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GUEST EDITOR'S NOTES AND COMMENTS

The Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences is pleased to have Dr. Benjamin Greene, Assistant Professor of History at Bowling Green State University as our guest editor for a special military history issue of the journal. Dr. Greene is a 2004 Ph. D. graduate of Stanford University and teaches courses at Bowling Green State on 20th-Century America, Foreign Relations, and Military History. He is the author of Eisenhower, Science Advice, and the Nuclear Test-Ban Debate, 1945-1963 (Stanford University Press, 2007) and numerous articles and book reviews on topics ranging from American foreign relations to military affairs. His research efforts have also examined the intersections of culture and foreign relations. A retired Army officer, Dr. Greene has previously taught history at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York and the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

I am delighted to be serving as the guest editor for this special issue of the *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences*. Military history, broadly conceived, is the organizing subject of the diverse articles that appear in this special issue. The field of military history continues to occupy a paradoxical position between the academy and the general public. Those visiting bookstores in the United States typically discover that an overwhelming majority of the titles filling the shelves of the "history" section examine various aspects of military history. Conversely, those scanning the tables of contents of the nation's leading academic journals in history or the programs of their association's annual conferences encounter very few articles or conference panels devoted to such topics. The reasons for this disconnect between an enthusiastic public and an apathetic academy have been the subject of a number of essays over the past twenty years.[1]

The last decade, however, has witnessed an increasing appreciation for military history within the academy. For many now living in an era of persistent armed conflict since 2001, assessing past conflicts, reexamining their causes and legacies, and evaluating the broader socio-cultural roles of the military often yields important insights with significant contemporary public policy implications. Reflecting this renewed interest, the leading academic historical journals in 2007 each published "state of the field" essays.[2] The diverse articles in this volume attest to the continued relevance of military history and to the innovative scholarship of its practitioners. While some of the articles engage in enduring or emerging historical disputes, others examine methodological and interpretative challenges common to those working in this subfield. The articles also differ in their scope of analysis, ranging from tactical engagements, to strategic planning, to the socio-cultural influence of national security affairs and the armed forces. Each article demonstrates in its own way why academic scholarship examining various aspects of military affairs remains essential to the discipline of history and critical to understanding contemporary American national security policy.

Over the past two years, several monographs, conferences, and special volumes have reconsidered aspects of the First World War on the occasion of its centennial. The United States, of course, entered the conflict over two and a half years after it began. The reasons for the belated American entry and assessments of the American Expeditionary Forces' role in the outcome of the war are just two of the many issues that remain in historical dispute. Rory McGovern's "'We Will All be Wiser in a Few Days:' Woodrow Wilson, Grand Strategy, and the U.S. Army in 1917" engages in the historiographical debate on the second issue, providing a new interpretation for why the U.S. Army was so ill-prepared for war. After summarizing the existing literature that focuses on either Congressional ineptitude or bureaucratic inertia, McGovern's own analysis concludes that Woodrow Wilson's tardiness in forming and disseminating a coherent grand strategy greatly hindered the army's ability to mobilize its forces and coordinate its operations to accomplish the president's political objectives.

Another curious characteristic of the general public's interest in military history is the fascination with conspiracies that academic historians have long-ago rejected due to absent evidence, faulty logic, or both. Walter Grunden's article, "'The 'Paranoid Style' in the Pacific Theater: Government Cover-Ups, Conspiracy Theory, and War with Japan and Korea," evaluates the origins and assesses the evolution of three of the most provocative and enduring conspiracy theories to emerge from the Second World War in the Pacific. His case studies examine the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, accounts of a successful Japanese atomic bomb, and accusations of the American employment of members of Japan's notorious Unit 731 to conduct biological warfare in Korea. As part of his analysis, Grunden proposes and models an innovative analytical methodology for examining the origins and explaining the enduring appeal of conspiracy theories.

My contribution to this volume, "'You Boys Must Be Crazy!' Eisenhower, Ambrose, and the History of Atomic Diplomacy in Asia," reflects upon the recent revelation that a colorful quote from Stephen Ambrose's highly influential 1984 biography of Dwight D. Eisenhower may have been based upon a fabricated interview with the former president. Many authors of both scholarly monographs and popular biographies over the next thirty years cited this quote, often to demonstrate Eisenhower's hesitancy to use nuclear weapons in Asia. My article assesses how declassified documents present a vastly different view of the thirty-fourth president's willingness to use nuclear weapons that challenges the veracity of the oft-cited quote. I emphasize how contradictions between contemporary private records, public pronouncements, memoirs, and later interviews present an interpretive challenge to those assessing Eisenhower's use of atomic diplomacy in Asia.

Randy Mills and Roxanne Mills, co-authors of a number of books and essays on the wartime experiences of Midwesterners, examine the difficulties of crafting a clear combat narrative from battlefields often obscured by inaccurate combat reports, inflated award nominations, and fading postwar memories that struggle to explain the often unexplainable aspects of combat. Drawn from their work on a book that assesses combat experiences in Vietnam, their article, "'With Complete Disregard for his Personal

Safety:' Adventures in Writing Accurate Accounts of Military Combat," provides a cautionary tale for those attempting to piece together such various strands of often contradictory evidence. Their article offers several vital insights on the challenges of weighing different types of primary sources and the importance of thinking critically about the context and purposes of the sources analysts uncover.

One of the most contentious current issues dividing analysts are the causal factors for the end of the Cold War. Proponents of the "Reagan Victory School" emphasize the conventional military buildup and the strategic defense spending of U.S. President Ronald Reagan, while others underscore Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev's commitment to decreasing defense spending and reforming the Soviet Union. More recently, several works emphasize the "human rights revolution" that eroded the Soviet bloc from within. Paul Rubinson's article, "Sakharov's Dilemma: Pursuing Nuclear Disarmament during the Human Rights Revolution" illuminates the interconnections between several causal factors. For Rubinson, Soviet nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov's advocacy of both nuclear disarmament and human rights illustrates the interconnections of issues that have been largely treated separately in the emerging scholarly literature on the end of the Cold War.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to work with these authors, and I am delighted to present this special issue of articles that demonstrate the vibrant and important work in the field of military history.

Benjamin P. Greene, Guest Editor
Assistant Professor
Bowling Green State University

[1] On the decline of military history in the academy, see for example John A. Lynn, "The Embattled Future of Academic Military History," *Journal of Military History* 61, no. 4 (1997): 777–789; John J. Miller, "Sounding Taps: Why Military History is Being Retired," *National Review* (October 9, 2006): 44-48.

[2] On the continued relevance of military history, see for example, Robert M. Citino, "Military Histories Old and New: A Reinterpretation," *American Historical Review* 112 (October 2007): 1070-90; Wayne E. Lee, "Mind and Matter—Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 93 (March 2007): 1116–42.

"We Will All be Wiser in a Few Days:" Woodrow Wilson, Grand Strategy, and the U.S. Army in 1917

Rory M. McGovern
United States Military Academy[*]

Abstract
Although mismanagement of the War with Spain in 1898 sparked comprehensive reform within the War Department, the U.S. Army was little better prepared for war in 1917. This article argues that while institutional dysfunction within the army itself and Congressional politics degraded the army's readiness for war, a more significant and more proximate obstacle was inadequate strategic direction and communication from the White House. President Woodrow Wilson proved unable to develop and communicate a coherent grand strategy, leaving the army without a clearly defined purpose and limiting its ability to mobilize forces and coordinate operations to achieve his political objectives.

Introduction

It is tempting to interpret the photograph that follows as an illustration of American industrial and military might tipping the scales on the Western Front after four years of deadly, ghastly stalemate. But a deeper analysis tells a different story. The soldiers' helmets were most likely British. The tank on which they rode was French, as were the artillery pieces and the vast majority of the artillery ammunition expended to prepare the battlefield for their advance. The small-unit tactics they used in

[*]Rory M. McGovern is a major in the U.S. Army and an instructor of history at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He received his B.A. from Boston College and his M.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he is also a PhD candidate. The views expressed in this article are his own and do not reflect official positions of the United States Army or the Department of Defense.

that particular battle were inspired more by lessons imparted by French and British trainers than by their General John J. Pershing's well-publicized open-warfare doctrine. Other than the people wearing the uniform and braving the enemy fire, few things captured in that particular photograph were actually American.[1]

Above: Soldiers and tanks of the American Expeditionary Forces move toward the front lines on September 26, 1918 *(File 111-SC-22334, RG 111, National Archives and Records Administration)*

In fact, the reduction of the Saint Mihiel salient in September 1918, only two weeks before a U.S. Army photographer captured the above image, marked the first time that an independent American field army was employed against German forces during World War I.[2] Fifteen months had elapsed between the American declaration of war and the first employment of an independent American field army in battle, and yet that army still could not independently equip and sustain itself. The U.S. Army was completely unprepared for war in April 1917, and the effects

of its poor state of readiness plagued its mobilization and affected its operations for the duration of the war.[3]

Scholars of the American war effort generally point either to Congressional politics or to shortcomings and problems within the U.S. Army itself to explain its troubled intervention in World War I. Some argue that problems of scale were the most significant causes of the army's lack of preparedness to enter the war. According to this line of interpretation, a troubled mobilization was the natural byproduct of a traditionally small national army whose experience largely consisted of limited coastal defense and frontier constabulary missions suddenly confronting mass industrialized warfare and all of its inherent problems.[4] Others view institutional dysfunction as the root cause of the Army's woes in 1917. They argue that a confused and improvisational intervention was attributable to unimaginative senior military leaders who proved unable to anticipate future requirements, question existing doctrine and organization, or make sound strategic decisions.[5] Still others ascribe equal significance to Congressional politics as they do to both institutional dysfunction and problems of scale and inexperience, highlighting the harm that Congressional resistance to institutional reforms enacted in the wake of the War with Spain in 1898 inflicted upon the Army's ability to plan and coordinate a major mobilization and overseas expedition.[6]

Although such interpretations address important factors that help explain the army's poor state of readiness to enter World War I, they overlook a more important factor. The U.S. Army certainly bore some of the responsibility for its troubled entry into the war, and the effects of Congressional politics cannot be ignored. But the most significant source of friction in the opening stages of the American war effort was President Woodrow Wilson, who proved unable to develop and communicate an effective grand strategy. As defined by B.H. Liddell Hart, "while practically synonymous with the policy which guides the conduct of war, as distinct from the more fundamental policy which should govern its object, the term 'grand strategy' serves to bring out the sense of 'policy in execution.'" The role of grand strategy, then, "is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war—the goal defined by fundamental policy."[7]

Wilson's shortcomings as a grand strategist and failure to communicate with those who led the war effort severely limited the army's ability to adequately mobilize forces and coordinate operations in support his political objectives. Only by reexamining its entry into World War I from this perspective can we begin to reconsider the whole of the American war effort.[8]

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Institutional dysfunction and Congressional politics severely damaged the U.S. Army's ability to plan and coordinate the mobilization and deployment of the American Expeditionary Forces to Europe in 1917. Large overseas expeditions were contrary to the army's purpose, organization, and experience during the nineteenth century. After evolving conditions suggested corresponding changes to the army's role and organization, reformers in and out of uniform sought to reshape the institution as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.[9] They quickly discovered that although structural reforms could be enacted with the stroke of a pen, institutional culture was less malleable. Reformers failed to win over not only an officer corps generally conditioned to believe that the methods that had produced the military leaders of the Civil War were as nearly perfect as could be reasonably expected, but also a cadre of extremely powerful and politically-connected chiefs of administrative and logistics bureaus.[10]

Late-nineteenth-century developments set conditions for reform in the U.S. Army. The most influential development was the closing of the western frontier. Outside of comparatively brief periods of interstate war, the army's role since its inception had been to guard the nation's coasts and serve as a frontier constabulary. Those missions determined its size, organization, training, and systems of management. The decades following the Civil War, however, saw the consolidation of white American control over the continental United States. As the army subdued the last active Native American resistance to American expansion, there was no longer a frontier to patrol and police.[11]

The effective disappearance of the frontier coincided with other societal developments that helped spur military reform. American conceptions of professionalism began to shift so that society began to recognize formal training and education—rather

than experience alone—as essential components of professionalism.[12] The "Managerial Revolution" swept through both public and private sectors alike, leaving rationalized managerial and bureaucratic structures in many aspects of American life, from small municipal governments up to mammoth multi-million-dollar corporations.[13] At the same time, the country was entering what one historian has labeled a "trans-Atlantic moment" when American society was particularly receptive to importing European ideas.[14]

With the frontier aspect of its traditional mission no longer relevant, the army reassessed its purpose. Reform-minded officers concluded that the fundamental purpose of national armies was to prepare for war, and that the U.S. Army would best serve the country if its organization, training, and systems of management were recalibrated and reoriented toward preparing to wage war against powerful European armies, then perceived to be the greatest military threats to the United States. Many reformers believed that the best way to accomplish this goal was to deliberately mirror increasingly popular European systems and organizations—including war colleges and general staffs—responsible for military education and the planning and coordination of military operations.[15]

The War with Spain in 1898 gave reformers the catalyst they needed to move beyond relatively small-scale and experimental efforts to affect institutional change in the army. The war effort was so poorly managed that it caused a national scandal. Mobilization camps were ill-sited, ill-supplied, and ill-supervised, leading to egregiously preventable outbreaks of disease. The War Department selected ports of embarkation serviced by limited, sometimes solitary, and generally underdeveloped rail lines, leading to congestion and confusion at the ports and a dearth of much-needed supplies on the ships sustaining the army's campaigns. Even as they steamed toward Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Philippines, most units found that the War Department could not supply them with adequate maps and even the most rudimentary information about their objectives or the disposition of Spanish forces. Furthermore, war plans were virtually non-existent and events in both the Caribbean and the Pacific theaters took on a strikingly improvisational air. In fact, then-Captain Peyton C. March, who would later serve as Chief of

Staff of the Army during World War I, was instructed to decide for himself to which theater of the war his light artillery battery would be deployed.[16]

As a result of popular backlash from the War Department's widely-publicized shortcomings in 1898 and a particularly damning Congressional investigation, President William McKinley sacked Secretary of War Russell Alger, replacing him with Elihu Root. Although new to the War Department and lacking military experience, Root recognized that the controversies surrounding the War with Spain had shifted the parameters of what both the army and the American public considered possible and acceptable, and was inclined to favor the reformers' proposals. During his tenure in office from 1899-1904, he pushed several major reforms through Congress. The most important of these established the Army War College as the pinnacle of a formal, rationalized, and tiered system of professional education, and established the U.S. Army General Staff—an agency responsible for developing war plans and coordinating the complex array of activities and resources required to mobilize and deploy the army.[17]

Along with the creation of the General Staff, Root reorganized the army's high command. Previously, a surprisingly powerless Commanding General was the nominal head of the U.S. Army, but the particularly powerful and autonomous chiefs of the service's several administrative and logistics departments were the independent masters of their own domains, jealously guarding their respective spheres and frequently frustrating attempts at cohesive, unified action in any form within the War Department. Root blamed this system for the problems that plagued the American war effort in 1898. To forestall such problems in future conflicts, Root replaced the Commanding General with a significantly more powerful Chief of Staff of the Army.[18]

Root soon found that it was much easier to change institutional systems and structures than it was to change institutional culture.[19] A major portion of Root's reforms rested upon the assumption that formal training and education—rather than experience alone—had an important role to play in developing officers capable of meeting the increasingly complex challenges of warfare in a rapidly industrializing era. But the

prevailing culture of the army's officer corps was at odds with such a notion, leading to subtle but immediate resistance to Root's reforms. One of the first acts of the first president of the Army War College removed its educational mandate. "Manifestly," he argued, "all this [theoretical education in the classroom or seminar room] will be a waste of time and a degradation of the institution from its true function." He claimed that "when an officer has passed through the course to which he must have been subjected before he comes to the War College he must have learned, (unless there be a great fault somewhere) all that he needs to know of the theory of the art of war," and that "from that time on, he should learn things by doing things."[20] As late as 1922, an exceptionally well-regarded officer who had served from 1880-1919 summarized his generation of officers' opinion by staking the claim that "the best man is the one who regards each difficulty overcome as in the nature of an educational degree . . . he learns in the only school that is worth anything—experience."[21]

Resistance from self-interested bureau chiefs who feared losing their relative power and autonomy further blunted the impact of reform. Root intended the General Staff to be a planning and coordinating agency, but the extent to which it could coordinate anything depended upon the degree to which the bureaus felt that they were subordinate to the Chief of Staff. The first two decades of the new system demonstrated that this was very much a function of the personalities occupying the key positions. The bureau chiefs, led predominantly by Adjutant General Fred C. Ainsworth, vigorously reasserted their claims to power and autonomy during Leonard Wood's tenure as Chief of Staff from 1910-1914. Although Secretary of War Henry Stimson sided with the Chief of Staff in 1912 and forced Ainsworth's retirement in under the threat of court martial for insubordination, Ainsworth remained a potent political force. He enlisted Congressional allies to continue his efforts to diminish the power of the Chief of Staff, and to sharply restrict the size and scope of the General Staff.[22]

Prompted by Ainsworth, the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee drafted legislation to protect the authority and independence of the bureau chiefs. Parts of the National Defense Act of 1916 constituted the apogee of attacks by the

bureau chiefs and their allies in Congress. While the act authorized an increase to the total number of officers assigned to the General Staff Corps, it sharply limited the number of General Staff officers that could be assigned to duties in or near Washington, D.C. As a result of this legislation, only nineteen General Staff officers were assigned to the War Department in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1917. Of these nineteen, only eleven served in duty positions dedicated to shaping operational plans and coordinating mobilization efforts. By comparison, Germany and England went to war in 1914 with 650 and 232 officers assigned to their General Staffs, respectively. The National Defense Act of 1916 essentially gutted the General Staff, leaving it drastically undermanned at the beginning of its first major test.[23]

With the General Staff so sharply restricted and the bureaus once again ascendant, many of the conditions that led to a problematic mobilization in 1898 remained in place in 1917. Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss, then serving as the Assistant Chief of Staff, foresaw the complications ahead. He wrote a memorandum to the Chief of Staff on March 31, 1917 recommending immediate changes to the War Department's management of logistics in order to avert disaster should the army be called upon to mobilize for war with Germany. According to Bliss:

> It is possible that in the near future the War Department may be placing huge orders for supplies of all kinds needed in the military service. It will sometimes happen that material of a certain kind will be required in different classes of articles supplied by the different purchasing departments of the War Department. Two departments may require great quantities of leather, or of woolen cloth, or of canvas. If the matter is not properly coordinated it may result that one bureau of the War Department requiring great quantities of such material will find that the manufacturers supplying it have tied themselves up for a long time in contracts with another bureau of the War Department. I think that this matter should be brought to the attention of bureau chiefs with the view to their arranging some sort of a 'steering committee'

> among themselves to insure an orderly and uniform acquisition of supplies.[24]

Although it was not acted upon at the time, Bliss's warning was remarkably prescient. Only weeks later, the well-meaning commanding officer of the arsenal at Rock Island, Illinois cornered the market on the nation's leather supply, without regard for the needs of other arsenals or other supply bureaus. The severely restrained General Staff had only a limited ability to coordinate the myriad and complex activities required to raise and equip an army, then deploy it to Europe as the United States entered World War I, degrading the American war effort from its outset.[25]

Clearly, then, institutional dysfunction and Congressional politics were major factors in the U.S. Army's lack of preparedness to intervene in the First World War. Elihu Root's reforms made definite progress in correcting the institutional weaknesses so readily apparent during the War with Spain. But structural reforms imposed from the highest levels proved to be insufficient means to affect complete institutional reform. With an institutional culture at odds with the spirit of the reforms, and with powerful and well-connected leaders determined to maintain the status quo, institutional and Congressional resistance prevented Root's program of reform from reaching its full potential prior to the American entrance into World War I. This significantly degraded the army's ability to plan and coordinate its mobilization and operations abroad, and was a major cause of the army's poor state of readiness to enter the war.

