of future history tied up in it." [25] In 1946 Raymond Kennedy, perhaps the leading American expert on Indonesia, analyzed how economic interests, racism, Navy expansionism, anti-communism, and the State Department's bureaucracy contributed to American aloofness from Indonesia's struggle for independence. He addressed precisely the strands of U.S. foreign policy Merrill and Paterson ask their readers to consider.[26]

The reworked chapter on the approach of war in the 1930s might include the Spanish Civil War, which pitted the American left against the Catholic faithful and severely tested U.S. diplomacy. Students would understand FDR's cautious internationalism better if they read an isolationist statement, perhaps by Charles Lindbergh. Bruce Russett's revisionist argument against U.S. entry into World War II is once again in the collection. Since he argued that joining the war fostered a belief among American policymakers and the public that the United States would henceforth intervene around the world at will, perhaps the classic statement of this perspective, Henry Luce's "The American Century," should be included.[27]

At least one chapter demands complete rethinking. The chapter on Reagan, Gorbachev, and the end of the Cold War appeared in the fourth edition with documents narrowly focused on negotiations over nuclear weapons and the Strategic Defense Initiative and essays reflecting a range of viewpoints about why the Cold War ended as it did. It now has fewer documents and two fewer essays on Reagan and the Soviets, but two new documents and one new essay on the appeal and pitfalls of unilateralism for the United States and U.S. power in the post-Cold War era. The editors presumably believe that the new readings relate to the chapter's theme in that they show that the end of the Cold War meant neither the end of history nor a free hand in the world for the sole remaining superpower. However, I suspect that most professors would rather use the chapter to analyze the successes and costs of Reagan's foreign policy. The two essays that formerly balanced John Lewis Gaddis's pro-Reagan triumphalism—Michael McGwire on the sources of change within the Soviet Union and Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry on how "engagement and anti-nuclearism" rather than military brinksmanship ended the Cold War—are gone. Paterson's own essay explaining the long-term decline of superpower influence on both sides is useful, though now very dated. In most of the chapters that Merrill and Paterson designed, a student could evaluate a clear historiographical disagreement by reflecting on the documents. That is not possible here.

The passage of time also forces us to reconsider the Reagan administration's policies in relation to central Asia, Central America, and the Iran-Iraq war. In light of 9/11, it is not possible to evaluate Reagan without addressing U.S. support for the Islamist "freedom-fighters"/"terrorists" in Afghanistan. Nor is it possible to evaluate the means by which the United States battled communism in Europe without also evaluating the allies Reagan embraced in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Moreover, there should be some mention of the social movements of the 1980s that pushed for a nuclear freeze and an end to Reagan's constructive engagement with apartheid South Africa.[28] Finally, with so much focus on the Strategic Defense Initiative there should be a document from the present on the progress (or lack thereof) of this alleged technological breakthrough.

The final chapter on 9/11, Bush's policy toward terrorism and Iraq, and U.S. relations with the Arab/Muslim world has a clear unity and enables students to evaluate divergent scholarly perspectives. The chapter represents a major revision of the original fourth-edition essay on the United States and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is now framed around two essays debating the causes of Muslim hostility to the United States. Bernard Lewis argues his familiar clash of civilization thesis, focusing on Islam's antipathy toward Western modernity, while Ussama Makdisi maintains that U.S. policy since the 1940s has created anti-Americanism where little had previously existed. A third essay addresses globalization from a perspective different from Lewis's. The documents, which range from correspondence between FDR and the Saudi king in 1945 to George W. Bush's war message in March 2003, are appropriate, although Jimmy Carter's 1977 paean to the Shah of Iran and material on Reagan's behind-the-scenes role in the Iran-Iraq war might also be included.

The latest essay or document included in this chapter is from September 2003, even though the copyright date for the edition is 2005. It was abundantly clear by the beginning of 2004 that the crux of Bush's argument for the invasion of Iraq—that there was "no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised" (vol. 2, 555)—was incorrect. Surely a newspaper report or statement from a United Nations inspector would have provided balance to Bush's assertions. Moreover, it was clear by mid-2003 that Bush not only led the United States into a war with Iraq and the radical Islamist world, but that his doctrine of preemptive war put the country at odds with many of its traditional allies and with global public opinion. The push for early publication of the new edition, which appeared in time for use in the fall 2004 semester, resulted in a collection that misses a major aspect of what diplomatic historians and their students will be discussing for years about Bush's war in Iraq. At the very least, the edition should have included a diplomatic historian's preliminary evaluation of preemptive war or of the intelligence problems in Bush's decision-making process.

