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Applied History Project Newsletter

May 2025

The May 2025 issue of the Applied History Network Newsletter spotlights member-contributed news items for more than 500 leaders in the Applied History movement across 50 institutions.

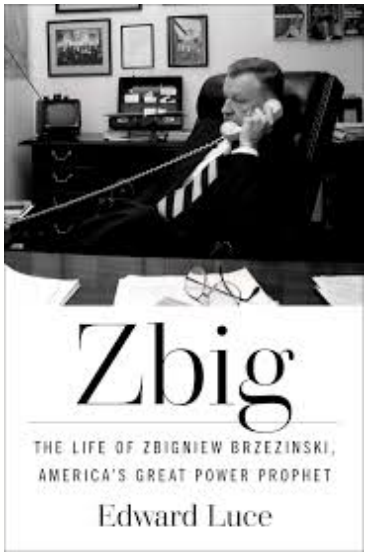
This newsletter is prepared by the Applied History Project at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center and edited by Jason Walter and Ivana Hoàng Giang. Past editions of the newsletter can be accessed on the Resources page of the Applied History Project website.

If you would like to submit an item for next month's issue, please email it to igiang@hks.harvard.edu with the subject "June Applied History Update" before Tuesday, July 8.

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

Luce Delineates Brzezinski as Strategist and Policymaker

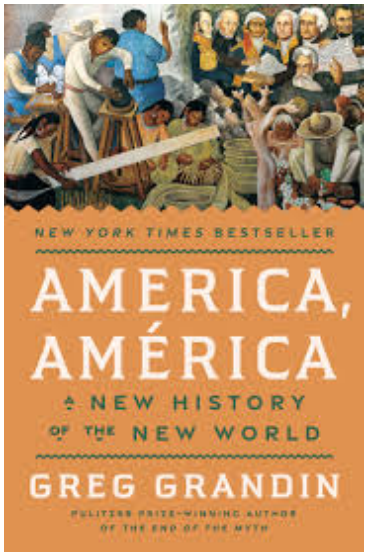
Zbig: The Life of Zbigniew Brzezinski, America's Great Power Prophet by **Edward Luce** (US national editor and columnist, *Financial Times*) "is an essential new contribution that properly elevates Brzezinski's standing in the pantheon of U.S. foreign policy thinkers." So writes **Theodore Bunzel** (managing director and head, Lazard Geopolitical Advisory) in *Foreign Policy* . Often compared to Henry Kissinger,



"his contemporary and rival," Brzezinski has "evaded easy categorization." Although as European émigrés they "shared a professional path of star-academic-turned-national-security-advisor," their approach to U.S. strategy differed sharply. "Kissinger, a German-born scholar of old-world European diplomacy, held a pessimistic view of the trajectory of the United States and inflated view of the USSR, seeking a balance of power between them through détente." Brzezinski, the son of a Polish diplomat, and "a scholar of the ideological and political weaknesses of the Soviet Union, bore a grudge against Moscow for the enslavement of Eastern Europe and had inherent confidence that the United States would prevail in the Cold War." In his role as National Security Advisor in the Jimmy Carter administration, Brzezinski built on Nixon and Kissinger's opening to China—intended to create "an elegant 'strategic triangle' that would bring the United States closer to both Moscow and Beijing"—and "instead operationalized U.S.-China relations against the USSR." For "Zbig," détente was "a one-sided bargain." While the administration's failed effort to rescue American hostages in Iran—which he advocated—permanently tarnished his legacy, "The fall of the Iron Curtain… fulfilled Brzezinski's boyhood and professional dreams." One of the principal conclusions that Bunzel draws from the book is that "the United States no longer produces many grand strategists like Brzezinski or Kissinger." This may partly be the result of their generational uniqueness in coming to maturity following World War II, which "produced thinkers fixated on problems of world order." Perhaps more importantly, "the requirements of success" in "the leviathan of the modern-day national security state and even the National Security Council itself… increasingly demands as much operational expertise as strategic depth." Both Brzezinski and Kissinger offer lessons for Applied Historians navigating today's geopolitical landscape.