Yet this explanation does not fully account for the U.S. Army's stumble into war in 1917. The army's ability to plan and coordinate military mobilization and operations was degraded, not completely absent. The eleven officers working on issues related to raising, equipping, training, and deploying forces to Europe on the eve and first weeks of the American involvement in the First World War demonstrated on several occasions that they could, despite the severe constraints under which they worked, develop and implement effective plans—such as the plan for the first national draft for military service since the Civil War.[26] To fully understand the lack of American military preparedness in 1917, one must look to the White House.

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Woodrow Wilson's failure to develop a coherent grand strategy and reluctance to communicate with his generals was a more proximate and more significant cause of the U.S. Army's troubled entrance into World War I. An analysis of the correspondence of Brigadier General Tasker H. Bliss, who led the army through the opening months of the American intervention in World War I, demonstrates the extent to which Wilson's failings impeded the army's mobilization efforts. Although Bliss served in early 1917 as the Assistant Chief of Staff, he is a better source for insights into the activities of the highest levels of the U.S. Army as it entered the war than Major General Hugh L. Scott, the Chief of Staff. Scott was a talented and dedicated soldier in his prime, but both his effectiveness as a leader and his presence of mind faded as he grew older. As Chief of Staff, he was known for falling asleep in meetings, and occasionally for launching into prolonged lectures about such matters as the meaning of the feathers in Native American headdresses.[27] Scott proved his inability to remain an engaged and relevant voice in the War Department by remarking to an advisor in the fall of 1914, "Everyone is talking about the Battle of the Marne," then asking, "what happened at the Battle of the Marne anyway?"[28] Bliss was much more engaged with the war and its implications for the U.S. Army, and became the officer responsible for planning and organizing the U.S. mobilization for war once President Wilson gave the order.[29] Thus, Bliss is the proper point of reference when examining the strategic direction provided to the U.S. Army at the beginning of its intervention in the First World War.

Thoughtful and articulate, Bliss's correspondence reveals an army paralyzed less by institutional dysfunction than by a lack of guidance and direction. The army lingered uncomfortably in the dark on such basic issues as whether or not the government would commit the nation to war, and if so, whether or not the government intended to deploy a large field army to Europe. Such insights reveal that the U.S. Army executed a slow and confused mobilization for its intervention in World War I because it lacked essential information it needed to adequately plan and prepare for war.

Woodrow Wilson's goal had long been to reshape the world order according to his principles and his perceptions of the U.S. national interest. From the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 until early 1917, Wilson believed that the best way to achieve that end would be to keep the nation out of war so that it could not only avoid wasting its power and resources on faraway battlefields, but also stand well positioned to serve as a legitimate moral arbiter of peace. He repeatedly offered to mediate an end to the war, hoping that his position as a neutral mediator would allow him to dominate the peace negotiations.[30] Wilson left few clues that suggest when he irrevocably shifted course. Some historians claim that it was in February 1917, when in rapid succession Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare and British officials disclosed the contents of the Zimmerman telegram to their American counterparts. At that point, Wilson came to the conclusion that neutrality was no longer an option, and that the best way to ensure American influence in shaping both the peace and a new world order was to intervene on the side of the Entente Powers and earn influence at the negotiating table by somehow contributing decisively to an Entente victory.[31] Others claim that although he began seriously considering American intervention at that point, he did not arrive at a firm decision until later in March 1917.[32]

Wilson's decision point was similarly unclear to his contemporaries. Recounting a meeting at the White House on February 28, Jane Addams wrote, "The President's mood was stern and far from the scholar's detachment when he told us of recent disclosures of German machinations in Mexico and announced the impossibility of any form of adjudication." Continuing, she recalled that Wilson addressed his audience that day "as to fellow pacifists to whom he was forced to confess that war had become inevitable."[33] On the other hand, in his March 20, 1917 diary account of the cabinet meeting in which Wilson had asked for advice about whether or not to go to war with Germany, Secretary of State Robert Lansing concluded that "the ten councilors of the President had spoken as one [in favor of war], and he—well, no one could be sure that he would echo the same opinion and act accordingly."[34]

Regardless of the timing of the decision, Wilson's transition from a commitment to peace to a commitment to war was

incomplete at best. By coming to the decision that the best way to shape the peace and a new world order was to intervene on the side of the Entente Powers, Wilson had settled upon a policy, not a strategy. He did not yet consider the methods of achieving that end. Accordingly, he authorized few measures to prepare for a significant military intervention in the war immediately after signing the declaration of war. Although he had authorized the General Staff to create a plan in February 1917 to implement a national draft in the event of war, the War Department did not actually execute the draft until the end of July 1917, nearly four months after Wilson went to Congress to request a declaration of war.[35]

That delay was mostly due to the fact that no one knew what the American contribution to the war would be, not even President Wilson or his Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker. A memorandum that Bliss had written for the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of War on March 27, 1917 requesting the War College Division of the General Staff be relieved of all duties that did not pertain to "raising and organizing additional troops, and plans for National Defense" was returned to his desk with a margin note that indicated that Baker did not feel the time was right to address the issue with the president.[36] Another memorandum summarizing a War College Division study of options of where to deploy American ground forces in Europe and how many troops and time each option would require—fourteen months after completion of training to ship 1,000,000 men and equipment to the Western Front or ten months after completion of training to ship 500,000 men and equipment to operate against Austria-Hungary from Macedonia—also went unanswered. In the same document, Bliss, who was only one month away from ascending to Acting Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army and leading its mobilization for war, predicted that the primary American contributions to the war effort would be naval and economic until 1919.[37] Two long months passed between the drafting of that memorandum and Wilson's reluctant approval of plans to commit an American field army to the Western Front.[38]

In the meantime, lacking clear guidance on what was to be expected of American ground forces in the war, the army's mobilization stalled. It could not make basic decisions about how many training camps to build, where to site the camps, and

how much war materiel to purchase or produce in the absence of a clearly defined strategic construct in which the army had a distinct role. Such decisions necessarily depended upon a resolution on the size of the army, which in turn depended upon decisions about the type, location, and scope of operations the army would undertake during the war.

Even a month after the United States declared war on Germany, Tasker Bliss expressed confusion on all of these issues. "The only hope," he wrote, "of having this work [the construction of training camps needed to train new recruits and draftees] finished in time is to have the department commanders instructed immediately by wire to make and report the selections for the necessary camp sites." Bliss went on to accurately note, however, that the department commanders "cannot do this until the War Department plans are approved and due announcement made."[39] Bliss's letter vented a rising sense of frustration over his inability to complete and set into motion plans for mobilization until he could discern how many troops the army needed to organize, train, equip, and ship. The absence of a firm decision rendered impossible any meaningful progress in mobilization during the first few months of the American war effort.

Wilson's failure to form a complete strategy would have caused little harm if he had allowed others to create contingency plans for wartime mobilization, ready to be executed upon the president's command when he decided to go to war. But he did not allow any such contingency planning. He considered such planning to be tantamount to strategic decision-making, which Wilson reserved exclusively as his own prerogative. Wilson had a highly centralized executive style, particularly with regard to foreign policy. He consulted with and sought advice from his cabinet secretaries and his inner circle, but frequently made significant decisions in varying degrees of solitude and secrecy. From the outbreak of war in August 1914 until the American declaration of war in April 1917, neither the civilian Secretaries of War and the Navy nor their uniformed service chiefs played a significant role in Wilson's decisions about American neutrality and belligerency.[40]

The president became enraged in 1915 after reading an article in the *Baltimore Sun* that claimed the General Staff was considering plans for offensive operations against Germany.

Wilson believed that any such planning—which was exactly the type of planning the General Staff was designed for—jeopardized the American position as a neutral power and a potential arbiter of peace. His message to the War Department and the General Staff was clear: no plans were to be made for offensive warfare against Germany in Europe. As a result, the only war plans the General Staff had developed by the end of 1916 were far-fetched schemes to defend New York City from a British attack, defend the Atlantic seaboard from a German invasion, and to repel a similar Japanese invasion of the west coast. Consequently, when Wilson decided for war in 1917, no plans were ready for immediate execution, no resources or infrastructure to support a mass mobilization were prepositioned for immediate use, and the army lacked a strategic framework to guide its mobilization and preparation for war.[41]

President Wilson could have mitigated, to some extent, this glaring shortcoming by communicating effectively with those who would lead the American war effort when he began to seriously consider entering the war in February 1917. But other than authorizing the War Department to create a plan for a national draft in the event of war, Wilson left senior military leaders ignorant of his intentions and deliberations over whether or not to enter the war. The Chief of Staff and Assistant Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army—upon whose shoulders the task of raising, equipping, training, and deploying the army for war would fall—devoted much of their time and effort in February 1917 to planning and coordinating inaugural festivities after they were assigned to serve as the grand marshal and chief of staff, respectively, of the presidential inauguration parade committee.[42] Once complete, analyzing and adjudicating a heated and contentious debate over the future of the Department of Natural and Experimental Philosophy at the United States Military Academy at West Point was the one piece of business that took up the most correspondence, and presumably the most time and energy, of Assistant Chief of Staff Tasker H. Bliss.[43]

Only in the middle of March 1917 did Bliss become increasingly preoccupied with preparations for war. Yet even then his language remained couched, reflecting the views of a thoughtful officer who was not sure in which direction he was being led. On March 20, 1917, while weighing in on a debate

over policies for personnel assignments, he wrote, "I think, therefore, that whenever conditions are such that we are warranted in saying that war is threatening, movements to and from foreign service (except under advice of medical officers) should be temporarily suspended."[44] Less than two weeks before Woodrow Wilson rode down Pennsylvania Avenue to ask Congress to declare war against Germany, the officer who would soon be responsible for the mobilization, training, and equipping of the U.S. Army as it entered World War I used the clause "whenever conditions are such that we are warranted in saying that war is threatening" as though such conditions would arise in the distant future. Bliss had no idea that on the very day he wrote that letter, Wilson convened a cabinet meeting to discuss the merits of calling a special session of Congress to request a declaration of war against Germany, and that the cabinet had unanimously advised for war.[45]

Wilson deliberately excluded the high command of the U.S. Army from his decision-making process. He kept even the most senior officers utterly in the dark as to his intentions and deliberations, which ultimately produced only a policy, not a complete and coherent grand strategy. As a result, when the United States finally entered the conflict, its army was totally unprepared for the test it faced. Due to a lack of any guidance or information and a prohibition on drafting relevant contingency plans, the army was not prepared to mobilize, equip, train, and deploy its forces. The Chief of Staff was not in a position to direct his staff to come up with even the vaguest of operational plans until March 27, 1917, just five days before Wilson delivered his war message to Congress.[46] Only one day earlier, Bliss, with an understandable note of exasperation, wrote in a personal letter to a friend, "You can imagine the pressure under which we are working here in the War Department just now." He added, "I do not know whether the work will result in any good or not . . . we will all be wiser in a few days than we are now."[47]

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While the U.S. Army was small, underequipped, and institutionally dysfunctional on the eve of war, Wilson's failure to develop a grand strategy and communicate effectively with senior military leaders did considerably more damage to the

army's readiness to enter the war. It is undeniable that the problems created by both institutional resistance to the Root reforms and the Congressional resistance they inspired sharply limited the army's ability to plan and prepare for war. But Wilson's actions rendered impossible any such planning and preparation. Dysfunction and politics degraded readiness, but Wilson's shortcomings as a grand strategist eliminated the possibility of any degree of readiness. Although the U.S. Army and Congress did much to set conditions that could allow a nearly blind stumble into the harsh realities of mass industrialized warfare on the Western Front, Wilson guaranteed it.

Understanding the U.S. Army's troubled entrance into World War I from this perspective offers an interesting avenue for reassessing the American war effort as we approach its centenary. Much went wrong in 1917 and early 1918. Training camp construction ran over schedule. Training programs were rushed, hasty, and often inadequate. A critical shortage of shipping severely limited efforts to deploy troops to Europe. Ineffective management of raw materials, war materiel, and the railroads transporting them east almost brought the American war effort to a grinding halt before it even began. And on the battlefield, the army's performance was uneven until the final weeks of the war. Army officers did not even begin to put into place many of the solutions to these problems until the spring of 1918.[48] As with the U.S. Army's lack of readiness to enter the war, many scholars who have considered problems related to the army's performance during the war ascribe them to complexities of scale and a lack of familiarity with fully industrialized warfare. However, that line of interpretation may overlook Woodrow Wilson's shortcomings as a grand strategist. Strategy and operations are inextricably linked, and failures in the former invariably produce major problems in the latter.

Notes

[1] Despite its industrial capacity, the United States borrowed prodigiously from its allies in order to equip its army—and its allies were only too happy to lend if it meant relieving some of the shipping burden so that the United States could ship more troops to Europe. In 1918, only 6% of the artillery shells fired by the Entente Powers on the Western Front were American-made; almost all of the light and medium field artillery pieces in the AEF were French or British pieces; only 1,216 of the AEF's 6,287 airplanes were American-

made. Of major weaponry, France and Britain provided 3,692 pieces of field artillery, 140 pieces of railroad artillery, 2,658 caissons, 1,664 trench mortars, 40,884 automatic weapons, 253 tanks, and 5,142 airplanes. As General John J. Pershing once quipped, "We were literally beggars as to every important weapon, except the rifle." See Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 233; and David R. Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 142-143. On Pershing's open-warfare doctrine, see Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War*, 119-122; and Mark E. Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10-58.

[2] For accounts of the St. Mihiel offensive—the first campaign of an independent American field army on the Western Front—see Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End all Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, 1998 edition (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 262-284; and Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War*, 298-322.

[3] The narrative of the American war effort during the First World War has long been overly influenced by the triumphalist accounts of its architects. The major memoirs of the American war effort disagree significantly over the source of any difficulties that arose in 1917-1918, but largely agree that the American intervention was an unqualified military success that ensured victory for the Entente Powers. These accounts include John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931); James G. Harbord, *Leaves from a War Diary* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1925); James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1936); and Peyton C. March, *The Nation at War* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1932). Their accounts were subject to some revision by a subsequent generation of professionally-trained historians who acknowledged and probed flaws and shortcomings in the American war effort in 1917-1918, but whose assessments of the American military to the larger allied war effort remain heavily influenced by the traditional triumphalist narrative. See Harvey A. DeWeerd, *President Wilson Fights His War: World War I and the American Intervention* (New York: MacMillan, 1968); and Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End all Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, 1998 edition (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), which was originally published by Oxford University Press in 1968. More recent scholarship has done much to complicate that assessment. Donald Smythe provides a nuanced look at John J. Pershing's command of the AEF in Donald Smythe, *Pershing: General of the Armies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986). David F. Trask argues that it was not the quality of the American military effort, but the effect the American intervention had on both German decision-making and aggregate allied military strength in 1918 that decisively shaped the outcome of the war—see David F. Trask, *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1993). Mark E. Grotelueschen provides an excellent analysis of the nature and consequences of problematic AEF tactical doctrine—see Mark E. Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The debate, however, is far from resolved, as revealed in a new narrative that leans more strongly toward Coffman's interpretation in David R. Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[4] Coffman, *The War to End all Wars* and Trask, *The AEF and Coalition Warmaking*.

[5] Timothy K. Nenninger, "American Military Effectiveness in the First World War," in *Military Effectiveness*, Volume I: *The First World War*, eds. Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray (Boston, MA: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 116-156 and Groteluesch en, *The AEF Way of War*.

[6] Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, Enlarged edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), chapters 15-16. Most recently, David R. Woodward has echoed this assessment, arguing that "the inability of America to wage modern war in 1917 was more a result of the unrealistic nature of the Army Reorganization Bill, signed into law by the President on July 3, 1916, which provided for a leisurely modernization of the army over a five-year period and was unrelated to waging war in Europe." See Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War*, 141.

[7] See B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd revised edition (New York: Praeger, 1967), 335-336.

[8] Woodrow Wilson's role in deciding for and managing the American intervention in World War I has long been scrutinized. When neo-classical realism was heavily in vogue, Wilson was criticized for having been naïve and for failing to adhere to realist principles—see Edward H. Buehrig, *Woodrow Wilson and the Balance of Power* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1955) and Robert Endicott Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953). That criticism is echoed in Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1991). A related criticism appears in Robert W. Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War: Reconsidering America's Neutrality* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2007), in which Tucker argues that Wilson's policy of neutrality was so flawed that it ultimately produced the opposite of its intended result, pulling the United States into the war. John A. Thompson also points to flaws in Wilson's policies and strategy throughout World War I in John A. Thompson, "More Tactics than Strategy: Wilson and World War I, 1914-1919," in *Artists of Power: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Their Enduring Impact on U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. William N. Tilchin and Charles E. Neu (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 95-115. Thompson argues that Wilson's different policies related to the war from 1914-1919 were not different means to the same end, but different ends based on changing circumstances, both external and internal. This article generally agrees with the faults that Tucker and Thompson have found in Wilson's abilities as a strategist, but more closely examines their implications for the American war effort. For a recent sympathetic view of Wilson and his strategy, see John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), chapters 17-19.

[9] The most significant aspects of reform focused on the organization of the War Department and the addition of a new General Staff Corps, the construction and implementation of a rationalized and tiered educational system. On the War Department and the General Staff, see especially James E. Hewes, Jr., *From Root to McNamara, Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1975), 1-21, and James L. Abrahamson, *America Arms for a New Century: The Making of a Great Military Power* (New York: Free Press, 1981). On reform in military education, see Timothy K. Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881-1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College* (Carlisle Barracks, PA:

The Alumni Association of the U.S. Army War College, 1983), and T.R. Brereton, *Educating the U.S. Army: Arthur L. Wagner and Reform, 1875-1905* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

[10] Daniel Beaver emphasizes continuity as well as change—see Daniel R. Beaver, *Modernizing the American War Department: Change and Continuity in a Turbulent Era, 1885-1920* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006). This theme also comes across strongly in Jason Patrick Clark, "The Many Faces of Reform: Military Progressivism in the U.S. Army, 1866-1916" (PhD diss., Duke University, 2009).

[11] The best treatment of the U.S. Army up to the late-nineteenth century is Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[12] Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession and the Making of a Vast Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 17-179. See also Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 128-129, and Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 111-127.

[13] Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press, 1977). See also Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 164-195.

[14] The concept is best summarized in Daniel T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 1-7.

[15] Coffman, *The Old Army*, 215-286; Nenninger, *The Leavenworth Schools*, 3-7 and 21-31; Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 273-281; Abrahamson, *America Arms for a New Century*, 19-62; and Brereton, *Educating the U.S. Army*, 30-46.

