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## Faculty Spotlight

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## Robert J. McMahon

Robert J. McMahon is Ralph D. Mershon Professor of History. A leading historian of U.S. diplomatic history, he is the 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*.

This year, McMahon releases his book, *Dean Acheson and the Creation of an American World Order* (Potomac Books, forthcoming). This biography critically assesses the life and career of Dean Acheson, one of America's foremost diplomats and strategists. Acheson was a top State Department official from 1941 to 1947 and served as Harry S. Truman's Secretary of State from 1949 to 1953.

McMahon expands on Acheson's shaping of many U.S. foreign policy initiatives, including the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, rebuilding of Germany and Japan, America's intervention in Korea, and its early involvement in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

McMahon argues that Dean Acheson is the principal architect of the American Century. 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. The remarkable durability of that world order is a tribute to Acheson's diplomacy.

In addition to research, McMahon serves on 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.



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This year, McMahon presented papers at several international research seminars, including "America's 'History Problem': U.S.-East Asian Relations in the Aftermath of the Vietnam War" at Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo (March 2008), and "The United States, International Institutions, and the Political Economy of Asian Development, 1947-1965," at Tohoku Gakuin University in Sendai, Japan (March 2008).

In spring 2008, McMahon coordinated the conference Cold War as the Periphery, which explored how the diffusion of power away from Moscow and Washington transformed global politics in the 1960s and beyond. The conference focused on three questions:

- How did the political and material terrain of the pan-European world change during this period?
- How did actors inside and outside government bureaucracies interpret and value these changes?
- How did geopolitical "flashpoints" in the global South rally, reflect, and reconstitute understandings of global power after 1960?

Cold War as the Periphery furthered McMahon's examination of alternative visions of world order in the Post-Cold War era – visions rooted in themes of racial justice, national sovereignty, and human rights.

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