Grandin Argues for Restoring Closer Ties with Latin America

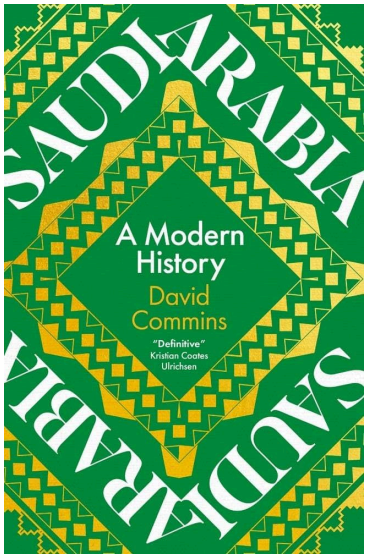
America, América by **Greg Grandin** (Professor of History, Yale University) examines the centuries of intertwined politics, "by turns turbulent and collaborative," of the United States and the countries to its south and makes a case for actively rebuilding their connections. Describing the book in *The Financial Times* as "compelling and written with zest," **Daniel Rey** (British-Colombian writer) outlines Grandin's argument for the mutual benefit of allied relationships, and in doing so suggests an



Applied History lesson that extends well beyond the region. Cooperation between the United States and Latin America was particularly strong from the period of U.S. independence through the Second World War. "Spain's colonies in the Americas were crucial to the outcome of the revolutionary war," as Spain provided "aid and up-to-date weaponry to George Washington's beleaguered army and fought Britain from the Caribbean to as far north as Lake Michigan." Despite America's self-contradictory behavior in 1823 with the Monroe Doctrine and, twenty years later, the U.S. capture of more than half of Mexico's territory, "much of the US-Latin America relationship… has been fraternal," Rey writes. And especially so under the presidencies of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. "Wilson compensated Columbia $25mn for the US-arranged separation of Panama in 1903, and took the Americas' tradition of international collaboration as his blueprint for Europe after the first world war." Both economic and military relationships were significant during the Roosevelt administration. In 1933 amid the Great Depression at the start of his presidency, "hemisphere-wide negotiations in Montevideo led (against the wishes of many US industrialists) to the reduction of tariffs. Along with the devalued dollar, this kick-started US exports and, in Grandin's words, helped 'save the New Deal.'" Roosevelt's relationships yielded U.S. vessels open access to the Panama Canal, linking the Pacific and Atlantic theaters, and assured supplies of natural resources such as petrol, copper, platinum, tin, and rubber from South America. Yet, after the war, American priorities shifted. "'The region fell out of mind'" as the focus became rebuilding Western Europe and a Japan-centered Asia, a position where the U.S. remains today. Drawing on the examples of regional cooperation in the Wilson and Roosevelt eras, Rey concludes, "The US, as the dominant power, must take the lead" to rebuild relations that have been neglected since the start of the Cold War.

Commins Evaluates Historical Tensions That Define the Saudi Kingdom's Ambitions

Saudi Arabia: A Modern History by **David Commins** (Professor of History and Chair, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Dickinson College) "delves into the country's transformation from a tribal society to a modern petrostate… and the potential obstacles it faces in the 21st century." As **Sanam Vakil** (Director, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House) explains in *The Financial Times* ,



Commins argues that the success of Vision 2030, Prince Mohammed bin Salman's strategic plan, will depend on "'overturning patterns and structures rooted in layers of history dating to the rise of Saudi power in the 1740s,'" including tribal alliances, Islamic ideology, and, in the early 20th century, British political maneuvering. Vakil notes that the discovery of oil in 1938 is a defining event in Saudi Arabia's ongoing tension between tradition and modernity. "Despite the kingdom's instinctive inward focus," its "regional integration and influence" increased. As early as 1943, reliance on foreign labor by Saudi Aramco, the state oil company, precipitated labor activism, mirroring the development of leftist and nationalist ideas across the Middle East. Later, amid the oil boom in the 70s, "the ruling al-Saud family… sought to balance conservative religious forces with the demands of a rapidly evolving society." While investing in national development, they "also gave voice to religious revivalist movements to combat revolutionary ideas coming from Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser." Similarly, in 1979 the Islamic-inspired Iranian Revolution, the seizure of the Grand Mosque of Mecca by Saudi militant Juhayman al Utaibi, and anti-government protests in the Shia-populated Eastern province demonstrated "the fragile balance between modernizing and religious currents." Vakil commends Commins' clear writing style and deep research in making "complex historical events easy to grasp" and avoiding "simplistic narratives and stereotypes." Although he states that more attention to recent developments, including the implications of Vision 2030, "would have strengthened the book's immediate relevance," he finds Commins' analysis makes clear that "the Saudi monarchy will continue to seek alignment with the U.S., assert its influence over regional challenges, and will have to prepare for more active engagement with the dynamic Saudi society at the heart of the kingdom."