[16] Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1994), 103-296; David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 1981), 145-422; Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 305-309; Edward M. Coffman, *The Hilt of the Sword: The Career of Peyton C. March* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 12-13.

[17] General Orders No. 155, Adjutant General's Office, November 27, 1901, File AWC 275, Box 2, Entry 295, RG 165, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as NARA II); Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 62-69; Otto Nelson, Jr., *National Security and the General Staff* (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), 44-60; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 6-12; and Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 319-320.

[18] Beaver, *Modernizing the American War Department*, 13-15 and 21-26; Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 5-9; and Nelson, *National Security and the General Staff*, 14-22.

[19] Institutional culture is the "habitual practices, default programs, hidden assumptions, and unreflected cognitive frames" that constitute a "repertoire . . . of habits, skills, and styles" which serve to inform decisions and behavior of and within an organization established for political or social purposes. It is influenced by the broader culture of the society the institution serves, and is transmittable within the institution from generation to generation through socialization, indoctrination, teaching, imitation, actions, and symbols. This definition is derived from Wayne E. Lee, "Warfare and Culture," in *Warfare and Culture in World History*, ed. Wayne E. Lee (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 3; and Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture*

and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 2. The first quotation appears in both; the second is taken from the former.
[20] Tasker H. Bliss, "Memorandum," August 3, 1903, File AWC 1147, Box 1, Entry 294, RG 165, NARA II. Underlines are in the original.
[21] Samuel Crowther, "Don't Fear to Attempt a Thing Just Because it Looks Big," *American Magazine*, January 1922, 16.
[22] Hewes, *From Root to McNamara*, 10-50; Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 326-341.
[23] Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 350-353; Coffman, *The War to End all Wars*, 23.
[24] Tasker H. Bliss, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, March 26, 1917, Volume 211, Tasker H. Bliss Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as LC).
[25] Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 34.
[26] Coffman, *The War to End all Wars*, 24-25. See also Tasker H. Bliss, Memorandum, March 31, 1917, and Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, March 31, 1917, Volume 211, Tasker H. Bliss Papers, LC; and Tasker H. Bliss, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, May 8, 1917, Volume 212, Tasker H. Bliss Papers, LC.
[27] See Coffman, *The Hilt of the Sword*, 40; and Robert H. Ferrell, *Collapse at Meuse-Argonne: The Failure of the Missouri-Kansas Division* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 3.
[28] Quoted in David R. Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 33. Officials in the Wilson administration found it difficult to take Scott seriously. The Secretary of the Interior dubbed Scott "Mars and Morpheus all in one" after he slept through a Council of National Defense meeting. See Franklin Knight Lane to George Whitfield Lane, February 16, 1917, in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 41, ed. Arthur S. Link et. al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 239. Hereafter, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* are cited as *PWW*.
[29] Bliss's direction of the mobilization effort is well documented in volumes 212-218, Tasker H. Bliss Papers, LC.
[30] See Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "Democracy, Peace, and World Order," in *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace*, ed. John Milton Cooper, Jr. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 226; Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, *Decisions for War, 1914-1917* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216-222. Wilson suggested as much to Jane Addams in late February 1917—see *PWW*, vol. 41, 305n3.
[31] Trask, *The AEF & Coalition Warmaking, 1917-1918*, 2.
[32] Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less than War: A New History of America's Entry into World War I* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2011), 248-282.
[33] Quoted in *PWW*, vol. 41, 305n3.
[34] Robert Lansing, "Memorandum of the Cabinet Meeting," March 20, 1917, *PWW*, vol. 41, 444.
[35] See Coffman, *The War to End All Wars*, 24-28.
[36] Tasker H. Bliss, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, March 27, 1917, Volume 211, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[37] Tasker H. Bliss, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, March 31, 1917, Volume 211, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[38] Trask, *The AEF & Coalition Warmaking*, 6-7.

[39] Tasker H. Bliss, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, May 9, 1917, Volume 212, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[40] Hamilton and Herwig, *Decisions for War*, 204-206.
[41] David R. Woodward, *Trial by Friendship: Anglo-American Relations, 1917-1918* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press), 18-19.
[42] Hugh L. Scott to Tasker H. Bliss, March 6, 1917, Volume 210, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[43] See especially Bliss to John Biddle March 1, 1917; Tasker H. Bliss to William B. Gordon, March 2, 1917; Tasker H. Bliss to John Biddle, March 3, 1917; Tasker H. Bliss to Biddle March 10, 1917; and Tasker H. Bliss to J.P. Jervey, March 13, 1917, Volume 210, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[44] Tasker H. Bliss, Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, March 20, 1917, Volume 210, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[45] Robert Lansing, "Memorandum of the Cabinet Meeting," March 20, 1917, *PWW*, vol. 41, 436-444; and Josephus Daniels, Diary Entry, March 20, 1917, *PWW*, vol. 41, 444-445.
[46] Hugh Scott to Joseph E. Kuhn, March 27, 1917, Volume 210, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[47] Tasker H. Bliss to J.W. Heard, March 26, 1917, Volume 210, Tasker Bliss Papers, LC.
[48] On such problems, see Phyllis A. Zimmerman, *The Neck of the Bottle: George W. Goethals and the Reorganization of the U.S. Army Supply System, 1917-1918* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 9-43; and Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War*, 123-155. On tactical and operational difficulties, and attempts to mitigate them them, see Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*.

The "Paranoid Style" in the Pacific Theater: Government Cover-Ups, Conspiracy Theory, and War with Japan and Korea

Walter E. Grunden
Bowling Green State University

Abstract
This essay examines three conspiracy theories that emerged from the Pacific War, including: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's alleged foreknowledge of the attack on Pearl Harbor; Japan's supposed development and test of a nuclear weapon in Korea; and charges that the United States exploited former members of Japan's notorious Unit 731 in a covert biological warfare campaign conducted during the Korean War. The essay presents an analysis of each case based upon a synthesis of recently developed methodological approaches and argues that these conspiracy theories endure because they have a particular political and socio-cultural value among those who promote them.

Introduction

FDR knew the attack on Pearl Harbor was imminent but did nothing to stop it. The Japanese were successful in developing their own atomic bomb, but concealed this fact from the world in order to preserve their "nuclear victim" status after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Americans employed members of Japan's notorious Unit 731 to conduct a biological warfare campaign in the Korean War. These are three of the most provocative and enduring conspiracy theories to emerge from the Pacific Theater in the wars against Japan and Korea. But what makes them so compelling, and why do they continue to live on, despite the absence of any substantive evidence to support them? This essay examines the origins and evolution of each of these

conspiracy theories and applies a synthesis of recently developed analytical methods to interpret their significance. The essay argues that each possesses a particular political and socio-cultural value that continues to give them life.

Until recently, most historians have eschewed the study of conspiracy theories. But these are now no longer the exclusive purview of the tabloid press, nor are they confined to dark corners of the Internet. In recent years a number of reputable scholars have critically examined the historical, political, and socio-cultural roles of conspiracy theories in the United States, and academic literature on the subject has begun to proliferate across disciplines.[1] Conspiracy theory has also been taken up by serious journalists.[2] Books on specific conspiracy theories, such as the Kennedy assassinations, the Roswell aliens, and 9/11, are far more voluminous, but for good reason, most academics have tended to avoid these. This genre, occupied predominantly by freelance journalists and amateur writers and researchers, unfortunately, has tended to dominate the literature in this subfield making serious study of such subjects problematic for even the most interested and sober scholars. But given the proliferation of "historical noise" generated by the Internet, cable-television, and various social media, now more than ever, historians have a professional responsibility to offer correctives to erroneous narratives, particularly when they possess the potential to cause actual political harm. The case studies presented in the following essay are worthy of serious examination for their gravity in international relations and politics as well as for their contested socio-cultural meanings.

Toward an Analytical Methodology for Interpreting Conspiracy Theory

> What distinguishes the paranoid style is not, then, the absence of verifiable facts…but rather the curious leap in imagination that is always made at some critical point in the recital of events.[3]
>
> -Richard Hofstadter, 1964

Although conspiracy theories of all varieties have existed throughout US history, it was perhaps only in the 1960s that

academics began to treat the subject matter seriously. The political turmoil of the McCarthy era in the 1950s, when anti-Communist paranoia ran roughshod over the American landscape, arguably set the stage for what followed. The early 1960s proved to be even more turbulent, if not politically, then certainly socially, with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement, and the formative years of the Counter-Culture Movement, much of which was fueled by opposition to the expanding role of the US military in the war in Vietnam, which grew into a movement of its own. The assassination of President John. F. Kennedy on 22 November 1963, a singularly traumatic event for the nation, opened a virtual Pandora's Box of political and socio-cultural paranoia and conspiracy musing that arguably pervades American culture to this day.

It was in this tumultuous atmosphere that the former DeWitt Clinton Professor of American History at Columbia University, Richard Hofstadter, published "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," which became one of the most seminal essays on conspiracy theory yet written.[4] Historian David Brion Davis described Hofstadter as "one of the first scholars to draw attention to the periodic obsession with conspiracy and subversion in American political life."[5] Hofstadter's essay would eventually inspire an entire sub-genre of academic inquiry, but the momentum was slow to build. The next critical contribution came in 1972, when Karl R. Popper, the philosopher of science who introduced such concepts as "critical rationalism" and "falsifiability," published "The Conspiracy Theory of Society," in which he presented an important critique of conspiracy theories. One of Popper's key observations was that "*a conspiracy never – or 'hardly ever' – turns out in the way that is intended*."[6] These essays by Hofstadter and Popper helped to legitimize an emerging subject of study that heretofore had been eschewed by academics.

Yet, the study of conspiracy theory arguably did not achieve a level of acceptability in academia until well after the Watergate scandal was exposed in 1972, or even after the Iran-Contra affair was made public in 1985. It was not until, perhaps, after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 that scholars began to seriously consider conspiracy theory a subject of appropriate inquiry. But academic interest remained minimal. The tragic events of 11

September 2001 and the attendant conspiracy theories that it engendered, however, set into motion political and cultural waves of inquiry that could not be ignored. It was, perhaps, this shared national trauma that opened the iron gates of academic interest, and the study of conspiracy theory finally met with more approval. But a sound methodology for studying conspiracy theory did not yet exist.

Today, that may no longer be the case. A number of recent studies have presented a variety of ways to approach the study of conspiracy theories to glean from them their historical, political, and socio-cultural significance. From the recent works of Jesse Walker and Cass. R. Sunstein, among others, we may begin to synthesize something of an analytical methodology for examining conspiracy theories. Author Jesse Walker presents "five primal myth" categories that underlie conspiracy folklore.[7] These include the rather self-explanatory paradigms of the "Enemy Outside," the "Enemy Within," the "Enemy Above," and the "Enemy Below."[8] Each of these types situates the conspiratorial forces at play relative to the ostensibly targeted individual or general public.[9] One particularly valuable contribution of Walker's work is that it successfully challenges Hofstadter's thesis that political paranoia and conspiratorial thinking are the "preferred style only of *minority* movements" which tend to have "a greater affinity for bad causes than good."[10] Walker aptly demonstrates that paranoid conspiracies are not limited to "fringe" elements in society, but that "educated elites have conspiracy theories too." In his explication of "moral panic," for example, Walker illustrates how "the center sometimes embraces en masse ideas that are no less paranoid than the views of the fringe."[11]

Harvard Law School Professor Cass R. Sunstein explains the evolution of conspiracy theories as a series of "cascades," including: the Role of Information, the Role of Reputation, the Role of Availability, the Role of Emotions, Group Polarization, and Selection Effects.[12] In the first, the quality and quantity of information a person possesses may determine the extent to which one is able to refute allegations of a conspiracy. Unable to dismiss the premise, a person may acquiesce and become part of an informational cascade. Those with "low thresholds" for acceptance, that is, a *willingness to believe*, initiate the cascade.

Sunstein describes the "Role of Reputation" as something akin to peer pressure or a herd mentality, wherein "people profess belief in a conspiracy theory, or at least suppress their doubts, because they seek to curry favor or to avoid disfavor."[13] In the third type, "a particular event initiates a cascade" and acts as a trigger for public concern or fear. Such events are typically catastrophic or traumatizing in nature, such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11, for which people immediately seek answers and explanations. Emotions play a significant role in accelerating the growth of a conspiracy theory from speculation to rumor to full blown conspiratorial scenario, much as an original idea or message is contorted in the child's game of "telephone." Group Polarization may be described as the "echo chamber" effect, wherein people begin to side with those who agree with or support their own views. When these are contested by non-believers, individuals tend to become more hardened in their own beliefs. Finally, "Selection Effects" result in individuals of a particular viewpoint isolating themselves into communities exclusively sharing their belief systems.[14]

Finally, Joseph E. Uscinski and Joseph M. Parent, both political scientists from the University of Miami, present six approaches for "evaluating how true a particular conspiracy theory might be," including: Occam's razor, falsifiability, the "Worst Intentions" test, the *Cui Bono* test, the "Eternal Recurrence of the Same" test, and the "Impartial Spectator" test.[15] The first, Occam's razor, also known as the "parsimony principle," essentially states that the simplest explanation is the most likely. Secondly, "falsifiability" refers us back to Popper but is defined by Uscinski and Parent thusly: "There must be some evidence that could show that the theory is wrong… [Otherwise] Ideas that rest entirely on faith and cannot be feasibly falsified are religion."[16] The "Worst Intentions" test, in part, seeks to ascribe motive to the conspiratorial actors and considers the plot within the context of past behavior. (e.g. Would X behave in such a way if there is no precedent for X ever having behaved in such a way?) The *Cui Bono* test asks "Who benefits?" Determining who profits from the conspiracy should lead us to the conspirators themselves. The "Eternal Recurrence of the Same" test asks if something similar has ever happened before. Finally, the "Impartial Spectator" test raises the objectivity issue. How

would someone with no stake in the game evaluate the theory? Limitations of space prevent us from running each of these case studies through all of the steps described above, but they give us plenty of tools with which to examine and better contextualize them. Through a synthesis of these questions, approaches, and paradigms, we can begin to forge something of an analytical methodology by which we may better understand the meaning and significance of each particular conspiracy theory.

Case Study #1: FDR and the Attack on Pearl Harbor

> Behind this artfully created silence, the American people have been deprived of the opportunity to determine the real responsibility for the crime – for crime it was that was committed against the nation in that fateful episode.[17]
>
> -John T. Flynn, 1944

The Pearl Harbor conspiracy theory can be said to have unfolded in four phases.[18] The first phase arguably began even before the attack on 7 December 1941 and laid the foundation for what was to emerge as the grand theory. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had numerous enemies in the Republican Party who despised him not only for his popularity but also suspected he was a dictator in the making, that is, an "American Hitler" waiting to rise. This sentiment was particularly pronounced on the far right. Journalist and professional Roosevelt critic, John T. Flynn, for example, turned into an ardent antiwar activist in the late 1930s as war grew imminent in Europe, and the debate over intervention vs. neutrality provided him a political platform from which to launch his crusade against Roosevelt. Together with a number of like-minded anti-intervention individuals from both the right and left, in 1938, Flynn helped to organize the "Keep America Out of War Congress," which emerged in August 1940 as the "America First Committee" (AFC). The AFC claimed an eclectic membership, ranging from well-known intellectuals, novelists, and poets, such as Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos, and the actress Lillian Gish, to war heroes, including World War I ace Eddie Rickenbacker. Among the AFC celebrities perhaps none was more famous than Charles Lindbergh, the popular

aviator known for making the first successful trans-Atlantic solo flight.[19]

The America First movement gained significant political traction with the American people for its strong anti-interventionist stance and support of isolationism and neutrality, but a darker side of the movement's leadership was revealed in two major speeches given in late 1941. In September, Lindbergh gave a speech in Des Moines, Iowa in which he indicted the Roosevelt administration for collaborating with the British and "Jewish groups" in pressing for war in Europe. At an AFC rally in Chicago in December, Flynn also flagrantly accused the Roosevelt administration of conspiring to embroil the US in a foreign war, though he was more restrained about revealing his own anti-Semitism. Thus, when the attack came on 7 December, Lindbergh, Flynn, and their AFC followers had only to connect the dots in order to see how Roosevelt had maneuvered the country into war "through the back door" by goading Japan into attacking the US at Pearl Harbor.[20]

To paraphrase Alvin D. Coox, the late doyen of Japanese military history, the smoke had barely cleared from the aftermath of the attack when partisan accusations of "incompetence" followed by "conspiracy" began to be leveled at President Roosevelt and his inner circle of high ranking advisors.[21] Such charges were politically motivated from the start, and Flynn and his allies in the Republican Party became determined to make the Pearl Harbor debacle a central campaign issue in the next presidential election. In October 1944, Flynn published an accusatory tract entitled, *The Truth about Pearl Harbor*, in which he challenged the premises upon which Roosevelt took the nation to war against Japan. He argued that Roosevelt had maneuvered the Japanese into war with an "ultimatum" presented by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and he attempted to exonerate Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lieutenant General Walter Short, the US military commanders responsible for the defense of Hawai'i and Pearl Harbor, whom the presidentially appointed Roberts Commission had found guilty of dereliction of duty in January 1942. Flynn argued Roosevelt had purposefully kept them uninformed of a pending Japanese attack and then scapegoated them.[22]

Even the passing of President Roosevelt on 12 April 1945 did not silence his critics. What may be considered the second phase in the development of the Pearl Harbor conspiracy theory began in the immediate postwar era. In 1947, George Morgenstern, a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, published *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War*, in which he criticized the administration for its partisan investigations of the Pearl Harbor affair that were conducted in the wake of the attack by officers in the army and navy who were either sympathetic to the administration or otherwise influenced by it. Morgenstern also implied that the administration had similarly controlled investigations undertaken by Congress through political pressure, censorship, and the need for secrecy during wartime.[23] In 1948, historian Charles A. Beard published *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941*, in which he accused Roosevelt of purposefully misleading the American public about his foreign policy in the Pacific and of superseding his constitutional authority in conducting secret diplomatic maneuvers that forced Japan into attacking the United States.[24] And, in 1952, historian Charles Tansill published *Back Door to War*, a 600-plus page tome in which he meticulously outlined Roosevelt's foreign policy in East Asia and the Pacific and persuasively demonstrated how the president "maneuvered" Japan into "firing the first shot at Pearl Harbor."[25]

Into this chorus of academic critiques of Roosevelt's foreign policy was added the collection of essays, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, published in 1953 and edited by former Columbia University historian and AFC member, Harry Elmer Barnes, an old crony of Flynn dating back to the formative days of the America First movement.[26] In this and subsequent works, Barnes superseded previous authors' accusations by introducing the "triple conspiracy" angle to the Pearl Harbor narrative: not only had Roosevelt maneuvered the Japanese into war, he had "also been warned of almost the exact hour and place of the supposed surprise attack, and had decided not to pass the warning on lest defensive measures led to the attack being aborted and his plan foiled."[27] Now, the conspiracy theorists alleged, Roosevelt was not only guilty of maneuvering Japan into war, but he knew when and where the attack would come and did nothing to stop it. This new aspect of the conspiracy narrative

thus transformed Roosevelt from a deceitful foreign policy actor into an outright traitor who sacrificed American lives for his own policy goals.[28]

