HARVARD Kennedy School
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Applied History Project Newsletter

October 2024

The October 2024 issue of the Applied History Network Newsletter spotlights member-contributed news items for more than 200 leaders in the Applied History movement across 50 institutions.

This newsletter is prepared by the Applied History Project at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center and edited by Jason Walter and Ivana Hoàng Giang.

If you would like to submit an item for next month's issue, please email it to igiang@hks.harvard.edu with the subject "November Applied History Update" before Thursday, December 5.

Special Announcements

Application for the Ernest May Fellowship in History and Policy at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center Open Until December 1

The Ernest May Fellowships honor Ernest May, Charles Warren Professor of American History, a member of the Belfer Center's board of directors, and a faculty affiliate of the Center's International Security Program, who passed away in June 2009. The Ernest May Fellows are housed with the International Security Program fellows and participate in the activities of the Center as part of the International Security Program. They will have access to most Harvard University libraries and facilities. **Fredrik Logevall** (Laurence D. Belfer Professor of International Affairs)

and **Niall Ferguson** (Belfer Center Senior Faculty Fellow) serve as the points of contact and mentors for the fellows. Fellows are expected to devote some portion of their time to collaborative endeavors, as arranged by the project director. They are also expected to complete a book, monograph, or other significant publication during their period of residence. Preference will be given to History Ph.D. students or postdoctoral researchers, but scholars in other fields whose research projects have a strong historical focus will receive consideration. For more information, click here. To apply, click here.

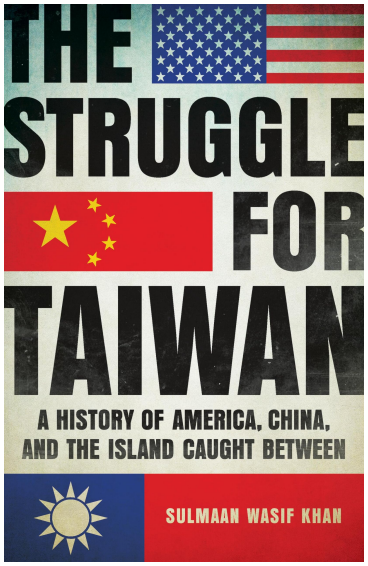
University of Georgia Seeks Applications for Professor in Applied History

The Department of History at the University of Georgia invites applications for a tenure-track open-rank position in Applied History with an anticipated start date of August 1, 2025. This professor will develop course offerings in Applied History, including “Introduction to Applied History,” and direct the new Applied History Certificate program, which trains students to use historical analysis in contemporary public policy and decision-making. Requirements include teaching undergraduate and graduate courses (two in each semester); mentoring and advising students; and maintaining an active scholarly research and publishing agenda. For more information, see the job posting here.

Latest History Books Illuminating Today’s Headline Challenges and Choices*

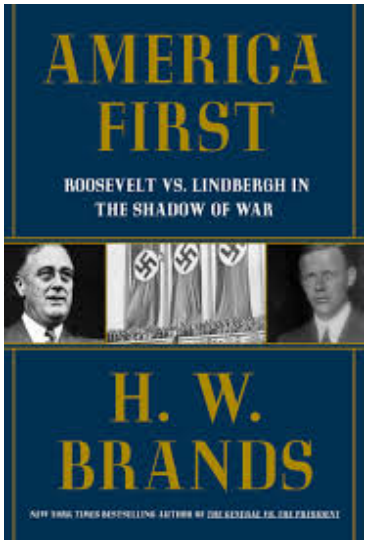
Khan Draws Lessons from Seven Decades of Taiwanese History

In *The Struggle for Taiwan*, **Sulmaan Wasif Khan** (Associate Professor, International History and Chinese Foreign Relations; Denison Chair of History and



Diplomacy, Fletcher School, Tufts University) explores the history leading to Taiwan's contested status and its relevance to the current tensions between the US and China. In his review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, **Jeremy Brown** (Professor of History, Simon Fraser University) writes that the main strength of the book is its focus "on accidents of history and confused politicians making contingent choices," circumstances familiar to Applied Historians. While concerned about the heightened risk of war between the US and China, Khan "argues against the notion that armed conflict is inevitable by placing US diplomatic memos alongside his thought experiments about 'paths not taken' and 'what if' scenarios." His exploration of counterfactuals "shows how a series of choices constrained by anti-communism in the US and what he calls 'blind nationalism' in China shaped the improbable rise of Taiwanese democracy and nationhood, while bringing two superpowers to the brink of an avoidable war in 2024." Khan's analysis – "a fruitful exercise that makes for exciting reading" – begins in 1949 when George Kennan proposed expelling Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang forces from Taiwan to "set up an occupation regime that aimed to 'invoke the principle of self-determination for the islanders.'" Kennan's objective was to stop the spread of communism, but "the cost of forcibly removing 300,000 soldiers of a Second World War ally (not to mention the question of where to send them) made the venture too unpalatable to pursue." In Kahn's examination, which continues to the present, "Chinese consistency versus US fickleness" emerges as one of the book's main themes. "The PRC view of the island as a 'sacred cause' that has been an inseparable part of the motherland since time immemorial has steadily deepened over the decades." Further, "PRC leaders have failed to understand" that military threats to Taiwan and attempts at election interference "have made Taiwanese people more committed to autonomy and less interested in a shared future with mainland China." By contrast, "the US legislative and executive branches have often been at odds, and policy has varied between different presidential administrations." The book ends "with imagined scenarios for Taiwan's future." In the worst case of a "PRC invasion and occupation of Taiwan," Khan points to earlier periods of outside control – under the Qing and Japanese empires and Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang – during which "Taiwanese resistance and struggles for independence never disappeared." Brown concludes, "Taiwanese resilience would only deepen in the event that another regime were to invade and occupy Taiwan."