**The inspiration for this section of the Applied History Network Newsletter, currently written by Anne Karalekas, comes from Paul Kennedy. In an email chain triggered by his review in* The Wall Street Journal *of Nicholas Mulder's* The 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

Ferguson Compares Conflicts Between Universities and Governments Past and Present in *The Times*

As the Trump administration continues its assault on Harvard University, **Niall Ferguson** (Co-Chair, Harvard's Applied History Project; Senior Fellow, Stanford's Hoover Institution) compares the fight to that between England's King James II and Magdalen College, Oxford, in the late 1600s. Quoting from James Macaulay's *History of England* , Ferguson highlights how the King's decision to install Catholics as leaders of the college over the protests of its fellows became a rallying cry for those opposed to his rule: "'In the coffeehouses of London, in the Inns of Court, in the closes of all the Cathedral towns, in parsonages and manor houses scattered over the remotest shires, pity for the sufferers and indignation against the government went on growing.'" These protests were a contributing factor to the Glorious Revolution months later, during which James II fled to France and was replaced by William of Orange. Although it may be tempting to directly compare James II and Trump, Ferguson cautions that recent scandals around plagiarism and antisemitism at Harvard mean "we all must think twice before we uncritically toe the line that Trump is the villain, like James II, and the professors of Harvard the heroes, like the fellows of Magdalen."

Sarotte Advises Peacemakers in Ukraine to Look to Cold War Precedents in *The Financial Times*

As the U.S. attempts to mediate a peace between Russia and Ukraine, **Mary Sarotte** (Visiting Fellow, Harvard's Applied History Project; Distinguished Professor of Historical Studies, Johns Hopkins SAIS) writes that officials in Kyiv and

Washington should look to two Cold War precedents for lessons: the Baltic states and West Germany. While the Baltic states were part of the USSR during World War II, “Washington never recognised that occupation.” And, despite its de facto separation from its eastern counterpart, West Germany and the U.S. “declared in a series of treaties that a unified German nation continued to exist – just temporarily divided into two states.” Sarotte concludes that as Ukrainian and American officials come to terms with the fact that some Ukrainian territory is likely to remain in Russia’s hands when the war ends, these examples provide models for making peace while retaining claims to sovereignty—and doing so in ways that prevent a return to conflict.

Tooze Explores the Different Narratives of the Second World War in *The Financial Times*

On the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, **Adam Tooze** (Professor of History, Columbia University) charts the changes in the war’s legacy over the decades. He argues that “Historical commemoration has always been a matter of power and politics. Public historical commemoration depends on what fits the prevailing narrative,” and laments that “on the 80th anniversary of the second world war, this has reached a delirious pitch.” Tooze states that the application of historical fundamentalism is highly selective. “While the meaning of the Holocaust is fixed, the ancient history of Gaza is reduced to rubble and its future reimagined as real estate fantasy.” As he observes the fraying of a common understanding of history, Tooze speculates that “sometimes history does die. Sometimes the past is very much past.”

Schake Outlines “A New Conservative Foreign Policy” in *The Catalyst*

Reflecting on the success of the post-war international order, **Kori Schake** (Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute) argues that it has been “a fundamentally conservative project…. The order is founded on belief in the dignity of the individual, and the need to preserve individual rights has led to policies that advance freedom, support democratic governance, reduce barriers to international trade, and build institutions to resolve conflict and enshrine compromise and cooperation.” In this

context she defines Trump's foreign policy as the opposite of what conservative principles stand for, as "Conservatism at its essence is about preserving what has value"—not "undermining the system and squandering the goodwill that has served U.S. interests well for nearly a century." If the U.S. does not realize this, she warns, "it may soon find there is no longer a liberal international order to conserve."