Textbook publishers seem to be encouraging frequent updating of editions not simply to take account of the latest scholarship or events, but to combat the increasingly sophisticated used-book marketplace. They have an interest in issuing versions that are different enough so that previous editions are difficult to use in class, but not so different that they would take too much time and effort by the editors to produce.[29] Given the rapidly rising cost of textbooks, professional organizations such as SHAFR should address this issue with publishers.

There have been improvements, to be sure, in the format as well as the content of recent editions of *Major Problems*. The numbering of documents in each chapter makes the book easier to use in class and homework assignments. The more consistent inclusion of bibliographic information for primary source documents has been helpful, and chapter introductions are more comprehensive. *Major Problems* has come a long way from its earliest incarnations, when there were often only two or three primary sources per chapter, far fewer foreign documentary sources, and almost no attention to the cultural aspects of foreign relations. Merrill and Paterson continue to improve the collection so that it is more representative of a range of viewpoints, addresses more of the issues considered by historians, and is better adapted for classroom use as an accompaniment to lectures, as the basis for discussions, and as the source material for writing assignments. I hope that the editors, as well as other professors who assign this collection, will consider this critique to be a contribution toward more reflective classroom use of these volumes and toward further improvements in the future.

Endnotes

[1] See, among others: Thomas Paterson et al., *American Foreign Relations: A History*, 2 volumes (Boston, 2005), sixth edition; Mary Beth Norton et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*, 7th edition (Boston, 2005); Thomas Paterson, ed., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York, 1989).

[2] Dennis Merrill, *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India's Economic Development, 1947-1963* (Chapel Hill, 1990); Dennis Merrill, ed., *A Documentary History of the Truman Presidency, 35 volumes* (Bethesda, MD, 1995-2002).

[3] William Appleman Williams, ed., *The Shaping of American Diplomacy, 2 volumes* (Chicago, 1956 [1st edition] and 1970 [2d edition]).

[4] References to specific pages of the current edition of *Major Problems* will be in the text, as here; other references will be in endnotes.

[5] For a recent AP dispatch that exemplifies such challenges, see: "Below That in China," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, 24 June 2005, A5.

[6] Harper's argument is much more sophisticated than George W. Bush's recent comments on Yalta. For representative coverage in my local newspapers of Bush's attacks on FDR's actions at Yalta see "President Critical of FDR's WWII Decision," *Carlisle (PA) Sentinel*, 8 May 2005, A1, and "That Was Then: Second-Guessing Yalta Belittles Sacrifices of Earlier Generations," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, 8 May 2005, A6.

[7] For Heiss, "culture" refers to the coded language that U.S. diplomats, acting from arrogance and ignorance, used to characterize Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq, whom they called unmanly and mentally unstable. One might point out to students that such characterizations of foreign leaders continue: in the 1990s the CIA referred to Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide as a "psychopath." See Steven Holmes, "Administration is Fighting Itself on Haiti Policy," *New York Times*, 23 October 1993, A1.

[8] Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954* (Stanford, 1999).

[9] Thomas Borstelmann, "'Hedging Our Bets and Buying Time': John Kennedy and Racial Revolutions in the American South and Southern Africa," *Diplomatic History* 24 (Summer 2000): 435-63.

[10] Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York, 1989), chap. 6, "Dependent Independence." If I were redesigning this chapter, I would include material on the impact of U.S. military bases abroad and the non-military interactions between U.S. soldiers and sailors and their hosts as further examples of ways that non-diplomats engage in "foreign relations." See Katharine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea*

Relations (New York, 1997); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, 1990).

[11] Among the minor details here is the continued characterization of the Louisiana Purchase as comprising 828,000 acres rather than square miles (vol. 1, 80).