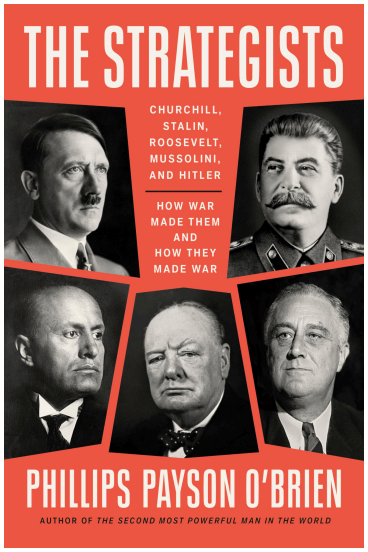
Brands Assesses Lindbergh's Appeal and Isolationist Challenge to Roosevelt



In *America First: Roosevelt vs. Lindbergh in the Shadow of War*, **H.W. Brands** (Professor, Jack S. Blanton, Sr. Chair in History, University of Texas, Austin) examines the late 1930s isolationist-interventionist debate personified by Charles A. Lindbergh, the aviator who secured international acclaim when he completed the first solo transatlantic flight in 1927, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Writing in the *New York Journal of Books*, **Steve Nathans-Kelly** (writer and editor) states that Brands "expertly dissects their rivalry and uses it to chart America's journey from isolationism to intervention." He describes the book "as a meticulously curated, guided journey through Roosevelt's and Lindbergh's own discourse on the subject, comprising voluminous journal entries and speeches, and often places the two in dialogue, however indirect their traded blows." Brands argues that Lindbergh's "celebrity and charisma" were not the only reasons for his appeal. He explains, "'Lindbergh understood'" why people listened to him. "'He realized that his credentials were thin in the realm of foreign policy. He knew aviation…But he was no student of government or diplomacy. Yet neither were the vast majority of Americans. To them he spoke; for them he would speak, if they would let him.'" Roosevelt did not impugn Lindbergh openly or personally. However, "Brands chronicles the many stratagems the president deployed for refuting the aviator's attacks and weakening his position without appearing to confront him directly." Nathans-Kelly commends the book as "an insightful and worthy addition to the growing body of literature on the heated battle over American involvement in World War II, and the formidable obstacle that opposition at home presented to Roosevelt's efforts to save democracy abroad." His conclusion will resonate with Applied Historians: "In an era more susceptible than ever to cults of personality elevating the foolish and the dangerous, *America First* recounts a cautionary tale well worth knowing."

O'Brien Distills the Making of World War II Strategy and its Contemporary Relevance

In T*he Strategists: Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt, Mussolini, and Hitler – How War*



Made Them, and How They Made the War, **Phillips Payson O'Brien** (Professor of Strategic Studies, University of St. Andrews) contends that "Strategy…is not the result primarily of cold calculations of the best mixtures of ends, ways, and means, but is constructed amid chaos out of the preferences, prejudices and predilections of flesh-and-blood humans." Writing in the *Literary Review*, **Jonathan Boff** (Senior Lecturer, Modern History, University of Birmingham) states , Payson "examines how the battles Churchill and four of the other major leaders of the Second World War… fought as young men affected the strategies they pursued between 1939 and 1945." The book combines biographical profiles with "ten case studies of strategic decision-making during the war, from the Nazi-Soviet Pact that enabled Hitler to launch his attack on Poland to the D-day invasion." Beyond the actions of the principals, other factors were also at play. Both autocrats and democratic leaders "needed to build structures, staffs and processes around them to convert thought into action…Even those at the summit depended on their teams of sherpas. Part of the reason the Allies won the war is that they built better teams, had better ideas, and used their forces more effectively than the Axis." Although Boff cites the limitations of the book, including underestimating "the impact of ground realities on the decisions these leaders made" and attempting "to cover too much ground to satisfy experts," he judges it useful. Specifically, "When we think about war it is easy to fall into the trap of economic determinism, imagining that victory always goes to whoever has the best stuff. The conflict in Europe shows this. Ongoing debates in the West about what weapons we should be supplying to help the Ukrainians resist Russian aggression all contain a hidden – and false and possibly dangerous – assumption that war can be won with weapons alone. *Strategists* reminds us that humans matter too. Defeating Putin will require brains as well as brawn."

**The inspiration for this section of the Applied History Network Newsletter comes from Paul Kennedy. In an email chain triggered by his review in the* Wall Street Journal *of Nicholas Mulder's* Economic Weapon*, he wrote, "I must confess that I enjoy doing these 'history that illuminates the present' book reviews for the general reader and international businessman. They are rather different in nature from the more scholarly pieces I would do in, say,* The International History Review *." He went on to explain: "For many years, when I was still at the University of East Anglia in the U.K., I was one of the two main anonymous [!] book reviewers of all books in history*

and politics for The Economist*. Although it was tough going because you didn't know what was the next book that arrived in your mail, it was incredibly challenging. 'Your task,' the book review editor demanded, 'is to explain in not more than 650 words to an IBM executive flying from Boston to Atlanta why a new biography of Bismarck is worthwhile—or not.'"*

Publications of Note

Allison Warns of "The National Insecurity of AI"