Walt Argues China's Attempts to Become an Asian Hegemon will be Counterproductive in *International Security*

In "Hedging on Hegemony: The Realist Debate over How to Respond to China," **Stephen M. Walt** (Professor of International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School) applies the contrast between offensive and defensive realism to assess China's prospects for regional dominance in Asia. Walt explores a range of historical cases demonstrating hegemonic pursuits—from Louis XIV and Napoleon to Imperial Japan—and finds that "bids for regional hegemony usually fail," often disastrously, because "other great powers can usually identify especially dangerous threats and balance against them effectively." He concludes that Beijing would be unwise to pursue such ambitions, and Washington should support regional balancing to counter China while prioritizing avoiding reckless escalation.

Brands Highlights Inadequacy of Cold War Thinking in Today's "New Nuclear Age" for *Bloomberg*

While it is becoming increasingly popular to frame the U.S.-China rivalry as a second Cold War, **Hal Brands** (Professor of Global Affairs, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies) observes that several aspects of Cold War thinking are outdated and not applicable to the "New Nuclear Age." Among the issues specific to this new age, "nuclear rivalry has gone tripolar," sharply contrasting with the "old nuclear balance [which] was a duopoly." In addition to new nuclear major powers, "technological breakthroughs — the advent of missile defenses or increasingly potent offensive weapons" threaten to undermine mutual deterrence. Furthermore, while several arms control treaties effectively restrained the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, "The old treaties are dead," according to Brands. Worst of all, with growing skepticism about U.S. extended deterrence and increasing regional threats, we "could simply see lots of exposed countries sprint for

their own arsenals at once…. We simply have no experience to teach us what a world of plentiful nuclear weapons and fading American leadership might look like. Perhaps the gravest danger of our new nuclear era is the chance that we might find out." In a separate article, Brands also comments on the prospect of Trump's pursuit of a "Reverse Kissinger" to split Russia off from China, writing that despite the optimism of some columnists, "the Sino-Russian relationship won't be broken anytime soon."

Chancellor Offers History of "King Dollar's Shaky Throne" in *The Times Literary Supplement*

In reviewing books by **Mary Bridges** (Ernest May Fellow in History and Policy, Harvard Kennedy School), **Paul Blustein** (Senior Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies), and **Kenneth Rogoff** (Professor and Chair, International Economics, Harvard University), **Edward Chancellor** (financial historian) charts the history of the dollar's dominance in international finance and the challenges it faces today. Writing in the context of debates over whether it is beneficial for the dollar to be the world's reserve currency, Chancellor observes, "The historical record shows a clear relationship between empire and currency dominance," adding that "once a currency has established primacy, it is hard to dislodge." He highlights Bridges's research into the origins of the dollar's primacy, noting that "A year after the Federal Reserve opened for business, the outbreak of war in Europe upended the City of London's role as the global financial centre," placing the dollar in an ideal position to start replacing the pound sterling as the world's reserve currency. Yet the rise of Chinese financial prowess and alternative forms of currencies could "erode the dollar's dominance of foreign exchange transactions," Chancellor concludes, and the dollar may yet be "gently dethroned" in the coming years.

Gramm and Boudreaux Assert "Tariffs Mean Electoral Defeat for the GOP" in *Wall Street Journal*

"The Trump administration is looking for an exit strategy from the most destructive parts of its trade war," observe **Phil Gramm** (Nonresident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute) and **Donald J. Boudreaux** (Professor of Economics, George Mason University). They argue that this would be a step in the right direction,

because “if history is any guide, the latest protectionist experiment will soon be over.” Gramm and Boudreaux find that over the nearly two centuries between 1842 and 2020, Republicans and their Whig predecessors lose elections after significant increases in tariffs. The most notable example is the party’s 1932 defeat in the wake of the Smoot-Hawley tariffs, after which the Democrats controlled “the White House for 20 years, the Senate for 44 of the next 48 years, and the House for 58 of the next 62 years.” Their extensive catalogue of examples begins from before the country was founded and includes the 1733 Molasses Tariff, the 1767-68 Townsend Acts, and the Tea Act of 1773, which triggered the Boston Tea Party. Gramm and Boudreaux observe most recently that “tariffs didn’t prove a winning political issue in 2018, when Republicans lost the House, or in 2020, when they lost the Senate and White House,” despite several other factors at play. Their overarching lesson? “Americans have historically hated high tariffs and never suffered them for long.”