The biggest problem for Barnes and his fellow conspiracy theorists, however, was the lack of evidence to indict Roosevelt. Despite all of the official investigations and academic research conducted to this point, there remained no smoking gun. Flynn continued his crusade against the Roosevelt administration during the 1950s, but his attention now turned to the insidious influence of communism. (Roosevelt was apparently a fellow traveler too.) Flynn became an enthusiastic supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy and wrote a series of anti-communist screeds until his death in 1964. Harry Elmer Barnes, the other major progenitor of the original Pearl Harbor conspiracy theory, continued to assail the prevailing official narrative of the Pearl Harbor affair but also went on to write his own revisionist history of World War II, which not only situated the Allies as the aggressors but offered a more sympathetic view of Germany and the rise of Hitler. Ultimately, Barnes devolved from Nazi sympathizer to outright Holocaust denier, which sent a chill through the conspiracy theory community and for a time ended the crusade against Roosevelt and further investigations into the Pearl Harbor affair.[29]

The third phase in the evolution of the Pearl Harbor conspiracy theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. As historian Kathryn Olmsted observes, this generation of writers moved beyond the usual arguments over Roosevelt's foreign policy and, instead, focused more on the "consistent pattern of deceit by the federal government."[30] Among the first to publish in this round was Bruce R. Bartlett, described as a "Washington-based writer and political consultant" who, it should be noted, also served on the congressional staffs of prominent Republicans. Bartlett's book, *Cover-Up: The Politics of Pearl Harbor*, purported to fill in some of the critical "gaps" in the Pearl Harbor narrative, identified other gaps that still existed, and blamed Roosevelt for the rise of the "Communist threat" and nearly every other foreign policy disaster since World War II, including the Korean War, the Cold War, and Vietnam. The dust-jacket synopsis of the book promised to expose "the often ugly

efforts of Roosevelt and his cronies to suppress the facts" and betrayed the author's decidedly partisan tone, stating:

> For years the 'court historians' and the media have sought to whitewash Roosevelt's pivotal contribution to the foreign policy that has brought us to where we are today, confused about our role in the world, and perhaps, on the brink of disaster. This important work penetrates the historical blackout. How will those who have lavished so much attention on Nixon's cover-up deal with this challenge to their own?"[31]

The next major work to garner significant attention in the third phase was John Toland's *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath*, published in 1982.[32] As a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist, Toland might have been expected to produce a more objective account than Bartlett, who made no effort to conceal his partisanship. Toland's new angle on the Pearl Harbor controversy was that Dutch intelligence sources revealed to Washington that they had intercepted details about an impending attack, but the Roosevelt administration indicated that it was already aware of the disposition of the enemy fleet. Also central to Toland's narrative was the testimony of Robert Ogg, an intelligence officer serving in the US Navy in San Francisco at the time of the attack, who claimed he had picked up radio transmissions from the approaching Japanese carrier force and was able to plot their course toward Hawai'i. As Aaronovitch notes, Toland built the bulk of his 366-page history of the Pearl Harbor attack and his indictment of Roosevelt around Ogg's testimony, which, incidentally, directly contradicted Japanese sources that stated the attacking fleet had disabled all of its radios and left their operators in Japan to assure radio silence.[33] Like Bartlett, Toland also sought to blame Roosevelt for the present chaotic state of the world – as well as for all the deaths incurred as a result of the Pacific War, including those of the Japanese.[34] To some scholars, Toland's *Infamy* was poor history at best and bordered on an ad hominem attack on Roosevelt.[35]

But the debate was far from over. More books on Pearl Harbor continued to be published throughout the 1980s,[36] and the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the attack in

1991 revived popular interest in the subject resulting in yet another spate of new publications.[37] But in the year 2000, journalist Robert B. Stinnett initiated what may be considered the fourth phase in the Pearl Harbor conspiracy theory debate with his book *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor*. In the Preface to this book, Stinnett declared, "My sole purpose is to uncover the true story of events leading up to the devastating attack… and to document that it was not a surprise to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and many of his top military and policy advisors."[38] Stinnett reprised all of the old allegations about the Roosevelt administration, including that it maneuvered Japan into war – now made clearer with the discovery of a document outlining Roosevelt's eight-point plan for doing so – that FDR knew the attack was coming but deliberately failed to inform Kimmel and Short in Hawai'i, and that the preponderance of evidence gathered during his near two decades of research overwhelmingly pointed toward Roosevelt's guilt. The critical claim this time was that the US had cracked Japanese military codes *prior* to the attack and the Japanese carrier fleet *had not* maintained radio silence en route to Hawai'i. Stinnett unflinchingly declared historians had been wrong on this point all along and concluded, "The truth is clear: FDR knew."[39]

With nearly 70 pages of meticulously detailed endnotes – nearly a book in itself – Stinnett's *Day of Deceit* received plenty of praise from popular and well-known reviewers, including those for *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*; but academics remained skeptical. In a review for *The Journal of American History*, Justus D. Doenecke identified no fewer than eight major fallacies presented by Stinnett, including the essential fact that many of the intercepted messages that he claimed informed Roosevelt of the impending attack were not decrypted until 1945-1946, and many of these were not even translated until 1946-1947.[40] Ed Drea, a leading authority on Japanese military and intelligence history, was less charitable and plainly stated, "This is a bad book."[41] Drea pointed out Stinnett's apparent lack of understanding of the difference between intercepts, codes, and decryptions, and he reminded readers that the Imperial Japanese Navy had changed its major fleet code book (JN-25) as early as December 1940, thus US codebreakers *were not* reading secret navy transmissions. Drea

added, “This kind of publication gives military history a bad name.”[42]

Nonetheless, the Pearl Harbor attack and its attendant conspiracy theories continued to garner the attention of amateur and professional historians well into the first decades of the twenty-first century. Although considerably fewer books focused exclusively on the conspiracy theories, most at least touched on them. Writing on Pearl Harbor became something of an industry unto itself, and the conspiracy theories surrounding it have shown no signs of abating, despite the fact that after all this time no compelling evidence has surfaced to implicate Roosevelt in allowing the attack to occur.

What, then, does an examination of the Pearl Harbor conspiracy case reveal when the aforementioned analytical methods are applied? First, this case can be interpreted as a classic example of the “Enemy Above” (i.e. federal government) and “Enemy Within” (i.e. President Roosevelt) paradigms; it not only asks us to accept that Roosevelt was aware of an imminent attack, but – by extension – so were members of his cabinet and high ranking military advisors, including General George C. Marshall. As Stephen Ambrose pointed out, teams of cryptographers were also involved in deciphering Japanese diplomatic codes in 1941, and they reported to ranking officers, who, in turn, were responsible for sharing the information with the president. All would be implicated in this conspiracy.[43]

The “Role of Information” framework helps to explain why this conspiracy theory continues to attract attention and captivate popular audiences. Capable historians, such as Charles Beard certainly was, and those at least sufficiently competent to compile a vast array of apparently supportive documentation, such as Stinnett, can be very convincing when presenting their case to an even moderately informed readership. Without counter-factual evidence at a reader’s disposal, it may be difficult to dismiss these charges in their entirety. Thus, if *some* of the narrative is true, why is not all of it so? Here, the “Role of Reputation” is also significant. The word of Ivy League historians, such as Beard, carries weight. Stinnett’s self-disclosure as a sailor and veteran of the Pacific War also lends credence. Finally, one must consider the reader’s threshold for acceptance. Given the highly partisan nature of the accusations,

this conspiracy theory finds high acceptance among the right wing. But the Pearl Harbor conspiracy theory is not the exclusive domain of the right. No less than the ultra-liberal political commentator and novelist Gore Vidal also accepted and propagated it.[44] Political persuasion is not always a predictor of the "threshold test."

The "Eternal Recurrence of the Same" test may not be applicable here as nothing comparable in scale or scope ever occurred previously in US history. The "Worst Intentions" test may also be irrelevant. Critics may resort to citing incidents of Roosevelt's duplicity in politics, but one would be hard pressed to find examples of equivalence on this scale. Applying the *Cui Bono* test leads us to Roosevelt using the Pearl Harbor attack as a pretext for declaring war on Japan; but, as others have argued, Roosevelt sought to enter the war against *Germany* – Japan was not his first priority. Secondly, he need not have sacrificed the bulk of the US Pacific Fleet and some 3,000 American lives to achieve this end. Warning the military commanders at Pearl Harbor and leaving them prepared to spring a trap on the Japanese may have sufficed equally well.[45] The "parsimony principle" would lead us to conclude that the attack on Pearl Harbor unfolded as a Japanese plan to knock out the US Pacific Fleet and the American response was, most likely, the result of "human weakness, incompetence, mistakes, and opportunism, but not of provable conspiracy."[46]

Case Study #2: The Japanese Atomic-Bomb

> It is a complete lie.[47]
> -Dr. Nishina Yoshio, 1946

Like the Pearl Harbor narrative, the conspiracy theory concerning Japan's atomic bomb also developed in distinct phases. Its origin can be traced to autumn 1946, when, on 3 October the *Atlanta Constitution* newspaper published an article by free-lance journalist David Snell that laid the foundation for what would evolve into the Japanese atomic-bomb conspiracy theory. According to Snell, the Japanese were deeply engaged in research on a nuclear weapon when US bombing raids over Tokyo in early 1945 forced a relocation of their program to

northern Korea. Somewhere in a cave not too far from the northeastern coast, Japanese scientists assembled their nuclear device, then transported it to the nearby port city of Hŭngnam where it was loaded onto a ship, which then set course for an island some twenty miles away. Anchored into position by a "robot launch," the bomb was prepared for detonation. The alleged test occurred at dawn on 11 August 1945 and produced a multi-colored fire ball over 1,000 yards in diameter. Thus, Snell proclaimed in his article, "Japan had perfected and successfully tested an atomic bomb as cataclysmic as those that withered Hiroshima and Nagasaki."[48]

With the Soviet Red Army now massing for a push into Manchuria, then into Korea, Japanese scientists hurried to conceal their work. They scuttled their production facilities, destroyed documents, and attempted to flee ahead of the advancing Soviets. Despite their efforts to escape, however, several "nuclear scientists" were captured by the Soviets and were spirited away to Moscow to be interrogated and tortured for their atomic secrets. Eventually, the US military learned of the Japanese "test" but kept it under wraps. None of this information would have come to light if not for a fortuitous meeting between Snell and a former officer of the Imperial Japanese Army in Korea in 1946.

On 4 October 1946, the *Atlanta Constitution* published a follow-up story that was decidedly less provocative, revealing that Snell's informant – a *counter-intelligence officer* – had not actually witnessed the event for himself but had only heard about it second-hand from "several persons whose judgments he trusted implicitly."[49] In an accompanying article published in the same edition, Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson stated he was certain the story was untrue. Dr. Harry C. Kelly, formerly a physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and then serving in Tokyo as General MacArthur's liaison to the Japanese scientific community declared, "There is no information here to justify such a story." Japan's foremost physicist at the time, Dr. Nishina Yoshio, vehemently asserted, "It is a complete lie."[50] With nothing further to add, Snell's story faded into obscurity.

By the time Snell's article appeared, US Occupation authorities were well aware of Japan's nuclear research activities

during the war, and it was no secret that both of its military services had explored the potential of nuclear power for military purposes. The Imperial Japanese Navy was initially interested in nuclear energy to power its ships; the Imperial Japanese Army was interested in a bomb. Both called upon Japan's premier physicist, Nishina Yoshio, of the prestigious Institute for Physical and Chemical Research (*Rikagaku Kenkyūjo,* or RIKEN), to help determine the feasibility of exploiting nuclear energy for the war effort. The army tapped Nishina to conduct a feasibility study in April 1941. The navy initiated a similar study under the direction of Captain Itō Yōji at the Navy Technical Research Institute in January 1942. Captain Itō's committee of experts – of which Nishina served as chair – folded within a year, while the army went on to start an official nuclear weapons research and development project, designated "Ni-gō," in May 1943. Ni-gō scientists experimented with separating uranium isotopes using a Clusius-Dickel tube, but made little progress. The lack of uranium and other necessary resources plagued the army effort throughout. Finally, an Allied bombing raid in April 1945 destroyed several buildings at the RIKEN in Tokyo and effectively brought the project to an end. Meanwhile, from around autumn 1942, another department of the navy, the Bureau of Ships, attempted to start its own project. Led by professor of physics Arakatsu Bunsaku at Kyoto Imperial University, the project, officially designated "F-gō" in May 1943, remained understaffed and underfunded through the end of the war. It, too, suffered from critical shortages of materiel, especially uranium.[51] In the end, neither service came even remotely close to developing a nuclear weapon.

These details were publicly available and fairly well-known to an informed readership in Japan by the late 1960s and early 1970s, but they remained rather obscure in the United States.[52] Then, in January 1978, the journal *Science* published an article by staff writer Deborah Shapley who presented the story of Japan's wartime nuclear research as "news" in the guise of a provocative exposé. But Shapley merely rehashed what was by then a familiar story in Japan: that Japanese scientists had conducted a feasibility study on the exploitation of nuclear power for military purposes during the war, that some bench-level experiments in uranium enrichment had been conducted, but

these efforts failed to produce any significant amount of enriched uranium, and no atomic bomb was built.[53] Shapley insinuated, however, that the Japanese actually progressed farther than they had previously revealed and made this judgment based upon historical "materials" provided to her by Dr. Herbert F. York, Jr., then director of the Program in Science, Technology, and Public Affairs at the University of California at San Diego, and Charles Weiner, professor of history of science at MIT. Although she did not invoke the Korean angle of the story, Shapley accused the Japanese of suppressing knowledge of the subject and asked "Why the silence?"[54] So began the second phase.

Shapley's accusation of a cover-up began to gain some traction in the US when her story was picked up and repeated by no less than the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.[55] York, himself, added to the confusion when he stated for the *Post* that "this evidence is only now coming out because the Japanese conducted a cover-up of what they'd done right after the war… I don't mean it was a plot: just that everybody involved in Japan wanted to forget it when they'd lost the war."[56] But nothing could have been farther from the truth. Journalists and historians in Japan had been writing on the subject since the late 1940s, and might have done so even sooner if not for the prohibition against publishing on nuclear subjects imposed by US Occupation authorities.[57] Once the ban was lifted, a number of articles appeared in the Japanese press concerning their wartime nuclear research. Far from pulling a "curtain of silence" over the matter, as Shapley alleged, Japanese scientists in particular were rather forthcoming about their wartime research in the postwar era.[58]

The Shapley article prompted a significant backlash from the academic community with scientists and historians in the US and Japan quickly rejecting the story and rebuking Shapley and the journal *Science* for publishing such misleading statements.[59] As Weiner noted in a letter to the editor, some of the "materials" Shapley cited in her article were actually translations of Japanese accounts published as early as 1953, which Weiner himself had provided Shapley.[60] Those that York gave her similarly turned out to be nothing more than photocopies of various other publications that were also well known in Japan.[61] Shapley's miscue in turn prompted longer rejoinders from Weiner

as well as historian John W. Dower, then a professor of history at the University of California at San Diego, who went on to write some of the first in-depth scholarly essays on the subject to be published outside Japan.[62]

Apparently inspired by the more sensationalist aspects of Shapley's article and the lure of a juicy conspiracy theory, in 1985 one-time journalist turned novelist and television screenwriter Robert K. Wilcox published *Japan's Secret War*, touted by the *Library Journal* as "the first book-length work on the subject in English… [and] a story of moral and historical significance."[63] Wilcox resurrected the Snell story and devoted considerable space to exploring Japan's wartime activities in Korea, as well as an alleged spy ring involving Spanish nationals attempting to penetrate the Manhattan Project. According to Wilcox, it was in Korea that the Japanese found abundant sources of uranium bearing ores, and it was there that nuclear research efforts continued after Allied bombing raids forced their evacuation out of Tokyo. The port city of Hŭngnam was the most logical site for the relocated nuclear weapons project. Not only was it one of the most industrially developed sites in the Japanese empire and home to advanced chemical production facilities, one of which even produced heavy water as a by-product – which could be used as a key component in constructing a nuclear reactor – but Hŭngnam was also conveniently close to a chain of hydroelectric power stations that had been built in Korea during the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, for Wilcox, Hŭngnam was comparable to Oak Ridge and Los Alamos all rolled into one with the necessary infrastructure to house a viable nuclear weapons program.[64] Ultimately, however, he had to concede "There is not enough evidence yet to believe the Japanese made an atomic bomb."[65] Nonetheless, Wilcox had initiated the third phase in the development of the Japanese atomic bomb conspiracy theory.

Like the Shapley article that preceded its publication, Wilcox's book was panned by informed scholars at the time, but it had a much greater and more enduring impact.[66] Despite scholarly attempts to discredit the Snell/Wilcox story, the Korean angle of the narrative lived on and was uncritically repeated in varying degrees both in popular and academic studies of World War II, the Korean War, and even in mainstream media accounts

exploring the origins of North Korea's nuclear program.[67] Today, the Snell/Wilcox narrative survives – predictably – on the Internet, where it has evolved as something of a meme.[68] The latest twist on the story is offered by Bill Streifer, an "historian and researcher," whose book on the *Hog Wild* – a US B-29 shot down by Soviet fighter planes over northern Korea in late August 1945 – purports to reexamine the Snell story using ostensibly new documentation obtained from Russian archives.[69] But to date, no convincing evidence has surfaced to prove that Japan tested a nuclear weapon in August 1945 or that it even came close to doing so.

Analysis of the Japanese atomic bomb conspiracy theory suggests that because the US government was also implicated in the cover-up this conspiracy would entail not only the "Enemy Outside" (i.e. Japanese government and scientists), but also the "Enemy Above" (US government) and yet again the "Enemy Within" (US government/military/scientists/academics). Given such complexity, it should fail the "parsimony test" on the face of it. Yet, applying the "Eternal Recurrence of the Same" test, we find that something similar *has happened before*. (More on that later.) Considering Sunstein's cascade principles first, however, we see a comparable outcome with the "Role of Information." Unable to prove a negative, no one could actually produce evidence to confirm that Japanese scientists *did not* succeed in developing such a weapon. Thus, those with a low threshold for acceptance may be inclined to believe.

But who would be willing to believe such a story and why? Perhaps we should ask first *who is peddling the story* and why? In each phase, from its origins to the present, it is predominantly journalists and independent "researchers" who have advanced the story and attempted to perpetuate it. The story has no traction in academe. In this instance, one might turn the *Cui Bono* test on the authors of the conspiracy themselves, in which case it is not difficult to discern a clear motive, whether for professional recognition, fame, or profit for breaking such a potentially controversial story.