In an essay published by the Aspen Strategy Group, **Graham Allison** (Co-Chair, Harvard's Applied History Project; Douglas Dillon Professor of Government, Harvard Kennedy School) applies history to challenge the current consensus in Washington about the possibility of meaningful constraints on AI—i.e., an AI analogue of nuclear arms control. While most analysts argue that the levels of mistrust and hostility between the US and China make an attempt to organize serious discussions about constraints on AI between officials, or even in Track II discussions, futile, Allison counsels that we should "consult history." When we do so, as his essay explains, we realize that in the early stages of the Cold War, despite the fact that the US and the Soviet Union were among the deadliest adversaries the world had ever seen, unstructured, open-ended conversations revealed unexpected islands of shared interests. For example, they recognized a common interest in preventing the spread of the most dangerous technology—nuclear weapons—to other states. This led to both unilateral and coordinated initiatives to create what has become the nonproliferation regime that has limited the spread of these weapons to just 9 states. And despite the fact that strategists thinking about the possibility of constraints on applications or advances of AI in the coming decades are uncertain and confused about where this new technology is going, "they are no more so than their predecessors seven decades earlier."

Ferguson Invites Readers to join him in Time Travel Applying History on *Substack*

Niall Ferguson (Co-Chair, Harvard's Applied History Project; Milbank Family Senior Fellow, Stanford's Hoover Institution) recently announced that, in addition to regular columns for *The Free Press* and other outlets, he is starting a new *Substack* newsletter where he will publish "all the writing and talking I do that belongs under the heading of applied history." Ferguson chronicles his interest in history and, in the past ten years, applied history, writing that "the fun of applied history is quite simply time travel itself…For the only way to travel backwards through time—and, I would say, also forwards—is to immerse oneself in the study of the past." And noting the decline in history program enrollment and hiring, Ferguson warns that "both the elites and the public…are increasingly remote from historical understanding. This does not equip either group to arrive at sensible decisions about the problems they confront." "Niall Ferguson's Time Machine" is another part of the larger campaign to address that.

Tooze Argues "The Old US Economic Policy is Dying and the New Cannot be Born" in the *Financial Times*

For a realistic accounting of today's economic policy options, **Adam Tooze** (Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Professor of History, Columbia University) encourages returning to the basics of macroeconomics. In the heat of great power competition with China, the United States should remember it "isn't a bug" that the US traded goods sector, particularly manufacturing, bears the burden of global competition. This, Tooze writes, is "a feature of what was once an elite consensus favouring market access and trade liberalisation underpinned by the widely felt benefits of cheap imports." Stating what he believes to be obvious for the US economy's future, Tooze asserts "that a chip fab here or there will not materially reset the American social contract, and that anyone serious about improving the lot of the American working class would start with basics like housing, health and childcare." In another op-ed for the *Guardian*, Tooze argues that "First the Trump and now the Biden presidencies are willing contributors to the controlled demolition of the 1990s post-cold war order." For better or worse, he writes, US foreign policy trends may not have changed that much between the Trump and Biden administrations and may not change as much as election politics would have us believe next year.

Nye Joins the Campus Protest Debate in *Project Syndicate*

With universities facing another year of campus protests, **Joseph S. Nye, Jr.** (Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, Harvard Kennedy School) draws on lessons from his own past and offers thoughtful commentary on how best to avoid another year of campus chaos. When comparing them to radical protest movements of the 1960s, which saw protestors "breaking into buildings…and shattering windows," Nye asserts that "today's obstructive encampments come nowhere close to this." As universities continually fumble their responses to campus protests, Nye argues that an overreliance on local and state police forces to quell unrest is "both tactically and morally problematic." With administrators and faculty amid another contentious year on campuses across America, Nye reminds readers that "academic freedom means that both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine voices must be heard" and urges universities themselves to "stand up to browbeating by congressional committees and donors." In a separate piece, Nye also offered a vision for what victory would look like in Ukraine, arguing that a "Korean solution" in which "an armistice and demilitarized zone along the line of control" may be the best way to finally bring an end to the war in Ukraine.

Westad Highlights Lessons from the Cold War in Building Strategic Trust Between US and China with *Grandview Institution*

Arne Westad's (Elihu Professor of History, Yale University) recent report published in conjunction with the Grandview Institution emphasizes the critical need for US-China dialogue on strategic stability to mitigate potential miscommunication and conflict. Unlike US-Soviet Cold War arms control efforts, dialogue with China requires unique approaches, given Beijing's differing nuclear capabilities and strategic interests. The report underscores learning from past US-USSR discussions while recognizing that the strategic environment is more complex now than at any point since the end of the Cold War. Recommendations of the report include fostering long-term trust through continuous, broad dialogue mechanisms, including Track II initiatives, and addressing emerging challenges like cyber and space security.

Simms Reflects on the UK's Devolution Challenges in *UnHerd*

Brendan Simms (Professor of International Relations and Director of the Centre for Geopolitics, University of Cambridge) examines parallels between the United Kingdom's devolution experience and the Austro-Hungarian Empire's fractious national compromises in *UnHerd* . With rising populism and immigration-driven tensions across Europe, Simms notes that past attempts to balance diverse identities hold lessons for Britain's union. While Austria-Hungary struggled with internal rivalries and collapsed post-WWI, the UK's devolved parliaments have stoked, rather than quelled, nationalist movements. Simms warns that indulging nationalism without firm integration risks splintering Britain's unity in the same way.