Interviews and Speeches

Logevall Reflects on “Lessons on Democracy” on *JFK35* Podcast

The JFK Library Foundation is hosting **Fredrik Logevall** (Faculty Mentor, Harvard’s Applied History Project; Professor of International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School) for a four-part series that takes “a closer look at what made President John F. Kennedy a strong democratic leader.” In the third installment about “The Art of Diplomacy,” Logevall notes that JFK’s establishment of USAID in 1961—which earned him few political points “because the American public has never been particularly keen on foreign aid”—demonstrated that Kennedy “understood soft power, even if he wouldn’t know what the phrase was.” Logevall argues that “The victory of the West in the Cold War was at least in part about soft power”—the Hollywood movies, the consumer culture, the free press, and “those well-stocked store shelves that you could see in West Berlin, but you couldn’t see in East Berlin.” Today’s equivalent is “those bags of grain that would be stamped USAID being delivered to countries all across the world.” One central lesson on “The Art of Diplomacy,” according to Logevall, is that “soft power in its various manifestations was important then and it’s important today.”

Gaddis Considers "The Intersection of Historical Consciousness and Strategic Thinking" on *unSILOed* Podcast

"How can we learn from the past so that we can better shape the future?" **John Lewis Gaddis** (Professor of Military and Naval History, Yale University) says that it is from history's "rich panoply of games that have been played, won or lost, from which we can extract principles" to teach grand strategy. The "most important skill you get out of a strategy class," Gaddis argues, is "knowing when and how to zoom in and zoom out." This is "like when you're writing a history, you're making all editorial decisions about when you need to zoom in" on details of specific events "and when you need to zoom out" to view overarching trends. Among the most consequential strategic games in modern history was the Cold War, which Gaddis describes as an example of good strategy full of "foxy adjustments, which caught the adversary, whoever that was, off guard, but ultimately fit within the larger strategy of maintaining the balance of power." Gaddis says that was "pretty good strategy," and "that's what I'm missing in the post-Cold War era… that's what we have to get back to."

McMaster and Kotkin Call for Applied History in Strategic Education at Hoover Webinar

At a recent webinar hosted by the Hoover Institution's Center for Revitalizing American Institutions, **H.R. McMaster** (former U.S. National Security Advisor; Senior Fellow, Stanford's Hoover Institution) and **Stephen Kotkin** (Visiting Scholar, Harvard's Applied History Project; Senior Fellow, Stanford's Hoover Institution) argue that rebuilding American strategic competence requires a revival of Applied History in leadership education. Drawing from his doctoral research on Vietnam, McMaster outlined five key lessons, one of which is that leaders must "surface implicit assumptions" and "take time to understand the nature of a challenge" before acting. Kotkin reinforced the need to teach historical reasoning as a discipline, urging leaders to "actively seek evidence that disproves your hypothesis." Both criticized the prevalence of "junk history" and shallow analogies in policy discourse and emphasized that strategy depends not just on superior resources, but on historically informed judgment.

Lepore Reflects on Domestic Effects of Cold War Idealism on *NPR*

Speaking with **Steve Inskeep** (Host, *NPR's* Morning Edition), **Jill Lepore** (Professor of American History, Harvard University) noted that during the Cold War, the "outward-facing posture" of the U.S. as "the beacon of freedom" in the world resulted in "a lot of pressure on domestic arrangements." The State Department, specifically, had issues with the Jim Crow policies of the South, which contradicted the values that the U.S. championed abroad and created "a series of really international scandals…. The Secretary of Agriculture of Haiti goes to Mississippi for a conference. He's unable to stay at the hotel where the conference is being held. And it's really hard for the State Department to do the work it thinks it should be doing" in convincing the world that Communists are the villains. This created pressure from the Truman administration to fight racial injustice, with the attorney general writing that discrimination "raises doubts even among friendly nations as to the intensity of our devotion to the democratic faith." However, after the end of the Cold War, Lepore says the U.S. felt less pressure to unify, allowing more domestic division over time. "In this moment of incredible retreat and betrayal of American ideas and ideals," Lepore concludes, this history shows that the idealism of the U.S. in the Cold War "mattered to Americans finding ways to meet those obligations to themselves as much as they attempted to meet them or failed to meet them to the world." Lepore also spoke to *CNN* about her reflections on Trump's first 100 days.

