Robert McMahon

Robert McMahon is Ralph D. Mershon Professor of History. A leading historian of American diplomatic history, he is author of several books on U.S. foreign relations, including *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia since World War II*, and *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan*.

McMahon's most recent book is *Dean Acheson and the Creation of an American World Order* (Potomac Books, 2009). This biography critically assesses the life and career of Dean Acheson, who served as Harry S. Truman's Secretary of State from 1949 to 1953.

McMahon argues that Acheson is the principal architect of the American Century. Acheson shaped many U.S. foreign policy initiatives including the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, as well as creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, rebuilding of Germany and Japan, intervention in Korea, and early involvement in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Acheson played an instrumental role in creating the institutions, alliances, and economic arrangements that, in the 1940s, brought to life an American-dominated world order.

Other publications this year include:

- “Security or Freedom? The Impact of the Korean War on America’s Quest for a Liberal World Order,” in *America’s Wars and World Order*, ed. by Hideki Kan (Tokyo, forthcoming)
- “War, Democracy, and the State,” in *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century*, ed. by Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank (University of Florida Press, forthcoming)
McMahon’s current book project for Oxford University Press is *The Cold War in the Third World*, an edited volume based on a Mershon Center conference he is organizing this year. It asks two related questions. First, how did the Third World affect the course of the Cold War and the behavior and priorities of the two superpowers? And second, what impact did the Cold War have on the developing states and societies of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America?

In addition to research, McMahon was named chair of the State Department’s Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation. He oversees publication of *Foreign Relations of the United States*, the nation’s official record of foreign affairs, and provides advice on sensitive issues surrounding the declassification of government documents.

McMahon has also presented papers at several international research seminars, including the keynote address “What Was the Cold War? Defining a Changing Field” at the London School of Economics (April 2009), and “Divided Allies: The Rise and Fall of America’s Alliances in Cold War Asia,” at China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing (April 2009).