Considering the "Role of Availability" principle here, one may see historical context playing a significant part in triggering the cascade. In 1946, the publication of John Hersey's "Hiroshima" in *The New Yorker* in August led to considerable debate among

the general public over the necessity of having used such brutal weapons, particularly as the gruesome details of the people's suffering were so graphically revealed.[70] Revealing "facts" of Japanese wartime nuclear research may alleviate potential feelings of guilt on the part of the American populace.[71] During the 1970s through the 1990s, which span both the second and third phases in the development of this conspiracy theory, the US and Japan were engaged in trade wars that evoked strong feelings of enmity and racism within the US, particularly as Americans continued to lose jobs to Japanese manufacturers of steel, automobiles, cameras, consumer electronics, semiconductors, and so on. Some even found themselves working for Japanese companies in the US and were not a little resentful of the fact that former enemies were now their bosses. Thus, the "Role of Emotions" principle becomes apparent.

The "Worst Intentions" and *Cui Bono* tests may reveal motivations for some Japanese military and scientific personnel to cover-up their work. But it makes no sense for the US government, military, or even scientists to aid or abet them in doing so. Japanese scientists did not progress further than their American, Soviet, or German counterparts, so there would be no "atomic secrets" to conceal. Knowledge of a successful detonation of a nuclear device by the Japanese could easily be used as political and historical leverage against them by the rest of the world, and particularly by Americans who may consider such a fact as exoneration for use of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

But the "Impartial Spectator" test may be the most serious challenge to this particular conspiracy theory. Let us consider a few of the inherent contradictions and flaws entailed by this narrative. First, consider the sheer folly of a desperate Japanese military wasting such a weapon on an experimental "test" in the waning days of the war. Why not use it against the advancing Soviet Red Army, or deliver it by submarine within close proximity of any of the US occupied islands in the Pacific, such as Tinian, from which the US launched its nuclear attacks on Japan? Would Japan have surrendered if they actually had such a weapon? Even a static demonstration before US observers might have been sufficient to alter US demands for an unconditional surrender. Under the circumstances, the waste of

such a weapon in an experimental test defies logic for a nation that was so desperate that it was sending its youth to certain death in kamikaze missions throughout the Pacific.

Case Study #3: Unit 731 and Biological Warfare in the Korean War

> It is possible to maintain that the whole thing was a kind of patriotic conspiracy [but] I prefer to believe the Chinese were not acting parts.[72]
>
> -Dr. Joseph Needham, 1953

Early in the Korean War (1950-1953) the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) formally accused US military forces of conducting biological warfare (BW) on the Korean peninsula. The charges were soon echoed by the People's Republic of China (PRC or China), which alleged also to have discovered evidence of US BW activities in the northeast (Manchuria), where witnesses claimed to have observed US military planes dropping suspicious objects from the air. Such sightings were reported to have been followed by outbreaks of various diseases in the area. Moreover, the Chinese also alleged that the US had mobilized former members of Japan's Unit 731 – the infamous biological warfare detachment of the Kwantung Army that occupied Manchuria during World War II – for the effort. Not only were Unit 731 members tapped for their expertise, accusers alleged, but their leader, Lieutenant General Ishii Shirō himself, was transported by the US to Korea to assist in the BW campaign against North Korean and Chinese forces. The Chinese also accused the US of using poison gas in North Korea. Predictably, the Soviet Union sided with its communist bloc allies, and the US vehemently denied all of the accusations.

It remains uncertain just who initiated this conspiracy theory, but the first allegation of US use of BW was made by the North Koreans on 8 May 1951 who charged the Americans with spreading smallpox.[73] Nearly a year later, in February 1952, North Korea's Foreign Minister, Bak Hun Yung, lodged a formal complaint with the United Nations (UN) accusing the US of dropping insects carrying various diseases – including plague and cholera – over North Korea in two separate incidents in

January and February of that year. The charges were endorsed two days later by China's Foreign Minister, Zhou Enlai, and further expanded the next month to include allegations of the US conducting BW operations over China on 68 different occasions.[74] Such incidents were ostensibly reported from commanders in the field, who, it was later revealed, also relied on reports made by local villagers. The Chinese government organized three separate commissions to investigate, including: the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, which sent a delegation to North Korea in March 1952 and concluded the US had engaged in both BW and chemical warfare (CW); a PRC government commission, which acted as a coordinating committee; and the "International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China," abbreviated as ISC, and otherwise known as the "Needham Commission." Its chair, Dr. Joseph Needham, a renowned British scientist and China expert, was "an avowed Marxist," but the committee, comprised as it was of an international team of scientists, presented itself as a neutral and impartial panel.

In early 1952, the Needham Commission published its conclusions in a 669-page volume, detailing some 50 incidents of BW and finding the US guilty of causing outbreaks of five different diseases. In the 62 page summary report preceding the hundreds of pages of appendices, the commission presented evidence of cases involving the spread of plague, anthrax, and cholera. Perhaps most shocking, however, were allegations that Ishii, the notorious leader of Unit 731, may have been reactivated by the US and dispatched to Korea to assist in the BW campaign.[75] When the Soviets championed the Chinese and North Korean claims before the United Nations, the US categorically denied and denounced the allegations, beginning with a strongly worded retort from Secretary of State Dean Acheson in February 1952 that the charges were "entirely false," followed in June by a statement from Deputy US Representative to the UN, Ernest Gross, who called the accusations a "false and wicked lie."[76] Members of the press and the international scientific community began to challenge the findings of the Needham Commission, noting that they had relied on evidence provided by the Chinese and had not conducted original site

investigations themselves. When Needham was asked what proof he had that samples of the plague bacillus the Chinese had provided him actually came from infected voles as was claimed, he replied, “None. We accepted the word of the Chinese scientists. *It is possible to maintain that the whole thing was a kind of patriotic conspiracy [but] I prefer to believe the Chinese were not acting parts.*”[77]

The allegations received considerable press in the US media at the time, but were quickly dismissed as communist propaganda, and they soon faded into obscurity after the armistice brought an end to hostilities in Korea in 1953. Yet the issue did not disappear entirely and the question remained: did the US really conduct BW operations in Korea during the war? Needham continued to believe so. In 1971, researchers affiliated with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), an independent think-tank dedicated to “research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament,” [78] became the first in the West to take up the issue seriously after the publication of the Needham report and attempted to give an impartial account of the subject in its multi-volume study of chemical and biological warfare.[79] The SIPRI study, written by Milton Leitenberg, provided a brief history of the matter, summarized the findings of the investigative report submitted by the Council of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers in spring 1952, reviewed the evidence presented by China and North Korea, and provided commentary based upon available evidence presented by the Needham Commission, among others. The SIPRI report made no attempt to determine guilt and noted how references to the allegations seemed to have disappeared in the decades since they were first brought to light.[80]

That changed, however, when Stephen L. Endicott, a professor of history at York University in Toronto, revived the matter in an article published in the journal *Modern China* in 1979. Apparently inspired by journalist Seymour Hersh’s investigation of US use of chemical warfare in Vietnam,[81] he argued that “skepticism about denials of the earlier case of biological weapons in Korea has been awakened,” and “the time may be ripe for a reappraisal of whether or not BW was used in the Korean War.”[82] Endicott took as his point of departure the

premise of "plausible denial," the definition of which he borrowed from the *Des Moines Register* investigative journalist Clark R. Mollenhoff, who defined plausible denial as "a carefully contrived cover story, often including coordinated perjury by a handful of the highest officials …"[83] From there, Endicott laid out his case in support of the North Korean and Chinese allegations of US BW operations in Korea. This first salvo in what was to become Endicott's search for truth on the matter, however, focused extensively on the testimonies of captured US airmen, who as prisoners of war of the Chinese had confessed to engaging in BW during the Korean conflict. Endicott's evidence was flimsy, but this did not deter him from publishing. A new phase in the US BW in Korea conspiracy theory had begun.

In 1984, Albert E. Cowdrey, then serving as Chief of the History Branch at the US Army Center of Military History, wrote a sober rejoinder in which he argued that the conditions of war alone frequently cause outbreaks of disease and that the Chinese accusations were rooted in their own inability to manage them. Cowdrey further argued that Chinese allegations of the US using poison gas were brought up to rationalize major losses in their spring offensive in 1951, in which the Chinese suffered some 160,000 casualties. Thus, the Chinese used allegations of both BW and CW to launch a major anti-American smear campaign internationally, and to initiate a comprehensive public health and hygiene campaign domestically.[84] An essential facet of the latter campaign was to exploit the people's fear of disease and the insects that transmitted them, leading to an "obsession with vectors" among the general public.[85] In the end, Cowdrey dismissed the accusations by arguing that the evidence presented was insufficient, that the means of investigation was flawed and unscientific, and that the whole affair had been a contrived mass propaganda campaign of the communist bloc.

Cowdrey's analysis, however, did not satisfy the believers. In 1989, British journalists Peter Williams and David Wallace published *Unit 731: The Japanese Army's Secret of Secrets*, the first detailed book-length account of Japanese efforts to develop and exploit biological weapons in the China Theater during World War II.[86] While the majority of the book was devoted to revealing the shocking and horrific actions of Unit 731 doctors, including experiments on live subjects and vivisections, and was

otherwise convincingly written based upon an array of Japanese, American, and British primary sources, Chapter 17, entitled "Korean War," revisited the allegations that the US had employed former Unit 731 members, and particularly its leader, Ishii Shirō, in the Korean conflict. The chapter provided perhaps the most detailed history of the matter yet published in English; however, it also relied extensively on the Needham study as a primary source. As a result, its findings were skewed in favor of the Chinese and North Korean allegations. Although the authors themselves implied their conclusions were based upon a chain of very circumstantial evidence, they stood by the allegations, nonetheless.[87]

Thus, in the 1980s and 1990s, the US BW in Korea issue resurfaced as a topic of popular interest. While the subject was discussed in various books and articles at the time,[88] it was not until the publication of Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman's *The United States and Biological Warfare* in 1998 that an entire book was devoted to it. Endicott and Hagerman, both historians at York University, aggressively addressed head-on the primary arguments put forth by the deniers, which they identified as the following: that the US lacked the technological capacity for BW during the Korean War; that the Korean War was only intended to be a limited war and use of "unconventional weapons" might risk escalating the war beyond Korea; that US resources were already stretched to the limit in the rearmament of its allies in the Cold War and it lacked sufficient funds to engage in "a program employing weapons of unproved worth"; and that US policy toward BW adhered to a "no first use" stance. Based upon newly declassified documents and others obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, Endicott and Hagerman constructed a compelling case that strongly refuted their opponents' arguments and that appeared to indict the US not only for BW use in Korea, but also for a sustained cover-up.[89]

But the book was not well received by the scholarly community. John Ellis van Courtland Moon, then professor emeritus of history at Fitchburg State College in Massachusetts and a member of the Harvard Colloquium on Chemical and Biological Weapons, offered a point-by-point critique of the authors' central arguments and noted several errors contained in the book in addition to its many "omissions and mistaken

conjectures." Moon's review concluded by stating, "If the United States had used bio-weapons in the Korean War, it would have constituted an international crime of the first magnitude. Such charges are appalling, and they need to be sustained by hard evidence, not by supposition and coincidental argument."[90] The late Sheldon Harris, then professor of history at California State University Northridge, was equally critical, stating, "It is easy to dismiss this book as a black mark on the historical profession…Sadly, this study is a prime example of shoddy scholarship masquerading as an objective examination of a controversial topic."[91] Others criticized the book for its lack of objectivity and accused the authors of cherry-picking their facts and otherwise ignoring counter-factual evidence.[92]

The worst was yet to come for Endicott and Hagerman. At about the same time as their book appeared in print, SIPRI author Milton Leitenberg, then a senior fellow at the University of Maryland's Center for International and Security Studies, unleashed a torrent of publications that seriously undermined Endicott and Hagerman's work. Together with colleague Kathryn Weathersby, the two introduced new evidence from Russian archives that clearly indicated the allegations against the US had been fabricated. Leitenberg and Weathersby introduced twelve Soviet-era documents stating that the alleged sites of infection and areas of exposure had been "prepared" for the international team of investigators, that no examples of bacteriological weapons had been found, that no outbreaks of either plague or cholera were reported in China, that the whole affair had apparently been a ruse by the Chinese and North Koreans to discredit the Americans on the world stage, and that post-Stalin Soviet leadership had even sent a message to Chairman Mao Zedong informing him that "the USSR and CPSU had been 'misled' (implicitly by the Chinese themselves) about the 'false' and 'fictitious' charges of CBW use that had been lodged against the Americans, and recommending that the international anti-American campaign on the subject be immediately dropped."[93]

Worse yet, another book review, this one appearing in the premier history of science journal *Isis*, called into question the authors' motive for writing the book, noting "a possible personal connection between the authors and their subject matter: Stephen Endicott, is apparently the son of a Dr. James Endicott,

a longtime Canadian missionary living in China … who was instrumental in helping make the Chinese charges of biological warfare known in the United States and Canada."[94] Given that the book is dedicated to Dr. Joseph Needham, John W. Powell, Sylvia Powell, Julian Shuman, and Dr. James G. Endicott, all of whom – with the exception of Needham himself – were accused of treason or charged with sedition for promoting the US BW allegations, it would appear that the book was written in part, at least, to exonerate the elder Endicott among others.[95] The reviewer, John Perkins, went on to state, "in the name of full disclosure, readers should be told explicitly that Stephen and James either were or were not related. If my surmise is correct and the two Endicotts were related, this fact provides insight into the obvious passion of this book."[96]

Just as it appeared the book and its authors had been discredited and would soon pass into obscurity, the tragedy of 9/11 unfolded, and subsequent events returned the subject of BW to national headlines, not the least of which was a spate of anthrax attacks unleashed in the United States.[97] After immediate reprisals against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, the George W. Bush administration soon changed its focus to building a case for invading Iraq. Late in 2002, the Bush administration began a campaign to garner international support for invasion predicated largely on accusations that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein was harboring weapons of mass destruction, including biological weapons. It was in this context, then, that the issue of the US use of BW in Korea and controversy over Endicott and Hagerman's book resurfaced in popular media. In the run up to invasion, the question was posed whether the US itself "has entirely clean hands when it comes to biological weapons."[98] Thus began another phase in the development of this conspiracy narrative.

Meanwhile, Endicott and Hagerman penned a response to their critics, including specifically Moon, Leitenberg, and more recently, military historian Colonel Conrad C. Crane, whose articles challenged the authors' assumptions of US capabilities in delivering BW in Korea at that time.[99] But the essay – for which the authors evidently could not find a publisher – largely rehashed old arguments from the book and offered nothing new or sufficiently persuasive to change minds within academe.[100]

Curiously, Endicott and Hagerman did not attack the weakest spot in the Russian document-based counter-charge presented by Leitenberg and Weathersby: namely, that the authenticity of these Soviet era sources had yet to be verified by other scholars and as such the validity of the their evidence depended almost entirely upon the integrity of the discoverer of those documents – a lone Japanese journalist – one Naito Yasuo, who claimed to have turned them up in the Russian Presidential Archive in Moscow in 1998.[101] While there was no known reason to impugn Naito's integrity, the documents remained problematic because they were fragmentary, pages were missing, photocopies were not permitted and Naito had to copy them by hand, and there were no archival citations for they had not been officially released.[102] At this point, the Russian documents remained the most critical counter-factual evidence to refute Endicott and Hagerman's allegations, yet they apparently chose to ignore them.[103]

Analysis of the US BW in Korea conspiracy theory is complicated by the alleged involvement of Unit 731, which entailed an actual conspiracy and cover-up of its own. In the aftermath of the Pacific War, US intelligence in Japan learned of Unit 731's wartime activities in Manchuria, which included not only biological weapons development and dissemination, but also experiments on live human beings. Data generated from this research were offered to the Americans in exchange for immunity from war crimes prosecution for key Unit 731 members, including Ishii Shirō. General Douglas MacArthur, then the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in the Pacific (SCAP), made the determination with his staff to accept the deal and protect selected members of Unit 731 from being indicted in the Tokyo war crimes trials. The matter was quickly silenced by the Americans, while the Soviets went ahead with trials of their own to prosecute members of Unit 731 they had captured in Manchuria. They also did not waste the opportunity to turn the affair into an anti-American propaganda campaign.[104]

In the case of the Unit 731 affair itself, this conspiracy involved not only the "Enemy Outside" (i.e. Japanese government and Unit 731 members), but also the "Enemy Above" (US government and military), and yet again the "Enemy Within" (US government and military). With this episode as a

precedent, the "parsimony test" could be rendered moot in the eyes of the conspiracy theorists trying to build a case for the US BW in Korea matter as an actual instance of the "Eternal Recurrence of the Same". In this particular case, the US government *was* involved in a cover-up, which only added credibility to the US BW in Korea allegations for those inclined to believe them. On the surface, the US BW in Korea affair, according to its conspiracy theory advocates, could be identified as an "Enemy Above" (i.e. US government) paradigm; but, in actuality, the Russian documentary evidence suggests that it was instead a classic case of the "Enemy Outside" in which the foreign governments of the USSR, China, and North Korea plotted against the United States.

The series of cascades in this example are particularly important. First, the evidence and information presented by the North Koreans and Chinese upon which the accusations were built were bogus. Zones of infection were contrived, evidence was falsified, and incidents of US aerial attacks were erroneously reported by uninformed villagers and military personnel who lacked the expertise to serve as reliable witnesses. All involved in the Communist bloc also had a vested interest in believing the accusations to be true, so the threshold for acceptance was exceedingly low. The "Role of Reputation" principle was especially important in this context as well, as there was little to no value in contradicting the party line accusing the US of BW, while there was safety in supporting or enhancing the validity of the narrative. General outbreaks of various diseases, which might be expected to increase during wartime, also provided for the "Role of Availability" as triggers of panic and fear over contagion. The "Role of Emotions" principle was a significant factor in accelerating rumors of US BW activities in the region and contributing to confusion and additional erroneous reports, while "Group Polarization" assured that counter-factual evidence would be suppressed in the totalitarian political and social sphere of China and North Korea in the 1950s.

Conclusions

None of these conspiracy theories appear to be factual, so why do they endure? For one, all of them possess real *political* and *cultural* utility. Where the FDR and Pearl Harbor case is

concerned, Olmsted has argued that it "helped to construct a foundational myth of modern conservatism."[105] She states, "Pearl Harbor demonstrated everything that was wrong with the New Deal," namely confusion, incompetence, wasteful extravagance, and, by extension, all that was wrong with the Democratic Party as well as with Roosevelt himself, including the "double-dealing and double-talking" that engendered so much suspicion on the right. As cultural historian Emily S. Rosenberg has argued, Pearl Harbor is also a "site of contested meanings."[106] Not only did it once serve as a rallying cry for national unification, but in the postwar era it has also served as a site of healing and forgiveness for some World War II veterans, as well as a place for honoring their service and memories. Pearl Harbor remains a site of intense emotions and complex memories.

If Pearl Harbor remains a site of contested meanings, then the atomic bomb remains an *artifact* of contested meanings. For many Americans, it represents absolute victory over Japan, while for many Japanese, it remains the ultimate symbol of victimization. Advocates of the Japanese atomic bomb conspiracy theory frequently criticize the "Japan as victim" trope and cite Japan's own wartime nuclear research as justification for the US bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As Wilcox states, the Japanese "are not solely the victims of the bomb, as they have been portrayed for so long. They were willing participants in its use, and only losers in the race to perfect it."[107] Despite all the evidence to the contrary, and no "smoking gun" document to prove its veracity, the Japanese atomic bomb conspiracy theory will likely endure so long as Americans continue to debate amongst themselves the morality of having used nuclear weapons against Japan and as long as the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain a point of historical and political contention between Japan and the United States.