Zelikow and Erdmann Distinguish Uses and Misuses of History at the Hoover Institution

The Hoover History Lab hosted **Philip Zelikow** (Senior Fellow, Stanford's Hoover Institution) and **Andrew Erdmann** (Research Fellow, Harvard's Applied History Project) for "'Lessons' of the Past? A Conversation on the Uses and Misuses of History." The discussion focused on the work of Ernest R. May, who laid the foundation of the Applied History Project with his colleague and coauthor Richard Neustadt in their seminal book *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* . Zelikow explains that what distinguished the Applied History curriculum in their class was May and Neustadt's use of case studies. If you were a student, "rather than actually reading large survey historical works, the characteristic way they ran their course back then in the early '80s was to offer very dense case studies

of some historical decision." In class, "you would then reflect on the quality of choices and reflections people made in that situation from that encounter, so that you'd reflect more intelligently about the vicarious experience you had just gained." Explaining how this methodology may have been developed, Erdmann said that May "acquired this ability to be empathetic and reconstruct how governments work and use documents, I would argue, unlike anyone of his generation."

Freeman and Cox Richardson Search for "Vibe Shifts" with Past Presidents on *Stay Tuned with Preet*

Are people starting to get "turned off" by President Trump's actions in his second term? "I'm trying to get a sense of if the vibe is going to shift away from him among Republican senators and independents and others," **Preet Bharara** (Host; former U.S. Attorney) says. He then asks **Joanne Freeman** (Professor of American History and American Studies, Yale University) and **Heather Cox Richardson** (Professor of History, Boston College): "Is there a straw that breaks the camel's back, historically, for a presidency or regime?" Freeman responds that it usually isn't just one thing. She points to the gradual consequences of, for example, Thomas Jefferson's trade embargo and George Washington's opposition to "self-created societies" that supported the French Revolution. Both experienced these grumbles of disapproval in their second terms as president. "There's a slow build of things and at a certain point, people see and hear and realize that there's enough opinion out there about that president that… [a] movement of opposition is created." Cox Richardson suggests "we are at a real paradigm shift moment" in which—like "we saw in the 1850s," "1890s," and "1920s"—one increasingly dominant political party "begins to concentrate power among a very small group of people." She says in those moments, "the pennies start to drop" and "more and more people begin to say, 'This is not working for me.'"

Hemmer Discusses the GOP's Abandonment of Reaganism at the LBJ Library

Discussing her new book, *Partisans: The Conservative Revolutionaries Who Remade American Politics in the 1990s*, **Nicole Hemmer** (Associate Professor of History, Vanderbilt University; Director, Center for the American Presidency)

observes that despite the Republican Party's reverence for Ronald Reagan, the conservative movement started to abandon his principles soon after his presidency. She argues this is because "Ronald Reagan was fundamentally a Cold War president." The geopolitical struggle the U.S. was involved in, along with Reagan's genuine belief in the need to spread freedom across the world, had a direct impact on his political stances—for example, his support for more open immigration and free markets. After the Cold War the Republican Party shifted to focusing on domestic issues, abandoning Reagan's small-government principles and leading "paleoconservatives" to argue that "if particularly white people are going to maintain their power in the United States, they need to be acting in more anti-democratic ways."

Brinkley Charts History of U.S. Executive Power in "America at a Crossroads" Event

In searching for precedents for Donald Trump's presidency, **Douglas Brinkley** (Professor of History, Rice University) reviewed the history of executive power in the U.S. "The big moment in presidential power," he says, "was Abraham Lincoln, because in the middle of the Civil War he ended up issuing, towards the end, the Emancipation Proclamation—in one swoop of the pen basically doing away with slavery altogether." The next presidents to truly seize on this power were Theodore Roosevelt—"from 1901 to 1909 TR starts using presidential power in unprecedented ways because he didn't want to be flummoxed by the Senate"—and his cousin Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression and WWII. Brinkley mentions Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Obama as each doing their part to expand executive authority, but he says that Trump "is taking it into the stratosphere" by arguing for such an expansive interpretation of the power of the presidency. President Trump ultimately seems to believe, Brinkley observes, "what Nixon believed: that if the president does anything, it must be legal."