[12] Samuel Flagg Bemis, "American Foreign Policy and the Blessings of Liberty," *American Historical Review* 67 (January 1962): 291-305.

[13] When teaching the war in the Philippines I also use the brilliant comparison of U.S. policy toward the Philippines with earlier policy toward American Indians in Walter Williams, "United States Indian Policy and the Debate Over Philippine Annexation," *Journal of American History* 66 (March 1980): 810-31.

[14] Thomas Bender, "Founding Fathers Dreamed of Uprisings, Except in Haiti," *New York Times*, 1 July 2001, IV-6; David Brion Davis, *Revolutions: Reflections on American Equality and Foreign Liberations* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), esp. chap. 2; Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968), esp. 375-99; Tim Matthewson, "George Washington's Policy Toward the Haitian Revolution," *Diplomatic History* 3 (Summer 1979): 321-36; Donald Hickey, "America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806," *Journal of the Early Republic* 2 (Winter 1982): 361-79.

[15] For primary sources by Bishop, see Matthewson, "Abraham Bishop, 'The Rights of Black Men,' and the American Reaction to the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (Summer 1982): 148-53; for Dwight, see Davis, *Revolutions*, 51-52 and 111, n.52; on Jefferson, see especially Matthewson, "Jefferson and Haiti," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (May 1995): 209-48; on Pinckney, see Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, 1991), 232-33.

[16] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870* (Boston, 1896. Reprint. Mineola, NY, 1970), 70, and see 70-93 more generally.

[17] Edward Crapol, "The Foreign Policy of Antislavery, 1833-1846," in *Redefining the Past: Essays in Diplomatic History in Honor of William Appleman Williams*, Lloyd Gardner, ed. (Corvallis, OR, 1986), 85-103.

[18] Williams, *The Shaping of American Diplomacy*, 2nd ed., 1:427-28 (on the 1905 Chinese boycott of U.S. goods) and 432-34 (on the "Gentleman's Agreement" of 1907).

[19] Luis Martinez Fernandez, "The Birth of the American Empire as Seen Through Political Cartoons (1896-1905)," *OAH Magazine of History* 12 (Spring 1998): 48-54; Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, 1998); Abe Ignacio et al., *The Forbidden Book: The Philippine-American War in Political Cartoons* (San Francisco, 2004).

[20] James Weldon Johnson, "Self-Determining Haiti," *The Nation* 111 (28 August 1920 and 4 September 1920): 236-37, 266-67, excerpts reprinted in *Eyewitness: The Negro in American History*, William L. Katz, ed. (New York, 1967), 391-92. A current essay by Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat, written for a popular audience, appeared in the *Miami Herald* on 25 July 2005, and is at <<http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0725-20.htm>> (accessed 29 July 2005).

[21] Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder, CO, 1988), 76-101.

[22] Elizabeth McKillen, *Chicago Labor and the Quest for a Democratic Diplomacy, 1914-1924* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), especially chap. 5.

[23] Williams, *The Shaping of American Diplomacy*, 2d ed., vol. 2, chap. 2.

[24] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam," *Ramparts* (May 1967): 33-37, reprinted in *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, Marvin Gettleman et al., eds. (New York, 1985), 306-14; on the web at <<http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0115-13.htm>> (accessed 30 July 2005).

[25] "The Brave New World Reaches Java" (editorial), *Christian Century* 62 (21 November 1945): 1276.

[26] Raymond Kennedy, "The Test in Indonesia," *Asia and the Americas* 46 (August 1946): 341-45.

[27] Henry Luce, "The American Century," *Life* (17 Feb. 1941), reprinted in *Diplomatic History* 23 (Spring 1999): 159-71, followed by essays by prominent diplomatic historians addressing its themes.

[28] See, e.g., John Tirman, "How We Ended the Cold War," *The Nation* (1 November 1999), already the right length for an anthology, and David Cortright, *Peace Works: The Citizen's Role in Ending the Cold War* (Boulder, CO, 1993).

[29] The inclusion of new materials in the suggested readings of each chapter could be more systematic. Among important recent books on the Nixon/Kissinger years not noted in the relevant chapter are Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, 2002), and Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York, 2003). The chapter on Wilson has no references to studies by Lauren and McKillen, cited above.

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