Similarly, the US BW in Korea narrative continues to have political utility for North Korea. The publication of Endicott and Hagerman's book, for example, had real world consequences beyond the Ivory Tower. According to intelligence historian Herbert Romerstein, the US BW in Korea story reappeared in the Communist bloc press again in 1999 when the story found a "new purpose" as a tool used by North Korea for leverage against the US and – by extension – the International Atomic

Energy Agency to deny inspections of its nuclear research facilities. The North Koreans demanded the United Nations condemn the US for its behavior in 1952. The source of their evidence on which to base this demand was none other than Endicott and Hagerman's *The United States and Biological Warfare*.[108]

Such conspiracy theories have real world consequences and can do actual harm. But damage control has become much more difficult for historians. Thanks to the Internet, social media, and the hundreds of specialized "channels" now available on cable and satellite television, not to mention the impending death of print media itself, the challenge for historians to have their voices heard has become much greater. When the one cable television channel ostensibly dedicated to "history" frequently presents fantasy as fact with such nonsense programming as "Ancient Aliens," while another channel allegedly dedicated to "learning" airs faux documentary-style coverage of the discovery of the remains of a mermaid, it becomes even more imperative for historians to push back against erroneous conspiracy theories, especially those with the potential to engender real world consequences. The study and discussion of conspiracy theories can no longer be left to amateurs and dilettantes.

Notes

[1] See, for example, the following: Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, second edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Lance deHaven-Smith, *Conspiracy Theory in America* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2013); Martha F. Lee, *Conspiracy Rising: Conspiracy Thinking and American Public Life* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/ABC-CLIO, 2011); Kathryn S. Olmsted, *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Donald T. Critchlow, et al., eds., *Political Conspiracies in America: A Reader* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*, second edition (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Peter Knight, ed., *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002); Timothy Melley, *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000); and Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From* (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

[2] Some representative examples may include: Jonathan Kay, *Among the Truthers: A Journey through America's Growing Conspiracist Underground* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011); and David Aaronovitch, *Voodoo*

Histories: The Role of the Conspiracy Theory in Shaping Modern History (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010).
[3] Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," in *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 37. Essay originally published in *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964.
[4] Ibid.
[5] David Brion Davis, ed., *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1971), 2.
[6] As italicized in the original essay, Karl R. Popper, "The Conspiracy Theory of Society," in David Coady, ed., *Conspiracy Theories: The Philosophical Debate* (Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 13-15.
[7] Walker focuses almost exclusively upon American conspiracy folklore, but these rubrics also could be applied more generically across cultures. Jesse Walker, *The United States of Paranoia* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013), 16.
[8] Walker also posits a "Benevolent Conspiracy," which he explains "isn't an enemy at all" but "a secret force working behind the scenes to improve people's lives." This paradigm will not be included here, as the present author accepts the premise offered by Uscinski and Parent that "the conspiracy must come at the expense of the common good, at least in the eyes of the conspiracy theorist." See Walker, *United States of Paranoia*, 16; and Joseph E. Uscinski and Joseph M. Parent, *American Conspiracy Theories* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34.
[9] Walker, *United States of Paranoia*, 16.
[10] Ibid., 9.
[11] Ibid., 10-11.
[12] Cass R. Sunstein, *Conspiracy Theories & Other Dangerous Ideas* (New York and London: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 15-22.
[13] Ibid., 16.
[14] Ibid., 17-22.
[15] Uscinski and Parent, *American Conspiracy Theories*, 51.
[16] Ibid., 39-40.
[17] John T. Flynn, *The Truth About Pearl Harbor* (New York: John T. Flynn, 1944), 3.
[18] The summary that follows is based largely upon Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories*, 90-114; and Olmsted, *Real Enemies*, 45-81.
[19] Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories*, 94-98.
[20] Ibid., 98-101.
[21] Alvin D. Coox, "Repulsing the Pearl Harbor Revisionists: The State of Present Literature on the Debacle," *Military Affairs*, vol. 50, no. 1 (January 1986): 29-31.
[22] Flynn, *The Truth About Pearl Harbor*, 1-32; Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories*, 101-105.
[23] George Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (New York: The Devin Adair Company, 1947), vii-xi.
[24] Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War 1941* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), see especially pp. 573-598 of the 1968 Archon Press edition.
[25] Charles C. Tansill, *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952).

[26] Harry Elmer Barnes, ed., *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1953). One might also add to the list the book by Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobold, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor: The Washington Contribution to the Japanese Attack* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1954), as Olmsted does. Theobold's book was an exoneration of Admiral Kimmel and attempted to illustrate how Kimmel, among others, had served as scapegoats for the Roosevelt administration. See Olmsted, *Real Enemies*, 79-80.
[27] Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories*, 105.
[28] Or, as Aaronovitch puts it, Roosevelt was now an alleged "mass murderer and infernal manipulator." Ibid., 106.
[29] Ibid., 111-114. On Barnes' anti-Semitism, see Justus D. Doenecke, "Harry Elmer Barnes," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 56 (Summer 1973): 311-323.
[30] Olmsted, *Real Enemies*, 80.
[31] See dust-jacket cover synopsis in the original edition of Bruce R. Bartlett, *Cover-Up: The Politics of Pearl Harbor, 1941-1946* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House Publishers, 1978). Bartlett also claimed to have "unearthed" Flynn's 1945 screed against Roosevelt entitled, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*, which he included and reprinted in full on pages 139-154.
[32] John Toland, *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982).
[33] Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories*, 106-107.
[34] Toland, *Infamy*, 324.
[35] Coox described it as being comparable to other "classic exponents of the Devil Theory." See the review by Coox, "Repulsing the Pearl Harbor Revisionists," *Military Affairs*, 29-31.
[36] Representative works include: Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Penguin, 1981); and Gordon W. Prange, with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), neither of which indulge much the conspiracy theory angles. Hans L. Trefousse, *Pearl Harbor: The Continuing Controversy* (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1982), directly addresses the central conspiracy theories and provides select documents as counter-factual evidence against them. Frank Paul Mintz's *Revisionism and the Origins of Pearl Harbor* (Lanham and New York: University of America Press, 1985), offered a review and critique of the revisionists from Flynn through Toland. See also the collection of essays in Hilary Conroy and Harry Wray, eds., *Pearl Harbor Reexamined: Prologue to the Pacific War* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).
[37] See, James Rusbridger and Eric Nave, *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into War* (London: Michael O'Mara Books, 1991). Not all of these addressed the attendant conspiracy theories, however. See, for example, Robert W. Love, Jr., ed., *Pearl Harbor Revisited* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).
[38] Robert B. Stinnett, *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), xiii.
[39] Ibid., 1-5.
[40] Justus D. Doenecke, review of *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor*, in *The Journal of American History* 89 (June 2002): 281-282.

[41] Edward J. Drea, review of *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbor*, in *The Journal of Military History* 64 (April 2000): 582-583.
[42] Ibid., 583.
[43] On these points, see the aforementioned reviews by Coox, Doenecke, and Drea. See also Stephen E. Ambrose, "Writers on the Grassy Knoll," *New York Times*, 2 February 1992, https://www.nytimes.com/books/98/11/22/specials/ambrose-knoll.html.
[44] Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories*, 104-105, 109-110.
[45] Coox, "Repulsing the Pearl Harbor Revisionists," 30; Doenecke, review of *Day of Deceit*, 281-282; and Mintz, *Revisionism and the Origins of Pearl Harbor*, 93-104.
[46] Coox, "Repulsing the Pearl Harbor Revisionists," 30.
[47] As quoted in "Scientists Doubt A-Bomb Story," *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 October 1946, p. 14. Note that East Asian names in this essay are presented family name first as is the convention in China, Japan, and Korea.
[48] David Snell, "Japan Developed Atom Bomb; Russians Grabbed Scientists: Actual Test was Success," *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 October 1946, p. 1. Copy from file Folder: "Magazine and News Articles," Box 7419, RG 331, US National Archives, College Park, Md. For more on the Snell story, see Walter E. Grunden, "Hungnam and the Japanese Atomic Bomb: Recent Historiography of a Postwar Myth," *Intelligence and National Security* Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer 1998): 32-60.
[49] David Snell, "Story of A-Bomb Story…No Cloaks, No Daggers…Just Tea Talk," *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 October 1946, p. 1.
[50] "Scientists Doubt A-Bomb Story," *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 October 1946, p. 14.
[51] On Japan's wartime nuclear research efforts, see Walter E. Grunden, *Secret Weapons and World War II: Japan in the Shadow of Big Science* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005). For the most recently updated account in Japanese, see Yamazaki Masakatsu, *Nihon no kaku kaihatsu: 1939-1955, genbaku kara genshiryoku e* [Japan's Nuclear Development: 1939-1955, From the Atomic Bomb to Nuclear Power] (Tokyo: Seki bundō, 2011).
[52] One of the most extensive and detailed publications examining Japan's wartime nuclear research first appeared in 1968 as a 150-page volume in the series *Shōwa shi no Tennō*, which contained in-depth interviews with the Japanese scientists who had participated in the work. See, Yomiuri Shimbunsha (ed.) 'Nihon no genbaku' [Japan's Atomic Bomb] in *Shōwa shi no Tennō* [The Emperor in Shōwa History], Vol. 4 (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1968), 77-229. See also, Kagakushi Gakkai, eds., "Butsurigaku to senji kenkyū" [Physics and Wartime Research] in *Nihon kagaku gijutsushi taikei* [Outline of History of Science and Technology in Japan], Vol. 13 (Tokyo: Daiichi Hogen, 1970), 441-474.
[53] Deborah Shapley, "Nuclear Weapons History: Japan's Wartime Bomb Projects Revealed," *Science* 199 (13 January 1978): 152-157.
[54] Ibid., 153.
[55] Malcom W. Browne, "Japanese Data Show Tokyo Tried to Make World War II A-Bomb," *New York Times*, 7 January 1978, p. 1; and Thomas O'Toole, "Japan Tried to Make A-Bomb in '40s," *Washington Post*, 7 January 1978, p. A1 and A7.
[56] O'Toole, "Japan Tried to Make A-Bomb in '40s," p. A1.

[57] On the matter of censorship under SCAP, see Monica Braw, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan* (NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1991).
[58] See, for example, Yomiuri Shimbunsha, ed., *Shōwa shi no Tennō*. For a comprehensive list of publications on the subject in Japanese as compared to English, see Walter E. Grunden, "Past and Future Directions in the Historiography of Japan's Wartime Nuclear Research," *Gijutsu Bunka Ronsō* [Tokyo Institute of Technology Studies in the History of Science] No. 8 (2005): 51-61.
[59] See especially the series of letters to the editor the article provoked in *Science*, including: Charles Weiner, "Japan's Nuclear Bomb Project," *Science* vol. 199 no. 4330 (17 February 1978): 728; letters from Norio Hayakawa, Nobuyuki Nakajima, and A. Theodore Forrester, *Science* vol. 199 no. 4335 (24 March 1978): 1286; and G. D. Kerr, "Japanese Wartime Nuclear Effort: A Cover Up?," *Science* vol. 200 no. 4341 (5 May 1978): 486.
[60] Weiner, "Japan's Nuclear Bomb Project," 728. For more on the backlash resulting from the Shapley article, see John W. Dower, "'NI' and 'F': Japan's Wartime Atomic Bomb Research," in *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York: New Press, 1993), 55-100.
[61] These included an excerpt from Kagakushi Gakkai, eds., *Nihon kagaku gijutsushi taikei*, 441-474, a copy of which York also presented to the present author as a duplicate of the file originally provided to Shapley.
[62] See, Charles Weiner, "Retroactive Saber Rattling?" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 34 (April 1978): 10-12; John W. Dower, "Science, Society, and the Japanese Atomic-Bomb Project during World War Two," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* vol. 10 no. 2 (April 1978): 41-54; and Dower, "'NI' and 'F'," *Japan in War and Peace*, op. cit.
[63] Robert K. Wilcox, *Japan's Secret War* (New York: Morrow, 1985). The quote is from the back cover of the reprint edition, Robert K. Wilcox, *Japan's Secret War: Japan's Race against Time to Build Its Own Atomic Bomb* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1995).
[64] Wilcox, (1995), 36, 168-170.
[65] Ibid., 239.
[66] See, John W. Dower, review of *Japan's Secret War* in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* vol. 43 no. 1 (August 1986): 61-2; Morris Low, "Japan's Secret War? 'Instant' Scientific Manpower and Japan's World War II Atomic Bomb Project," *Annals of Science* vol. 47 no. 4 (1990): 347-360. For further critiques of the Wilcox narrative, see also Dower, "'NI' and 'F'," *Japan in War and Peace*, op. cit.; and Grunden, "Hŭngnam and the Japanese Atomic Bomb," *Intelligence and National Security*, op. cit.
[67] Select examples include: Philip Henshall, *The Nuclear Axis: Germany, Japan and the Atom Bomb Race 1939-45* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000); Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Jonathan D. Pollack, *No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons and International Security* (London: Routledge, 2011); and Richard Wolffe, "How North Korea Got the Bomb," *Newsweek*, 26 October 2003, http://www.newsweek.com/how-north-korea-got-bomb-138995. For more on the enduring impact of the Snell/Wilcox/North Korea narrative, see Walter E.

Grunden, "Hŭngnam Revisited: The 'Secret' Nuclear History of a North Korean City," *Intelligence and National Security* 20 (October 2015): 1-14.

[68] See for example, Bill Streifer, "Hungnam, North Korea: Delving into Pyongyang's Long Nuclear Past," *National Security News Service: DC Bureau*, 25 June 2013, http://www.dcbureau.org/201306258778/national-security-news-service/hungnam-north-korea-delving-into-pyongyangs-long-nuclear-past.html; David Dionisi, "Japan's A-Bomb Secrets," *The Barnes Review* November/December 2014, http://issuu.com/teachpeacefoundation/docs/japan_a_bomb/1; and Charles W. Stone, a self-described "financial consultant, investigative writer, and speaker." See, http://washingtontiger.weebly.com/.

[69] Streifer apparently contends that the B-29 was shot down to protect Russia's interest in what remained of Japan's nuclear program in North Korea. It is too early to determine whether this addition will initiate a fourth phase in the evolution of this conspiracy theory or otherwise have any historiographical significance. See, Bill Streifer and Irek Sabitov, *The Flight of the Hog Wild: The Secret History of North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program* (Jia Educational Products, Inc., January 2014), as listed on www.bookwire.com. As of January 2016, the book was yet to be listed on the websites of either Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble, or other major on-line book sellers. It should also be noted that Streifer advertises himself as president of Jia Educational Products, Inc., (http://www.slideshare.net/billstreifer), suggesting the book is self-published. For a less sensational account of the *Hog Wild* incident that dismisses the connection between the B-29 and Japan's nuclear research, see Dwight Rider, *Hog Wild 1945: The True Story of How the Soviets Stole and Reverse-Engineered the American B-29 Bomber* (Morgan Hill, CA: Bookstand Publishing, 2013), which categorically states, "The two issues, the bomber and the bomb, are largely unrelated."

[70] John Hersey, "Hiroshima," *The New Yorker*, 31 August 1946, available on-line at http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1946/08/31/hiroshima.

[71] As Low and Dower have argued. See, Low, "Japan's Secret War?" 359-360; and Dower, "'NI' and 'F'," *Japan in War and Peace*, 55-57.

[72] As quoted in Milton Leitenberg, "False Allegations of U.S. Biological Weapons Use During the Korean War," in Anne L. Clunan, et al., eds., *Terrorism, War, or Disease?: Unraveling the Use of Biological Weapons* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 129.

[73] The following summary is based largely upon the works of Milton Leitenberg, to date considered the most reliable scholar on the subject. See, in particular, Ibid., and Milton Leitenberg, "New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations: Background and Analysis," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 11(Winter 1998),185-199.

[74] The formal charges may be found in The Chinese People's Committee for World Peace, *Stop U.S. Germ Warfare! Part I: Protests, Statements, Appeals and Other Documents Concerning the Criminal Use of Bacteriological Weapons Against the People of Korea and China* (Peking: 1952), 1-37.

[75] The report states, "in the early months of 1952, newspaper items had reported two successive visits of Ishii Shiro to South Korea, and he was there again in March. Whether the occupation authorities in Japan had fostered his activities, and whether the American Far Eastern Command was engaged in making use of

methods essentially Japanese, were questions which could hardly have been absent from the minds of members of the Commission." See, *Report of the International Scientific Commission for the Investigations of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China* (Beijing, 1952), 14.
[76] Statement of Ernest A. Gross as reproduced in, "Germ Warfare in Korea," *Current History* (September 1952): 172-178.
[77] Italics mine. As quoted in Leitenberg, "False Allegations," op. cit., 129.
[78] The SIPRI website provides the following description of the organization: "Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public. Based in Stockholm, SIPRI also has a presence in Beijing, and is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide." See, http://www.sipri.org/about.
[79] See, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare: Volume I: The Rise of CB Weapons* (Stockholm and New York: Almqvist & Wiksell/Humanities Press, 1971), 224-225; and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare: Volume V: The Prevention of CBW* (Stockholm and New York: Almqvist & Wiksell/Humanities Press, 1971), 238-258.
[80] Leitenberg concluded with the following statement: "It is necessary to repeat that the object of reciting this evidence has not been to try to reach a conclusion one way or the other, but to recount the history as carefully as possible and to illustrate the very difficult problems of verifying allegations of use. The allegations of BW in Korea and China, which commanded world-wide attention and were so hotly debated in 1952-53, are largely ignored in 1971. Discussions of them in Western literature are rare, and tend to dismiss the charges as fabrications. References to the allegations seem simply to have disappeared from East European literature." SIPRI, *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare: Volume V: The Prevention of CBW*, 258.
[81] Seymour Hersh, *Chemical and Biological Warfare: America's Hidden Arsenal* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968).
[82] Stephen L. Endicott, "Germ Warfare and 'Plausible Denial': The Korean War, 1952-1953," *Modern China*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January 1979): 79-104.
[83] The quote continues, "…when deception and perjury are not sufficient, it must also include willful destruction of records when those records are inconsistent with the cover story." As quoted in Ibid., 81.
[84] For an intriguing analysis of China's political exploitation of this affair based upon this premise, see Ruth Rogaski, "Nature, Annhihilation, and Modernity: China's Korean War Germ-Warfare Experience Reconsidered," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61 (May 2002): 381-415.
[85] Cowdrey states, "In China and North Korea the accusation of germ warfare was seemingly used to good effect in genuine public health campaigns, teaching, as no ordinary appeal could have, fundamental lessons in cleanliness and sanitation, vector control, and the need to report epidemic outbreaks." Albert E. Cowdrey, "'Germ Warfare' and Public Health in the Korean Conflict," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 39 (April 1984): 153-172. Cowdrey credits the "obsession with vectors" quote to John Cookson and Judith Nottingham, *A Survey of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 303.