Mitchell Outlines Strategy for Coping with Multiple Adversaries with The Marathon Initiative

As the US grapples with the risk of simultaneous conflicts with Russia and China, **A. Wess Mitchell** (Visiting Scholar, Harvard's Applied History Project; Co-Founder and Principal, The Marathon Initiative) explores how the US can employ a strategy of sequencing to "gain an advantage in competition by manipulating the factor of time." Mitchell points out that "Sequencing's use in strategy is as old as history" and identifies examples as far back in the past as Ancient Greece, in which great powers concentrated "resources against one opponent in order to weaken its disruptive energies before turning to another." Mitchell asserts that today, "we have not seized this opportunity." The "rhetoric-reality gap" in US policy risks "a massive credibility shortfall when we prove incapable of defending what we have announced is so dear and crucial." Europeans must "sustain an effort at war preparation" beyond what they have done for Ukraine, according to Mitchell, while the US itself must bring its "defense-industrial base into alignment with the realities of a great-power competitive landscape." While significant work remains, Mitchell writes, "the situation is not hopeless," and "we should do everything in our power to prepare for the worst in hopes of avoiding it."

Whalen Analyzes What Israel May Learn from the First Lebanon War

Israel invaded Lebanon for the fourth time in its 75-year history on October 1, 2024, to stop Hezbollah's attacks from southern Lebanon and allow displaced Israelis to

return to their homes in the north. **Emily Whalen** (Former Ernest May Fellow in History and Policy, Harvard's Belfer Center; Non-Resident Senior Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies) recommends Israel look back on its first war with Lebanon to avoid making the same mistakes. The Israeli Prime Minister today, as in 1982, has called the invasion limited and said he would protect Lebanese civilians. The target is a nonstate armed group that provides "necessary services while simultaneously inciting resentment," and "just as in 1982, the United States finds itself trapped in its own equivocations on the Middle East, caught in the usual tension between its commitments to Israel and its commitments to international law." In 1982 Israel occupied Beirut, engendered deep opposition among the local population, and ultimately "helped create new, longer-lasting security threats." Whalen warns that the current Israeli government seems to be repeating this. With the level of destruction it is inflicting across Lebanon, "even if the IDF successfully incapacitates Hizbollah—as it did with the PLO in 1982—a new threat, eventually, will rise." Whalen also discussed Lebanon's history and the current war with **Jeremy Suri** (Professor of History, University of Texas at Austin) and **Zachary Suri** (Poet) on the podcast *This is Democracy*.

Salamé Places Netanyahu in Long Line of Aspiring Middle Eastern Hegemons

The Middle East, **Ghassan Salamé** (Professor of International Relations, Sciences Po) writes , has long tempted "conquerors and politicians alike" to impose "some kind of order on its vulnerable states and uncertain, volatile identities… Cyrus of Persia and Alexander of Macedonia tried; so, more recently, did George W Bush." State-building, while challenging in the best conditions, is "rendered even more difficult when emerging regional hegemons keep attempting to transform these fragile units into obedient satellites." Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser, Iran under Khomenei, and Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan all strived to bend their neighbors to their will, leading to disastrous conflict in most cases. Reflecting on current events, Salamé argues that "The latest to be tempted is Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu." Yet, while there is no doubt Israel has altered the balance of power in the region, a lasting strategic victory remains elusive. "Starting the re-engineering of the region with an incursion in Lebanon has, in particular, been a curse for Israeli politicians." Ultimately, Salamé predicts Israel's efforts will fail because they solely rely on the use of force: "If history is of any use, it teaches us that the use of force to settle complex political issues is always sterile and often counter-productive. In any case, the ruins left by Israel's present pounding of Lebanon have none of the charm

left by Romans and Byzantines in my village: they are instead the mark of an unconstrained, unbearable hubris."

Gage reflects on America's 250th birthday in *The Atlantic*

Beverly Gage (John Lewis Gaddis Professor of History, Yale University) explores the historical complexities of America's upcoming semi-quincentennial in 2026 amidst a fraught political climate. Reflecting on past anniversaries, she examines national identity crises during prior celebrations, such as Reconstruction-era divisions and the turbulent 1976 Bicentennial. Today's polarized landscape raises questions about commemorating shared values and history. Gage urges dialogue on which symbols unite or fracture the nation and whether current critiques of American history can foster new, hopeful narratives about what the US stands for, concluding with some advice for the political left: "Why not wear the hat and fly the flag? Despite today's political optics, neither one actually belongs to the devotees of MAGA rallies. Perhaps those on the left can at least seize the moment to open up the conversation over what, if anything, really makes America great." In a podcast with **Daniel Kurtz-Phelan** (Editor-in-Chief, *Foreign Affairs*), Gage and Kurtz-Phelan also weigh in on Donald Trump's affinity for dictators, including Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, and Viktor Orban, noting that such admiration for strongmen is not unprecedented in American political history.

Kelly Analyzes Chinese Justification for Conflict in Vietnam

In analyzing Chinese justifications for their invasion of Vietnam, **Jason Kelly** (Former Ernest May Fellow in History and Policy, Harvard's Belfer Center; Senior Lecturer in International Relations, Cardiff University) finds in his Wilson Center publication, "Logics of War in the Era of Reform and Opening," that "Party leaders did not invent new rationales to justify China's invasion of Vietnam… rather, they justified the war as a necessary step to achieve economic development." As Kelly asserts, "US security and defense analysts today [should monitor] the CCP's legitimacy narrative… to anticipate how and when Chinese officials might build a case for conflict and rationalize the use of force." He also notes the extent to which regional stability matters to China's leaders and how policymakers could leverage that in their diplomatic and foreign policies. Finally, Kelly makes the case for US

policymakers learning from their nation's past, adding that the "Department of State, in coordination with historians and experts from other federal agencies, should develop a series of 'lessons learned' studies focusing on the history of US-China diplomacy."