Jobs and Opportunities

Call for Papers: The University of Texas at Austin Announces the 2025 "Bobby R. Inman Award" for Student Scholarship on Intelligence

The Clements-Strauss Intelligence Studies Project of The University of Texas at Austin announces the 10th annual competition recognizing outstanding student research and writing on topics related to intelligence and national security. The winner of the "Inman Award" will receive a cash prize of $5,000, with two semifinalists each receiving a cash prize of $2,500. This competition is open to unpublished work by undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in degree programs at accredited U.S. higher education institutions during the 2024-25 academic year. The deadline for submitting papers is June 30, 2025. More information can be found here.

Applied History Articles of the Month

"The U.S. Deported This Chinese Scientist, in a Decision That Changed World History" – Kathleen Kingsbury, *The New York Times*, May 30, 2025.

The "brilliant Chinese rocket scientist" Qian Xuesen, **Kathleen Kingsbury** (Opinion Editor, The New York Times) argues, was one of the U.S.'s "keys to winning the Cold War" in the 1950s—a key the U.S. squandered by deporting him to China at the height of the Red Scare, despite his achievements working on the Manhattan Project and American ballistic missile programs. Qian then "immediately persuaded Mao Zedong to put him to work building a modern weapons program," setting "in motion the technological revolution that turned China into a superpower." Reflecting on the Trump administration's decision to "'aggressively revoke'" Chinese students' visas, Kingsbury reminds us that "Dr. Qian's deportation should serve as an important cautionary tale." After all, "To this day, Washington spends billions of dollars on a nuclear umbrella shielding our Pacific allies from his technical achievements."

"A war too well remembered" – Janan Ganesh, *Financial Times*, May 24, 2025.

“The lesson of the 1930s is that people who suffer — economic pain, physical fear, national territorial loss — are liable to turn to extremists,” **Janan Ganesh** (International Politics Commentator, *The Financial Times*) writes . However, because “Today’s demagogues emerged in a period of sustained peace and affluence,” he asserts, “The lesson of today is that not suffering can induce them to do the same thing.” Ganesh therefore finds the oft-discussed comparison between today and the 1930s inappropriate, warning that overuse of this analogy risks inaction. To avoid the “danger” that we remember the 1930s “so well as to see all contemporary events through its distorting lens,” he concludes “we might have to forget the last disaster to avert the next one.”

“The 20th Century’s Timeless Values” – Stephen Breyer, *The Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2025.

“History suggests that, in the U.S., the rule of law surrounds us like the air, essential but invisible,” **Stephen Breyer** (former Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court; Professor of Administrative Law and Process, Harvard Law School) observes , attributing this to widespread acceptance by “ordinary citizens.” He recalls the fight over integrating Central High School—shut down after the 101st Airborne Division, sent by Dwight Eisenhower, was no longer deployed to protect the Little Rock Nine—but insists that “The rule of law won…. The entire nation had awakened to what was happening and to the horrors that had occurred in the South.” The lesson for today comes from our Founders: “This democracy, our Constitution, our values, they said, are an experiment. It is easy for me to accept them. I grew up with them in the 20th century. The children of the 21st century must learn their histories, discuss them with others (including those who disagree), use them to help lead the world by example.”

“Joseph Nye Was the Champion of a World That No Longer Exists” – Suzanne Nossel, *Foreign Policy*, May 9, 2025.

The Applied History Project is among those mourning the loss of **Joseph S. Nye** (Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, Harvard Kennedy School), whose “intellectual leadership, teaching, policy guidance, and diplomatic efforts shaped five decades of U.S. foreign policy,” **Suzanne Nossel** (CEO, PEN America) fittingly appraises . The lesson and call to action for “Nye’s intellectual progeny,” she argues, is to “navigate—and perhaps one day again bridge—the gap between a beloved nation and the treasured values that its current government has left behind. As we lament the loss of Nye, we must also grieve the vanishing world he bequeathed

us”—one that Nye believed was made stronger by “U.S. leadership and liberal internationalism.”

Applied History Quote of the Month

> “The historian may very well be related to the non-historian as the trained woodsman is to the ignorant traveller. ‘Nothing here but trees and grass,’ thinks the traveller, and marches on. ‘Look,’ says the woodsman, ‘there is a tiger in that grass.’”

– R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (1939)

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