[86] Peter Williams and David Wallace, *Unit 731: The Japanese Army's Secret of Secrets* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989).
[87] It should be noted that this chapter was not included in the edition of the book published in the US ostensibly due to "marketing" concerns. See also the American edition, Peter Williams and David Wallace, *Unit 731: Japan's Secret Biological Warfare in World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1989).
[88] See, for example, Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *A Higher form of Killing: The Secret Story of Gas and Germ Warfare* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Mark A. Ryan, *Chinese Attitudes Toward Nuclear Weapons: China and the United States During the Korean War* (Armonk, NY and London: East Gate/M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989); and William B. Breuer, *Shadow Warriors: The Covert War in Korea* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996).
[89] Whether the publication of this book represents a new phase in the development of the conspiracy theory or whether it is merely an acceleration and expansion of the second is open to interpretation. See, Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, *The United States and Biological Warfare: Secrets from the Early Cold War and Korea* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 185-199.
[90] John Ellis van Courtland Moon, "Dubious Allegations," review of Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, *The United States and Biological Warfare*, in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (May/June 1999): 70-72.
[91] Sheldon Harris, review of Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, *The United States and Biological Warfare*, in *The Journal of American History* 87 (June 2000): 285-286.
[92] See, William Stueck, review of Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, *The United States and Biological Warfare*, in *Pacific Historical Review* 69 (August 2000): 504-505; and Ed Regis, *New York Times Book Review*, 27 June 1999, https://www.nytimes.com/books/99/06/27/reviews/990627.27reg.html.
[93] The quote is from Leitenberg, "New Russian Evidence," op. cit., 196. See also, Kathryn Weathersby, "Deceiving the Deceivers: Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, and the Allegations of Bacteriological Weapons Use in Korea," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 11: (Winter 1998), 176-184. Other essays published by Leitenberg covering much the same ground include: Milton Leitenberg, "Resolution of the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations," *Critical Reviews in Microbiology* 24 (3) (1998): 169-194; Milton Leitenberg, "The Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations Resolved," Center for Pacific Asia Studies at Stockholm University, Occasional Paper 36, May 1998: 1-40; and Milton Leitenberg, "The Korean War Biological Weapon Allegations: Additional Information and Disclosures," *Asian Perspective* 24 (3) (2000): 159-172.
[94] John Perkins, review of Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, *The United States and Biological Warfare*, in *Isis* 92 (June 2001): 425-426.
[95] The Canadian government dropped the treason charges against Dr. James Endicott when US officials refused to allow US BW personnel to participate in a public trial. The Powells and Shuman were acquitted in 1959 due to insufficient evidence. See, Ibid., 426.
[96] Ibid.
[97] See, Jeanne Guillemin, *American Anthrax: Fear, Crime, and the Investigation of the Nation's Deadliest Bioterror Attack* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2011).

[98] David Isenberg, "Did the US use Bioweapons in Korea?," *Asia Times*, 13 February 2003, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/EB13Dg03.html.
[99] Conrad C. Crane, "Chemical and Biological Warfare during the Korean War: Rhetoric and Reality," *Asian Perspectives* 25 (3) (2001): 61-83; and Conrad C. Crane, "'No Practical Capabilities': American Biological and Chemical Warfare Programs during the Korean War," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 45 (Spring 2002): 241-249.
[100] See, Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, "United States Biological Warfare during the Korean War: Rhetoric and Reality," (June 2002), http://www.yorku.ca/sendicot/ReplytoColCrane.htm. Although written in 2002, according to this webpage, as of June 2004, the authors still had not found a scholarly journal willing to publish the essay.
[101] Naito Yasuo, "The Use of Bacteriological Weapons by US Forces during the Korean War Was [a] Fabrication by China and Korea: Uncovered by Classified Documents of the Former Soviet Union," *Sankei Shimbun*, 8 January 1998.
[102] On the problematic nature of the documents and how they came to light outside Russia, see Weathersby, "Deceiving the Deceivers," op. cit., 176.
[103] The last published round appears to belong to Leitenberg, who reports that the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) authenticated the documents in 2010. The Chinese government, however, officially maintains the allegations of US BW use in Korea. See, Milton Leitenberg, "China's False Allegations of the Use of Biological Weapons by the United States during the Korean War," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper* 78 (March 2016), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/chinas-false-allegations-the-use-biological-weapons-the-united-states-during-the-korean?mkt_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRons6XPe%2B%2FhmjTEU5z14uwpW6Og38431UFwdcjKPmjr1YIIRMtlI%2BSLDwEYGJlv6SgFSLHMMa12z7gLXxI%3D
[104] The two most commonly referenced works on this subject in English are Williams and Wallace, *Unit 731*, op. cit., and Sheldon Harris, *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-1945 and the American Cover –Up* (London: Routledge, 2002), both of which are problematic due to a number of errors. More reliable accounts have been written by Japanese historian Tsuneishi Keichi. See, for example, Tsuneishi Keiichi, *731-butai: Seibutsu heiki hanzai no shinjutsu* [Unit 731: The Truth of Biological Warfare Crimes] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), among others.
[105] Olmsted, *Real Enemies*, 80.
[106] Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory*, 121-125. See also, Michael Schaller, review of Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live*, in *The International History Review* 26 (December 2004): 891-893.
[107] Wilcox, *Japan's Secret War*, 242. Similar sentiments were expressed in the documentary, "Japan's Atomic Bomb," The History Channel, West Park Pictures, London, England, original air date 16 August 2005.
[108] Herbert Romerstein, "Disinformation as a KGB Weapon in the Cold War," *The Journal of Intelligence History* 1 (Summer 2001): 54-67.

"You boys must be crazy!" Reconsidering Eisenhower, Ambrose, and Atomic Diplomacy in Asia

Benjamin P. Greene
Bowling Green State University

Abstract
According to biographer Stephen Ambrose, President Dwight D. Eisenhower responded to his advisors' recommendation to use of atomic weapons to assist the besieged French forces defending Dien Bien Phu in 1954 by exclaiming "You boys must be crazy. We can't use those awful things against Asians for the second time in less than ten years. My God." Recent revelations of Ambrose's scholarship, however, challenge whether or not Eisenhower ever uttered the words that appeared prominently over the next twenty-five years in both scholarly analyses and popular biographies. This essay reconsiders the veracity of this quote in the broader context of Eisenhower's consideration of the use of nuclear weapons in Asia.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower's deliberations on using nuclear weapons during Cold War crises in Asia is the subject of a rich body of scholarly literature. Scholars examining the nuclear history of Asia amidst crises in Korea, Indochina, and the Taiwan Strait encounter a confused historical record rife with official government secrecy, clever public dissembling, and delicate discussions with allied nations. The efforts of participants and nations to recast their actions in the most favorable light have only clouded rather than clarified the historical record. As a result, historians have continued to debate issues such as when, how, and why the Eisenhower administration issued nuclear threats, whether they were serious or bluffs, what lessons American decision-makers learned from

their use, and whether exercising "atomic diplomacy" in Asia was shrewd or reckless.

An oft-cited quote in Stephen Ambrose's highly influential biography of Eisenhower is central to many analyses of these enduring questions. Citing an undated interview with Eisenhower, Ambrose wrote that the president in 1954 reacted to a draft proposal to use atomic bombs to support the French in Vietnam by exclaiming, "You boys must be crazy. We can't use those awful things against Asians for a second time in less than ten years. My God."[1] Since it appeared, the arresting quote became a staple of "Eisenhower Revisionism."[2] For some, it illustrated in colorful and powerful terms the view of a president who consistently sought to moderate the more provocative views of his advisors – the prescient president who famously warned in his farewell address against the rise of the military-industrial complex. Ambrose used the quote to punctuate the praise of Eisenhower's champions that "He got us out of Korea and he kept us out of Vietnam."[3] The quote appeared prominently over the next twenty-five years in both academic monographs and popular biographies, though a few skeptics over the years pointed out its inconsistencies with Eisenhower's secret views on employing atomic weapons that have emerged in the archival record.

Recent findings from the Eisenhower Presidential Library, however, revealed the limited number and short duration of Ambrose's interviews with Eisenhower, placing serious doubt about several key quotes from his influential study of the thirty-fourth president.[4] These revelations that raise questions about a quote that appears prominently in much of the scholarly and popular literature inspires a reconsideration of Eisenhower's approach to the use of atomic weapons in Asia. This article assesses inconsistencies between Ambrose's two-volume biography, Eisenhower's memoirs and recollections, and the archival record. It concludes that, contrary to the implication of the arresting quote in Ambrose's biography, Eisenhower seriously considered using atomic weapons against Asians during his presidency on a number of occasions.

Dien Bien Phu

Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954 faced several challenges to the momentum he had developed during his first year in office. Although an armistice had ended America's involvement in the increasingly unpopular conflict in Korea, the Second Red Scare fueled by Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy continued to evoke fears of communist subversion at home and aggression abroad, making the armistice in Korea a dissatisfying conclusion to the war. Critics of Eisenhower's national security strategy, the "New Look", began to question the president's reduction in conventional forces and reliance on a "massive retaliation" from the nation's superior nuclear arsenal to deter communist aggression. The massive *BRAVO* nuclear test in the Pacific in March 1954 increased concerns that the weapons of the thermonuclear age would imperil civilization itself in the event of another world war. Others wondered how the administration could use "tactical" atomic weapons in what Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev would later call "wars of national liberation."

This series of domestic and international developments convinced Eisenhower that he had to contain the spread of communism in Asia, avoid a costly and unpopular ground war that involved U.S. troops, and develop a national security strategy that the nation could afford over an enduring period of sustained tension with the Soviet Union.[5] His administration's effort to resolve this dilemma centered on its publicly stated willingness and its preparedness to use tactical atomic weapons just as a bullet or anything else in the nation's arsenal. Although differing in presentation, purpose, and outcome, nuclear threats, or "atomic diplomacy" may have played a role in the conclusion of the conflict in Korea, the siege of French forces at Dien Bien Phu, and the shelling of Quemoy and Matsu, the Chinese Nationalist-held islands in the Taiwan Strait.

The deteriorating French position in Indochina posed both domestic and international challenges to the administration's effort to contain the spread of communism in Asia. A powerful wing of "Asia Firsters" in Eisenhower's Republican Party skewered President Harry S. Truman for allowing China to fall into the hands of the Communist party. Many focused their scorn on Eisenhower's mentor and benefactor, General George C. Marshall. Of course they were aware of Eisenhower's high

regard for Marshall and gratitude for promoting him above many of his peers to command the western allied forces in Europe during the Second World War. Moreover, they feared that Eisenhower would neglect Asia and focus excessively on Europe, where he had considerable experience during the war and gained even more afterward in his capacity as the first supreme commander of NATO forces.

The First Indochina War between the French and the Viet Minh reached its climax in 1954 amidst this domestic political context. An isolated French outpost at Dien Bien Phu became surrounded by a numerically superior force of Viet Minh who had unexpectedly emplaced artillery in the surrounding hills. Would the Eisenhower administration use American forces to save the outpost at Dien Bien Phu and to bolster the deteriorating French position in Indochina? That spring, the administration welcomed a visit to Washington by a top French general, deliberated throughout several long meetings, consulted with members of Congress, and sent Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to London and Paris for discussions with the nation's strongest European allies. With Congressional leaders dubious of another ground war in Asia and the British adamantly unwilling to assist the French, the administration limited its support to approving an earlier French request for a limited number of medium range B-26 bombers along with American ground crews to maintain them.[6]

At a meeting on April 29th of the National Security Council (NSC), Eisenhower and his advisors considered the dire situation at Dien Bien Phu and the deterioration of the overall French position in Indochina. While some advisors, most notably Harold Stassen, encouraged the introduction of American ground forces, others, such as Vice President Richard M. Nixon maintained that limited carrier-based airstrikes would be sufficient to bolster the overall morale of French forces and their Vietnamese allies. Eisenhower, aware that his predecessor had been blamed for "losing" China to communism and for committing U.S. ground forces to what became a bloody stalemate in Korea, sought the best means to contain the spread of communism without committing U.S. military resources to a country that he privately did not consider strategically significant. Fundamental to his "New Look" national security strategy was

collective defense. Applied to the situation in Indochina, Eisenhower insisted that any U.S. participation must be part of a "united action" that included a significant commitment of military forces from the nation's allies in the region. Moreover, he also questioned whether any airstrikes would have much of an operational impact on the situation at Dien Bien Phu. In sum, Eisenhower insisted that the U.S. not act unilaterally and he was skeptical of the value of airstrikes against guerilla forces. His willingness to use atomic weapons was contingent upon their delivery as part of an internationally-sanctioned operation and that they would accomplish his intended objectives. Significantly, moral considerations on the use of atomic weapons were absent from his calculations.[7]

The following day, Eisenhower's National Security Advisor, Robert Cutler, briefed the president and vice president on wider ranging discussions on the situation in Indochina in the NSC Planning Board. The board occupied what McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's National Security Advisor, described as "the hypothetical world of staff analysis."[8] Their interagency discussions on this occasion included the possibility of using one or two tactical atomic weapons to increase French morale. According to Cutler, Eisenhower and Nixon considered that " it was very unlikely that a "new weapon"[atomic bomb] could effectively be used in the jungles around DBP [Dien Bien Phu], and that well piloted Corsair strikes with HE [high explosive] bombs and Napalm bombs would be more effective." It also noted that the U.S. may consider loaning France "a few" atomic bombs and that the primary value of the American atomic arsenal was its value as a deterrent to Chinese intervention rather than any actual combat use in Indochina. A hand-written comment in the margin acknowledged the legal restrictions on providing an atomic bomb to the French. Cutler's memorandum indicated that Eisenhower's overall emphasis was on forming a regional grouping for collective defense, an initiative that ultimately led to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). In sum, the record of the conversation indicates Eisenhower's skepticism over the operational utility and the legal implications of transferring an atomic weapon to the French, but reveals no qualms about morality or concerns about public opinion.[9]

In his own account of this conversation in his 1978 memoirs, Richard Nixon wrote that Eisenhower turned to Cutler and said, "'First, I certainly do not think that the atom bomb can be used by the United States unilaterally, and second, I agree with Dick that we do not have to mention it to anybody before we get some agreement on United action'."[10] Thus Nixon attributes the responses Cutler recorded to Eisenhower. Significantly, Nixon did not indicate that Eisenhower expressed any strong objections to using atomic weapons based upon morality, perception, or precedent.

Ambrose's account of the briefing neglects to mention that Nixon was also present, yet quotes the president as providing the same initial response printed in Nixon's published memoirs: "Eisenhower told Cutler, 'I certainly do not think that the atom bomb can be used by the United States unilaterally.'" Ambrose then moves beyond Nixon's account, writing that "Eisenhower turned on Cutler. 'You boys must be crazy. We can't use those awful things against Asians for the second time in less than ten years. My God'"[11] The salient passage thus moves beyond both the details of the archival record of the meeting as well as Nixon's recollection. It would be odd for such a forceful reaction to escape the contemporary account of Cutler and Nixon's memoirs. Ambrose's notes attribute his source of this quote to an undated interview with Eisenhower.

As the rich quote appeared in countless books and articles in the first twenty-five years after it emerged from Ambrose's biography, only a few analysts questioned its accuracy and implications. Moreover, those that did so challenged Eisenhower's memory rather than Ambrose's scholarship. Richard Betts, a political scientist, noted in 1987 that Eisenhower's "recollection does not seem quite consistent with Cutler's contemporary record." For Betts, the quote was at odds with the documentary record of discussions on the possible use of atomic weapons in Indochina.[12] Writing in 2007, one historian also questioned Eisenhower's memory of the discussion. In his view, the quote was not only inconsistent with deliberations over Indochina, it also contradicted Eisenhower's willingness, at times even apparent eagerness, to use atomic weapons against Asians as part of the administration's response to crises in Korea and in the Taiwan Straits.[13]

The story of the powerful but rarely questioned quote took another turn in 2010. In an article in the *New Yorker*, Richard Rayner reported the stunning discovery that "Eisenhower saw Ambrose only three times, for a total less than five hours."[14] Tim Rives, deputy director of the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, determined this as part of his background research for an event at the library. Rives' revelation stunned historians familiar with the exceptional number of lively quotes attributed to interviews with the former president within Ambrose's biography on matters ranging from the Rosenberg case to Dien Bien Phu. Many concur with Rives, that "the discussion of so many diverse subjects in less than three hours strains credulity."[15]

What are the implications of this discovery for our understanding of Eisenhower's view on the use of atomic weapons in Indochina? Significantly, the archival record supports the first part of the quote. Eisenhower did not forcefully advocate the use of atomic weapons in Indochina at this point and he certainly underscored that the U.S. could not intervene in any significant manner unilaterally. The second sentence indicating Eisenhower's revulsion at the thought of using atomic weapons against Asians, however, is strikingly at odds with documents that reveal his serious consideration, at times even apparent eagerness, to use them in other crises in Asia. Moreover, it is not the first time Eisenhower or Ambrose may have sought to recast the president's record to present him as either opposing or hesitant to use atomic weapons in Asia.

Hiroshima

Eisenhower's efforts to shape historical memory of his approach to the atomic age antedated his presidency. In *Crusade in Europe*, his 1948 memoir of his wartime command of western allied forces in Europe during the Second World War, Eisenhower revealed that he had stated his opposition to the use of the atomic bombs against Japan. According to Eisenhower, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who was visiting Europe in July 1945 to attend the Potsdam Conference, informed him of the test of the atomic bomb in New Mexico. Eisenhower recalled that he "expressed the hope that we would never have to use such a thing against any enemy because I disliked seeing the United States take the lead in introducing into war something as horrible

and destructive as this new weapon was described to be." In addition, he also "mistakenly had some faint hope" that the technology would remain a secret if the bomb had never been tested.[16] In this initial recollection of his discussion with Stimson, Eisenhower cautiously indicated his discomfort at introducing a new powerful weapon into armed conflict. He expressed neither an understanding of the operational situation in the Pacific nor an awareness of the desire of the some within the Japanese government to seek a negotiated surrender. He also did not comment upon the projected casualty estimates for the invasion of Kyushu, the southern-most of the five Japanese home islands, planned for November 1945.

In the first of his two-volume presidential memoirs, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*, Eisenhower in 1963 once again asserted that he had questioned the atomic bombing of Japan. Curiously, his recollection fifteen years later suggested that his critique of the planned bombings was more forceful in presentation and broader in argumentation. In *Mandate for Change*, Eisenhower recalled that he "felt there were a number of cogent reasons to question the wisdom of such an act." Moving beyond his concerns about setting a precedent that he revealed in *Crusade in Europe*, Eisenhower's later recollection included an argument that the atomic bombs were militarily unnecessary. He wrote in 1963 that he had "voiced to him (Stimson) my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at the very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of 'face.'"[17] Fifteen years later, Eisenhower recalled presenting his opposition to the bombings as not only morally questionable, but also militarily unnecessary.