Ang Highlights Uniqueness of "China's Economic Paradox"

Writing in *Project Syndicate*, **Yuen Yuen Ang** (Alfred Chandler Chair Professor of Political Economy, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies) explains China's paradoxical economic trajectory: a tech boom alongside a growth slump. She highlights two salient points for Applied Historians. First, she emphasizes that the line of communication between Xi Jinping and the officials implementing his policies has unintendedly exacerbated economic imbalances and trade tensions with the West. "Contrary to the perception of China as a command economy where national leaders deliver precise orders, the logic of what I call 'directed improvisation' prevails. Central leaders signal their priorities while the country's vast bureaucracy – comprising ministries and local governments – interprets and acts on these signals according to political incentives." Xi's one-sided emphasis on promoting the high-tech new economy has led to overinvestment in this area, exacerbated by a lack of incentives to prop up the still immensely important old economy. Second, she highlights the limits of comparing China's current economic woes with Japan's. "China, however, is accelerating its shift to cutting-edge technologies in the midst of an economic slump and a local-government debt crisis. This approach is unprecedented in modern history," as Japan did not "double down on state-led innovation" in the face of 1990s economic stagnation.

Walt Wishes a Happy 100th Birthday to Jimmy Carter, "America's Most Underrated President," in *Foreign Policy*

In a celebratory message for the only US president to become a centenarian, **Stephen M. Walt** (Robert and Renée Belfer Professor of International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School) advises that "some current world leaders would be wise to heed" the lesson from Jimmy Carter's patient diplomacy, which achieved the safe return of every American from the 444-day hostage crisis in Iran. Despite previously agreeing with hardline critics who called Carter's actions "naive and unrealistic," Walt

writes that Carter “was on to something important” by emphasizing human rights, enhancing “the United States’ ‘soft power’ at a time when its reputation needed burnishing.” US policymakers, according to Walt, would do well to ensure Carter’s “prophetic message” in his 2006 book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* does not remain ignored—or else we will continue “witnessing the bleak and tragic results of Israel’s failure to heed Carter’s warning.”

Ehrhardt Invokes Historians’ Duty to Recall Possibilities for the Future from the Past in *Engelsberg Ideas*

In the year of NATO’s 75th anniversary, **Andrew Ehrhardt** (Former Ernest May Fellow in History and Policy, Harvard’s Belfer Center; Visiting Scholar, Johns Hopkins Kissinger Center) contends that Britain’s new Foreign Secretary David Lammy “would do well to embody” the thinking of his Labour predecessor Ernest Bevin, who served in the role from 1945 to 1951. Ehrhardt says Bevin “was not so much a ‘realist’, as Lammy has written, but more of a visionary who held that political values and moral principles served as a core animating force in a nation’s foreign policy.” Ehrhardt admits that “generally speaking it is unfashionable to talk about civilisation and spiritual values in foreign policy and national security today,” but in the face of existential anxiety over the global order, Ehrhardt charges historians with reminding the world of those forces “that have given life to surviving institutions.” What made Bevin an effective statesman was this understanding—that “Power and brute force were indispensable, but so too was a larger notion of national or even civilisational purpose.”

Rove Debates Trump’s Interpretation of McKinley on Tariffs in *The Wall Street Journal*

President William McKinley has long been a favorite example of President-elect Donald Trump: Trump talks about him as a model for his own aspiration to be known as a “Tariff Man.” Yet, as **Karl Rove** (Former Deputy Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to President George W. Bush) argues : “Trump’s account of McKinley is incomplete and superficial.” Tariffs had been a feature of American policy for decades by the time McKinley rose to prominence. His most important contribution to trade policy was instead “his advocacy of reciprocity—levying tariffs proportional

to those of other countries and negotiating to lower them when possible." Thus, "McKinley was never a high-tariff man. He supported only what he felt industries needed, rebuffing greedy corporate demands for unnecessarily high increases." Moreover, Rove argues, Trump misconstrues the contribution of tariffs to America's economic recovery under McKinley. His endorsement of the gold standard and the discovery of gold in Alaska were much more important factors driving the US recovery from depression without inflation than tariffs. "What was true in the 1890s is still true today," Rove concludes. "America needs foreign markets. McKinley used tariff policy to open the way for trade. If he wins, will Mr. Trump?"

Babiracki and Cortada Tout Advantages of Historical Education in Other Fields

Writing in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, **Patryk J. Babiracki** (Associate Professor of History, University of Texas, Arlington) and **James W. Cortada** (Senior Research Fellow, University of Minnesota's Charles Babbage Institute) acknowledge the troubles facing history departments and identify ways to maintain the relevance of the field. They recommend focusing on the unique skills history graduates have —"how to think about change over time, do research on people and ideas, interpret data, [and] analyze action scenarios"—and connect them to the needs of employers in business and the private sector with competitive salaries. They conclude by reflecting on the history of the field. History "flourished under the aegis of 19th-century nation states that relied on historians to consolidate ideas about nations and peoples in order to justify their power…. Today, businesses are increasingly expected to be socially responsible, and many of them are improving people's lives. They might be our natural partners in the effort to revive interest in history and the humanities."

Slezkine Recommends US Foreign Policy Move Beyond Outdated Dichotomy in *Foreign Policy*

How do we understand the current goals of US foreign policy? **Peter Slezkine** (Former Ernest May Fellow in History and Policy, Harvard's Belfer Center; Director, Monterey Trialogue, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey) points to two major frameworks developed over time in Washington—one is the "long-

established orthodoxy of liberal internationalism" that pursues democracy and human rights, with the other being the "increasingly influential position of restraint" that prescribes action strictly to protect vital strategic national interests. Neither is quite right, according to Slezkine. "Washington should recognize that the U.S.-led sphere is unlikely to grow much beyond its current scope, and there is no reasonable prospect of it ever becoming a global order…The next step is to consider how to apportion U.S. power within the greater West to maximize its assets and opportunities" while minimizing threats. For instance, Slezkine recommends that "Washington should pull back from military bases that risk pulling the United States into unwanted conflict through political pressure to retaliate in the case of American casualties."

Freymann Overviews Confrontational History of US-China Climate Negotiations

Talking to the Brookings Institution's *Climate Sense* podcast, **Eyck Freymann** (Fellow, Stanford's Hoover Institution) stressed that the history of US-China cooperation on climate policy has been tense from the beginning. During climate negotiations in Rio in 1992, the US agreed to give developed countries greater responsibility for lowering emissions than developing ones, quickly creating a point of conflict as China, a developing country, refused any restrictions on its own emissions. China ultimately changed its position in the early 2010s when "there were massive protests across China from urbanites who were unhappy with the air pollution." After realizing that its economic plans had emissions peaking in 2030 anyway, though, China began to view climate change as an economic opportunity: "It is hoping that when that inflection point comes, and it sees it coming in the late 2020s, early 2030s, when green technology reaches the point where it can actually start to replace rather than supplement fossil fuel energy, China will be prepared to win on the flip and go that last mile for national development by helping the world decarbonize."

Cook Argues "History Shows that You Can't Kill Your Way out of a Resistance Movement" in *Foreign Policy*

Predicting that “reality will soon set back in” for Israel, **Steven A. Cook** (Eni Enrico Mattei Senior Fellow for Middle East and Africa Studies, Council on Foreign Relations) underscores evidence from history that decapitating leaders of terrorist groups does not end the resistance of “the committed.” The deaths of Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi did not free the US from self-imposed obligations in the Middle East and, Cook points out, the assassinations of Palestinian and Lebanese militant leaders have not solved Israel’s problems either. “That Israel killed Sinwar seems like a major achievement today,” Cook writes, “but in time, others will rise as they always have—to continue to resist.”

Looking Back, Noonan is Optimistic that “Whatever’s Coming” Next for US, “We’ll Likely Get Through That, Too.”

Reflecting on American resilience after Hurricane Milton, **Peggy Noonan** (Columnist, *The Wall Street Journal*) reminds readers that “To read our history is to say, ‘We got through that.’” She profiles *The Jonestown Flood* by David McCullough to illustrate this, describing lifesaving heroism after a breached dam flooded the town. Many townspeople had, in fact, long expressed worries about the reservoir’s sturdiness to the trust responsible for managing the reservoir. Noonan urges readers to recognize that “In great disasters rumors spread quick as fire,” and people should be careful to separate such rumors from their own observations. Reflecting on the mistakes of the Johnstown Trust’s leaders, Noonan encourages us today to listen to gut feelings and act on them. “Premonitions have to be followed by action or they’re just something that keeps you up at night.”

Interviews and Speeches

Goodwin Recalls Periods Where “Democracy Was a Challenge” in America

The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation partnered with United to Preserve: Democracy and the Rule of Law to host **Doris Kearns Goodwin** (Presidential Historian) at the Ford Presidential Museum. Discussing lessons from her book *Leadership in Turbulent Times* , Goodwin noted that the presidents she chronicled in it—Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson—"lived, like today, in a time when democracy was a challenge." Highlighting the economic and social challenges, including anarchist bombings, that rocked the country at the turn of the 20th century, Goodwin urges listeners to remember Theodore Roosevelt's warning that "If people in different regions and parties and sections began to view each other as the other, rather than as common American citizens, then American democracy will be in peril." And while the current political environment is worrying, Goodwin says it's important to recall that people at the time "didn't know how it was going to end…they lived with the same anxiety that we're living with today, but I think we can take hope from the idea that we came through those struggles" to emerge stronger than before.

Brinkley Analyzes Trump's Reading of US History for Clues on How He May Shape His Own Legacy

In a podcast series hosted by **Lance Armstrong** (American Former Professional Road Racing Cyclist), **Douglas Brinkley** (Katherine Tsanoff Brown Chair in Humanities and Professor of History, Rice University) says Trump idolizes what most US history observers view as past presidents' "lowest moments." Paying attention to how Trump remembers his predecessors may shed light on how he will want to be remembered after this second term. For example, Trump extracts from Dwight Eisenhower's record "not the building of the interstate highway system, not creating of NASA, not sending National Guard into Little Rock to do civil rights—but his 'block the border,' 'send them back,' Operation Wetback of Ike." On Franklin Roosevelt, Brinkley recalls, "I've heard Trump say, 'Look, I'm a conservative, I'm not an FDR guy, but he's a leader because he put Japanese in internment camps.' That's pure Trump." Brinkley's assessment is that "Somewhere in Trump, you come to the conclusion that… he wants an America that had a power structure that's different than it is today. It was white men running the country." When asked by ABC News in another interview prior to the vice-presidential debate, "What can both candidates learn from Mr. Carter?" Brinkley responds—drawing from his book on Jimmy Carter, *The Unfinished Presidency*—that both Vance and Walz should "do what's right for the country" and "put party second or a distant third."

Freeman and Richardson Reflect on Creation and Condition of US Democracy

In an event hosted by United to Preserve: Democracy and the Rule of Law and co-sponsored by DemocracyFIRST, **Joanne Freeman** (Class of 1954 Professor of American History and of American Studies, Yale University) and **Heather Cox Richardson** (Professor of History, Boston College) draw from their expertise on the early republic to make sense of the state of US democracy today. On the Supreme Court decision granting immunity to presidents, Freeman says that this was "the number one thing" Constitutional Convention delegates "would not have wanted—they had just broken away from a king, they were creating an anti-king government, they did not want immunity." Freeman says the country's founders "looked back to ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and what they saw was that in republics, demagogues come to power by pandering to the public, get power, and then with that power do whatever the heck they want to do." The lesson for today, according to Freeman's reading of the Founders, is that they would tell policymakers that this democracy "isn't autopilot—this is yours, and if you think we were perfect and we set everything in motion and you think you can just walk away and let it go, you're wrong."

Brands Argues Today is Less like the Cold War, More like Pre-World War II on *One on One with Robert Doar* Podcast

When asked by **Robert Doar** (President, American Enterprise Institute), "Are we no longer in a Cold War? But are we in a hot war?" **Hal Brands** (Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies) responds : "Today, the international scene looks a little bit less like the early Cold War and a little bit more like the period running up to World War II." Without overdrawing that comparison "because there are a million differences," Brands contends that the separate pre-WWII regional conflicts in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia—which "got more interwoven as the bad guys did more and more together in those areas"—are echoes of today's crises in Ukraine, the Middle East, and the Western Pacific. According to Brands, "fortunately, the US-China rivalry has not yet gone hot, although in some ways, it's gotten a little

bit hotter," as "a set of autocratic actors… are doing more and more together because they have a common interest in destabilizing the existing state of things."

Blackwill Discusses America's Missteps and the Pivot to Asia on *The President's Inbox*

Robert Blackwill (Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for US Foreign Policy, Council on Foreign Relations) sat down with **James M. Lindsay** (Mary and David Boies Distinguished Senior Fellow in US Foreign Policy, Council on Foreign Relations) on CFR's *The President's Inbox* to examine why America's strategic pivot to Asia failed to deliver on its grand promises. Reflecting on the history of interagency initiatives in the US government, Blackwill argues that despite the Obama administration's focus on prioritizing Asia in 2011, it was interagency disorganization, resource constraints, and shifting Middle Eastern priorities that led to a "lost decade" in US-Asia policy, while China gained influence. Blackwill underscores the need for clearer US objectives and robust defense, trade, and diplomatic efforts to maintain balance and avert potential conflict, particularly with China over Taiwan.

Bridges Discusses *Dollars and Dominion* on *New Books in Finance* Podcast

When asked by **Meghan Cochran** (Host, *New Books Network*) for the most important takeaway of *Dollars and Dominion: US Bankers and the Making of a Superpower*, **Mary Bridges** (Ernest May Fellow in History and Policy, Harvard's Belfer Center) points to the design of financial systems: "It is political, and it's not just how it's designed, it's how it's implemented." Today the centrality of the US-led institutions that drove 20th-century globalization, such as the Fed and its credit practices, to the world economy "are all of a sudden headline news again." Bridges posits that engaging with economic policies requires a deeper understanding of the central banking system. "It conveys opportunities to certain people, to certain holders of money instruments as opposed to others. And we can't afford to let that be the realm of elite experts only. That is about access to economic opportunity. That is about what power looks like in systems. And we all need to be a part of those conversations."

Wang Explores Historical 'Crown Prince Problem' to Predict Weak Successor to Xi at Harvard Fairbank Center Symposium

During a symposium on China hosted by Harvard's Fairbank Center, **Yuhua Wang** (Professor of Government, Harvard University) analyzed Xi Jinping and the PRC in the context of Chinese emperors and communist regimes. As Wang argues, the governance of China has long relied on individuals rather than institutions, a trend even the collectivist PRC has failed to break. But he fears that Xi will "almost certainly choose a weak successor." Citing the 'crown prince problem,' a concept which "explains why strong emperors usually select heirs who threaten neither power nor life," Wang noted that leaders of communist China haven't broken with Chinese emperors. For modern analysts of China, Wang sees Xi Jinping's successor as a critical question. As he concludes, "What I worry most in the next 25 years is exactly this."

Mulder Traces Efficacy of Sanctions Today to 1970s End of Gold Standard and Bretton Woods

On an episode of *The Economist* podcast *Money Talks*, **Nicholas Mulder** (Assistant Professor of Modern European History, Cornell University) explains one reason the Russian economy has been resilient in the face of Western sanctions: gold reserves. Russia's clue for buying gold to protect against geoeconomic warfare? According to Mulder, it was Jimmy Carter's 1979 executive order sanctioning Iran in "the largest single asset freeze in history" and "one of the first extraterritorial freezes." That was the first instance when sanctions triggered a global gold rush, and central banks have not stopped buying gold since. Mulder adds two caveats to this "really interesting prologue" to Russia's situation after 2022. First, in this case, Russia is an "almost perfectly diversified commodity basket," resulting in "a store of natural wealth that will have some kind of tradable value no matter really what happens to the currency." Second, Mulder attests that gold reserves cannot completely sanction-proof an economy because they yield no returns. Policymakers should remember that with gold, "You can certainly survive a certain kind of hit, but at the cost of really missing out on a lot of future growth." In another article in *The Yale Review*, Mulder argues that nationalism and internationalism have become more "contradictory rather than complementary" over the past century and warns today's leaders that

“the zero-sum logic of their nationalist policies has the dangerous effect of fomenting international rivalry and conflict.”

Jobs and Opportunities

Call for Papers: The John McCain Dissertation Award 2025

The Munich Security Conference has announced it is accepting submissions for the John McCain Dissertation Award 2025, which “honors academic achievements in the field of transatlantic relations and is awarded to up to two outstanding doctoral dissertations for exceptional academic contributions in the field of political science, history or policy analysis.” Eligible dissertations have “an emphasis on transatlantic relations,” and will have been defended between November 1, 2023, and October 31, 2024. The deadline for nominations is December 6, 2024. More information can be found here.

America in the World Consortium Seeks Applicants for Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs

The American in the World Consortium (AWC) at Duke University, Johns Hopkins SAIS, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Florida seeks applications from current Ph.D. students for its Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs. Applicants from all disciplines whose research bears directly on American grand strategy, broadly defined, are welcome to apply. Applications are open as of October 1 and are due no later than Sunday, December 1, 2024. Please apply on AWC’s website and direct any questions to Emma Rogers, the America in the World Consortium Program Manager, at emma.rogers@austin.utexas.edu.

Clements Center for National Security Seeks Applicants for Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs

The Clements Center for National Security at the University of Texas at Austin seeks applications from current Ph.D. students for its Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs. Applicants from all disciplines whose research bears directly on foreign and defense policy, intelligence, or international security are welcome to apply. Applications are due no later than Friday, December 16, 2024 (11:59 p.m. EST). Apply on the Clement Center's website.

Applications for the Clements Center for National Security's 2024 Summer Seminar in History and Statecraft Now Open

The Clements Center for National Security at the University of Texas at Austin seeks applications from advanced doctoral students in history, political science, or related fields interested in careers in either academia or policymaking for their 2025 Summer Seminar, from July 13 to July 18. The seminar will feature in-depth discussions with top scholars, senior policymakers, and intelligence officials, as well as sessions devoted to academic publishing and strategies for approaching the academic and policy job markets. Participants will explore the relationship between historical insights and national security policymaking. This program is open to non-UT students only. The Clements Center will cover all travel and related expenses for participants. Visit the Summer Seminar page to learn more about the program and for application details. Applications are due by Sunday, February 23, 2025.

Project Updates

Zelikow, Bew, and Bick Launch Workshops on Urgent Security Choices

Hosted at Stanford's Hoover Institution, **Philip Zelikow** (Botha-Chan Senior Fellow, Stanford's Hoover Institution), **John Bew** (Professor of History and Foreign Policy, King's College London), and **Alexander Bick** (Associate Professor of Practice, University of Virginia Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy) recently announced a new Applied History initiative aimed at helping the US "navigate an exceptional period of crisis, perhaps the most dangerous since early in the cold war." These workshops will engage senior crisis managers and strategic thinkers in solving the headline challenges of today, focusing on bringing their contemporary and historical analysis to bear on "specific policy questions that may arise in the next one or two years." More information about the workshops can be found here.

Applied History Articles of the Month

"Is There Life After NATO?" – Marc Trachtenberg, *Cato Institute*, October 22, 2024.

Is there precedent for President Trump to regard the US commitment to NATO as less than "sacred" and threaten to condition US support for NATO allies on their good behavior? Does Article 5 of the NATO Treaty let the US choose whether to send troops to fight for allies under attack? In considering threats to NATO, and members' responses, must we also consider actions taken by NATO members that could create conditions in which an attack is more likely? In a provocative essay published by the Cato Institute, **Marc Trachtenberg** (Distinguished Research Professor and Emeriti Faculty, University of California, Los Angeles) answers : yes, yes, and yes. Reviewing the history of the US commitment to its European allies under the North Atlantic Treaty, Trachtenberg challenges contemporary interpretations of Article 5—reminding us that "the commitment that provision established was not nearly as strong" as NATO advocates today would have you believe. He reminds us of the fact that in making the case for Senate ratification of the treaty in 1949, "government officials stressed the point that under the treaty, an act of aggression would *not* necessarily lead to war." Without that assurance, the treaty would not have been ratified. While Trump's demand that only members who pay their dues can count on the protection provided by the club are dismissed by most of the foreign policy community as evidence of his ignorance of alliances, Trachtenberg points to analogous US pressure placed on European allies—for example, by Reagan to stop their support of the Soviet Union's Siberian gas pipeline project and by Kissinger to reevaluate their Middle East

policies which were “far too pro-Arab for the US government’s taste.” Trachtenberg goes on to argue that America’s commitment to NATO and its eastward expansion “poisoned relations between Russia and the West” and is largely “responsible for creating the mess we find ourselves in today.” Trachtenberg asserts that without US backing, European policy would “certainly be more moderate, more status quo–oriented, and more purely defensive” and, as a result, “be less likely to be perceived as a threat by Russia.” While controversial, Trachtenberg’s analysis prepares readers for potential massive shifts in US foreign policy during the Trump administration and reassures them that “the world will not end if the United States withdraws from the alliance.”

“How Congress Can Reclaim Its Role in U.S. Foreign Policy” – Geo Saba, *Foreign Policy*, October 1, 2024.

Recalling the US founding fathers’ distrust of “unchecked monarchs, many of whom plunged countries into ill-advised wars,” **Geo Saba** (Former Chief of Staff, Rep. Ro Khanna) asks why, in more recent decades, Congress has forfeited its constitutional power to check the executive branch. “For much of U.S. history, Congress upheld its end of the deal;” however, Saba writes that the creation of the Defense Department, National Security Council, and Central Intelligence Agency in the postwar period marked a shift after which presidents exercised increasing power in foreign policy. “Now, as it embarks on its final stretch before the November elections,” Saba concludes, Congress “must act to ensure that Washington’s foreign-policy decisions reflect the broader will of the U.S. people.”

Applied History Quote of the Month

> “Whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past; for human events ever resemble those of preceding times. This arises from the fact that they are produced by men who ever have been, and ever shall be, animated by the same

passions, and thus they necessarily have the same results."

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter XLIII (1532)

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