In a private letter in 1965 to Stimson's wartime assistant, John McCloy, Eisenhower provided yet additional details of what had become an increasingly forceful exchange with Stimson. Eisenhower recalled that their conversation occurred in a private meeting Eisenhower provided Stimson shortly after the atomic

bombs had been tested successfully. Eisenhower wrote that his "instant reaction was an urge that we do not use it; my reason being that I was certain that Japan was already licked and wanted nothing as much as to get out of the war, and I did not want our nation to be the first in using such a thing." He then added a third component to his opposition that had not appeared in the previous two accounts: "He [Stimson] was under the influence of a statement from military sources who figured it would cost 1,000,000 men to invade Japan successfully. I, of course, thought this is a tremendous error in calculation."[18] Although the meaning of "cost" is unclear, it appears that Eisenhower is referring to lives lost, rather than casualties (combining wounded, killed, and missing) or the number of forces required to participate in an invasion. What is clear is that Eisenhower in 1965 recalled citing in July 1945 estimates and figures that simply did not exist. As Barton J. Bernstein has carefully detailed, assertions of the number of lives saved and recollections of the pre-bomb estimates of the number of casualties in an invasion of Japan grew significantly following the war. As more historians and citizens questioned the morality and the necessity of using the bombs to compel Japan's surrender, wartime leaders asserted that the atomic bombs had saved an increasing number of American lives. In fact, Eisenhower in a 1955 letter recalled that Stimson had said the bomb "would save hundreds of thousands of American lives."[19] It appears that Eisenhower embraced these increasing figures, amending them in his evolving account of his conversation with Stimson.[20] As the years progressed, Eisenhower clearly broadened and deepened his description of the extent of his opposition.

Eisenhower's changing recollection of his opposition to the atomic bombings poses a number of interpretive challenges to historians. First of all, Bernstein's astute analysis of the matter seriously questions whether Eisenhower ever stated his views on the atomic bombings in July, 1945. According to notes by Stimson's aide, Eisenhower and the Secretary of War on July 27th talked informally about the bomb. The notes, however, made no mention of Eisenhower's reaction. Significantly, Stimson's diary sheds no light on nature of the conversation. Although Stimson's hectic travel schedule made his diary entries

briefer than usual, it would be atypical for him to omit such a strident challenge to the prevailing assumption to use the atomic bomb against Japan.[21] Moreover, those who knew Eisenhower best considered it completely out of character for him to have forcefully countered the views of a superior on a matter that he knew little about and was out of his command's area of responsibility.[22]

Stephen Ambrose, in the first of his two-volume biography of Eisenhower, reached beyond Eisenhower's changing recollection, asserting that Eisenhower had met with President Harry S. Truman and recommended against using the bomb.[23] Ambrose later confirmed that he pieced together his account based upon his knowledge that Eisenhower met Truman on July 20th, his belief of Eisenhower's later assertions that he had stated his opposition to the bombings to Stimson, and his acceptance of Truman's 1952 claim that the president had held a meeting with his leading advisors to decide whether or not the bomb should be used. Yet none of Ambrose's sources indicated that Eisenhower and Truman had even discussed the bomb, much less that Eisenhower expressed any opposition to its use. As we have seen, there are serious questions about Eisenhower's assertion that he indicated his dissent to Stimson. Most importantly, Truman's claim to have discussed whether or not to use the bombs is unsubstantiated by any other participant.[24]

Even if we are to accept Eisenhower's assertions that he had a conversation about the atomic bomb with Stimson, how do we make sense of the differences in Eisenhower's account of the exchange? Was Eisenhower more willing to reveal the extent of his opposition after Stimson passed away in 1950? Had Eisenhower's memory of the details of a brief conversation with Stimson sharpened over the course of fifteen years? Most analysts would argue that memory fades, rather than sharpens. Although it is questionable whether Eisenhower's memory of his conversation with Stimson became more lucid over the fifteen year period, it is clear that his understanding of atomic weapons, and his concerns about the increased dangers of the nuclear age with the advent of thermonuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles, changed over the fifteen year period.[25] One possible explanation is that Eisenhower simply succumbed to a

common tendency to grant foresight and imbue himself with knowledge of facts and events that occurred later, providing him prescience and perspective that he simply did not possess at the time. Although we will likely never know what conversation actually took place between Eisenhower and Stimson in 1945, Eisenhower's consistent assertion that he opposed the atomic bombings of Japan cultivated a public narrative of a president hesitant to use atomic weapons in Asia.

Korea

Eisenhower's publicly-stated assertion that he questioned the use of atomic weapons against Japan suggests that he would have been hesitant to use them in Korea. Yet the declassified record of private, top-secret discussions on the situation in Korea at the dawn of his presidency in the first half of 1953 presents a sharply different view. Eisenhower in 1952 ran for president amidst mounting concern over the stalemate in Korea. A Gallup Poll conducted the month before the presidential election found that more Americans than not considered it a mistake to send U.S. forces to Korea.[26] Emphasizing his credentials as the victorious commander of Allied forces in Europe during WWII, Eisenhower pledged that if elected he would "go to Korea," suggesting he had a plan to bring the war to a favorable conclusion. The month before the election, the United States detonated the world's first thermonuclear device, providing a significant edge in strategic superiority over the Soviet Union. Between his election and his inauguration, the president-elect fulfilled his campaign pledge by embarking upon a trip to Korea. Shortly after he entered the White House, Eisenhower held a number of meetings with his top advisors on how to advance the stalled negotiations toward an armistice in Korea. What emerges from the declassified records of these meetings is a president seemingly eager to use atomic weapons against Asians for a second time in eight years.

According to the declassified records of a February 1953 NSC meeting, Eisenhower suggested that the Kaesong sanctuary, a 28 square mile area that contained massed enemy troops and supplies, would provide a good target for tactical atomic weapons. He suggested to his advisors that they should consider using one there. Eisenhower's West Point classmate

and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Omar Bradley feared that using atomic weapons risked alienating the nation's allies. Eisenhower tartly countered that the allies should be prepared to commit additional ground forces if they were unwilling to approve the U.S. use of tactical atomic weapons. His influential Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, expressed concerns about international public opinion, asserting that the Soviets had effectively built a moral distinction between atomic and conventional weapons.[27]

When the possible use of atomic weapons arose again the following month, Eisenhower agreed with Dulles that the administration should break down the taboo associated with atomic weapons and consider them as any other weapon in the nation's arsenal. The records of the NSC discussions reveal Eisenhower's determination that "somehow or other the tabu [sic] which surrounds the use of atomic weapons would have to be destroyed." Curiously, this moral distinction Eisenhower and Dulles were seeking to demolish was similar to the objection Eisenhower repeatedly asserted he had raised to Stimson prior to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In Korea, Eisenhower not only sought to break down the moral distinction over the use of atomic weapons, he was also convinced their use would serve a useful operational or strategic purpose. The president acknowledged that there may be limited appropriate targets for tactical atomic weapons in Korea, but asserted that using them would be worth the cost in adverse allied and international opinion if they could "achieve a substantial victory over the Communist forces" and "get to a line at the waist of Korea."[28] A month later, Eisenhower once again asserted to his advisors that he "had reached the point of being convinced that we have got to consider the atomic bomb as simply another weapon in our arsenal."[29] Although Bradley expressed doubts about the usefulness of atomic weapons against dug-in troops in mountainous terrain, the president urged his advisors to consider using atomic weapons against targets ranging from North Korean airfields to fortified defensive positions.[30] The view that emerges from the record of declassified meetings on Korea is of Bradley's cautious military advice restraining a president who appeared willing, perhaps even eager, to use tactical atomic weapons in Korea.

In his presidential memoirs, Eisenhower omits his inclination to use tactical atomic weapons in North Korea during the first half of 1953. Instead, he perpetuates an officially sponsored myth, likely originally fostered to justify the viability of the New Look and answer its critics, that threats to use atomic weapons proved decisive in compelling the Chinese to support an armistice in Korea that summer.[31] Eisenhower's arguments in his memoirs echo several public assertions from John Foster Dulles, most notably his 1956 interview in *Life* magazine. In it, Dulles insisted that he had issued an "unmistakable warning" to China that, in the absence of any progress in the peace negotiations, the U.S. would expand the war, lifting any previous inhibitions on the type of weapons and where they would be employed. In Dulles' view, this clear threat compelled the Chinese to support a negotiated settlement.[32] Historians, using declassified records of meetings held during this period, challenge Dulles' assertions, arguing that it is far from clear that the threats, which were much more discreet than Dulles suggested, proved more decisive than other factors. In fact, Soviet support for the war declined following the death of Stalin and uprisings in Eastern Europe. Most importantly, Communist China also sought an end to the conflict to pursue higher priorities, such as recovering from their own civil war and preparing for a possible assault on Taiwan.[33] Curiously, Eisenhower does not acknowledge these factors in his memoirs, choosing instead to bolster Dulles's earlier public arguments that atomic threats were decisive. Significantly, Eisenhower's assessment in his memoirs ten years later and in public and private conversations thereafter differs from the documentary record; the minutes of an NSC meeting on 23 July 1953 reveal that Eisenhower himself did not believe that the threats were responsible for the Chinese agreement on the armistice.[34]

Taiwan Strait

The evidence that Eisenhower practiced atomic diplomacy against Communist China during the two Taiwan Strait crises in the 1950s is much stronger. The threats took the form of inconspicuous diplomatic exchanges, saber-rattling military maneuvers, and subtle public statements. One of the most prominent examples of the latter occurred amidst the crisis of

1954-1955, when Communist China shelled and threatened to invade the Chinese Nationalist-held islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Asked at his press conference on March 16, 1955 if the U.S. would use tactical atomic weapons in a general war in Asia, Eisenhower replied, "I can see no reason why they [tactical atomic weapons] shouldn't be used just exactly as you would a bullet or anything else…yes, of course they would be used."[35] When Joseph Harsch, a reporter for the *Christian Science Monitor*, pursued the matter further a week later, asking specifically if he would conceive of using tactical atomic weapons against the Chinese in the crisis over Quemoy and Matsu, Eisenhower responded with a classic performance of evasive semantic wanderings to "confuse" his audience that has become a staple of Eisenhower revisionism.[36]

Although the purpose of Eisenhower's ambiguity is now quite clear, the advisability of his tactics remains in dispute. Was Eisenhower's handling of the Taiwan Strait crisis, as Ambrose assesses it, "a tour de force…of deliberate ambiguity and deception" or was it a reckless and unnecessary case of brinkmanship in an area not vital to U.S. national security?[37] Eisenhower advanced the former interpretation in his memoirs. He asserted that his administration kept control over a complex series of events, rejected extreme recommendations, maintained its freedom of action, and thread its way with "watchfulness and determination, through narrow and dangerous waters between appeasement and global war."[38] Some Eisenhower revisionists writing in the 1980s largely concur with Eisenhower's interpretation. For them, Eisenhower shrewdly issued veiled public threats that retained his initiative and arrested his adversary without actually jeopardizing his credibility or needlessly risking a broader conflict.[39] Declassified records released after the publication of those seminal works strongly suggest that Eisenhower was actually firmly committed to using nuclear weapons against Asians if the Chinese called his bluff. In this first crisis in the Taiwan Strait, Eisenhower's ambiguity may have come dangerously close to provoking his enemy rather than giving them sober pause.[40] Once again, Eisenhower's memoirs and Ambrose's biography minimized how close he came to employing atomic weapons against Communist China. The assertion that Eisenhower in 1954 was revolted at

the suggestion of using atomic weapons again in Asia so soon after Hiroshima and Nagasaki contradicts the now declassified record of his willingness to consider using them in crises over Korea in 1953 and the Taiwan Strait in 1955.

Post-Presidency

After Eisenhower left office, President's John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson sought his private advice and his public support during a number of crises abroad. As the Kennedy administration in 1962 considered deploying U.S. ground forces to Laos, Eisenhower privately suggested that they may need to be supported with tactical atomic weapons.[41] A few years later, Eisenhower instructed Lyndon B. Johnson on the utility of threatening the Chinese with atomic strikes. Restating his assertion that nuclear threats had convinced China to modify their stance in the negotiations toward the armistice in Korea, Eisenhower in February 1965 asserted that a clear nuclear threat to China would deter them from intervening as the U.S. began in 1965 a major deployment of American ground forces in South Vietnam.[42]

Although the evidence that the Johnson administration followed Eisenhower's advice is inconclusive, the former president may have sought to provide them the benefits of another of his nuclear bluffs. When asked at a news conference in Chicago in October, 1966 if he would preclude the use of atomic weapons to end the war in Vietnam, Eisenhower replied that he "would not automatically preclude anything." Recalling his veiled threats that he believed led to the armistice in Korea, Eisenhower maintained that he "never *openly* threatened the use of atomic weapons" but that he made it clear that he would no longer be "restrained" on the types of weapons he would use or the locations in which he would utilize them. If Eisenhower had been hoping that a public bluff would assist the Johnson administration, he must have been pleased that a headline in the *New York Times* the following day read "Eisenhower Would Not Bar Atom War in Vietnam."[43]

One final episode of Eisenhower's atomic advocacy occurred in January 1968 when North Korea seized the U.S.S. *Pueblo* and its crew. Eisenhower advised President Johnson to consider using atomic weapons to bomb the bridges across the

Yalu to isolate North Korea from possible Chinese intervention if the administration implemented a series of retaliatory steps.[44] Eisenhower's frequent and consistent recommendation to his successors that they consider using atomic weapons appears especially cavalier. Perhaps this reflects Eisenhower's opinion that both presidents were either reluctant to use military force or that the nation's adversaries considered them to be so. Regardless of Eisenhower's reasons, the counsel the former president dispensed to his successors contained a willingness to use atomic weapons in Asia that is sharply at odds with the reflection he purportedly uttered to Ambrose in an interview during this same period.

Conclusion

The analysis above demonstrates the difficulties of evaluating Eisenhower's record on the use of atomic weapons in Asia. Eisenhower, with Ambrose as his admiring biographer, carefully cultivated the image of a president who was horrified at the thought of nuclear war, yet at the same time issued atomic threats in a manner that was necessary, prudent, and successful. Eisenhower's efforts to recast his past are not exceptional. Memoirists often succumb to the natural human tendency to place their actions in the most favorable light. After the fact, Eisenhower recalled providing prescient counsel on the Bonus Army March, the atomic bombings of Japan, and post-war relations with the Soviet Union. Yet his later accounts appear at odds with his character, his attitudes at the time of the events, or both. The archival evidence to support Eisenhower's remembrances is weak on the first two cases, and contradictory on the third. Thus Eisenhower's self-serving recollections of his uses of atomic diplomacy are neither exceptional to memoirists, nor to Eisenhower's retellings of other episodes.[45]

This perspective provides a possible explanation for the curious quote in Ambrose's biography asserting Eisenhower's revulsion at the suggestion in 1954 to use atomic weapons in Asia. As we have seen, the quote is inconsistent with the president's private views on using atomic weapons against Asians during crises in Korea, the Taiwan Strait, and Vietnam. It is consistent, however, with Eisenhower's post-war efforts, to assert publicly that he indicated his opposition to the atomic

bombings of Japan to Stimson. As we have seen, Ambrose went even further than Eisenhower on this argument, asserting that Eisenhower had also informed Truman that he opposed the bombing. Just as we will likely never know what Eisenhower and Stimson in 1945 discussed about the bomb, we will likely never know if the prominent quote that appeared in Ambrose's biography originated from Eisenhower's own faulty memory, his conscious effort to shape his historical legacy with inaccurate information, or from a sympathetic biographer who fabricated the quote in the belief that it accurately revealed the way his subject would have recalled that particular episode in Asia.[46] What is now clear is that Ambrose carefully courted the former wartime commander and president, eager to receive access to him and his records in exchange for burnishing his reputation in both capacities that had taken a beating in the early-1960s.[47]

There is one other plausible explanation, in addition to his desire to influence his historical legacy, for the inconsistencies in Eisenhower's post-presidential writings and interviews on his atomic diplomacy. His remembrances reflect, consciously or not, the dramatic transformation in his understanding of nuclear weapons during his presidency and beyond. Consequently, his recollections claim remarkable prescience on matters that he simply did not possess when the events occurred.[48] His increasing comprehension of the consequences of nuclear warfare, his awareness of the growing Soviet nuclear arsenal and his recognition of the implications of intercontinental ballistic missiles likely altered the memory of his inclination in the mid-1950s to use tactical atomic weapons. Similarly, the realization that his adversaries never called his bluffs and that the crises, whether by skill or luck, did not escalate imbues his memoirs and later interviews with a sense of confidence he and other participants did not possess at the time.

This effort to reconcile the contradictions between public and private records, and between contemporary accounts and later recollections, presents a cautionary tale for those assessing memoirs, interviews, and sympathetic biographies. Analysts must neither dismiss them as manufactured nor accept them uncritically without a thorough effort to corroborate them with contemporary accounts and documents from the archival record. Those who fail to do so may be the ones who "must be crazy."

Notes

[1] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*. Vol 2, *The President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 185.
[2] For an overview of the development of Eisenhower Revisionism, see Stephen G. Rabe, "Eisenhower Revisionism," *Diplomatic History* 17 (winter 1993): 97-115. The most influential works of Eisenhower revisionism are Richard H. Immerman, "Eisenhower and Dulles: Who Made the Decisions?" *Political Psychology* 1 (Autumn 1970: 21-38 and Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). Other popular and influential works include Ambrose, *Eisenhower*. Vol 2 and Robert Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
[3] Ambrose, *Eisenhower*. Vol 2, 185.
[4] Richard Rayner, "Channelling Ike." *New Yorker*. 86.10 (April 26, 2010): 19.
[5] Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Forged an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[6] For a thorough analysis of this period, see Fredrik Logevall Pulitzer-Prize winning *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012).
[7] Memorandum of Discussion at the 194th Meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), 29 Apr. 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (herafter *FRUS), 1952-1954* 13/2: 1431-1445.
[8] McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), 269-270.
[9] Although Cutler prepared a memorandum of his discussion, he did not distinguish between the responses of the president or the vice president, simply recording "their" views. Memorandum by Cutler to Smith, 30 Apr. 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954* 13/2: 1445-48.
[10] Richard M. Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard M. Nixon.* (New York: Grosset, 1978), 154.
[11] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*. Vol 2, 184.
[12] Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1987), 51.
[13] Benjamin P. Greene, *Eisenhower, Science Advice, and the Nuclear Test-Ban Debate, 1945-1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 40-45. Another brief analysis of the contradictions in this quote later appeared in Matthew Jones, *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race, and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 212-216. In a brief comment in a footnote, Ira Chernus also suggested that Eisenhower's "reminiscences were sometimes less than accurate." See Chernus, *Apocalypse Management: Eisenhower and the Discourse of National Insecurity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 259 n24.
[14] Richard Rayner, "Channelling Ike." *New Yorker*. 86.10 (April 26, 2010): 19.
[15] For an initial assessment of the impact of Rives's revelations, see Ira Chernus, "Ambrose on Eisenhower: The Impact of a Single Faulty Quotation." *History News Network*, May 16, 2010. http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/126636. For Rives' view, see Timothy D. Rives, "Ambrose and Eisenhower: A View from the Stacks in Abilene." *History News Network*, May 17, 2010.

http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/126705. For a response from the influential historian's son, see Hugh Ambrose, "Eisenhower and My Father, Stephen Ambrose." *History News Network*, May 20, 2010. http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/126907

[16] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1948), 443.

[17] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years, 1953-1956: Mandate for Change* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), 380-81.

[18] Eisenhower to John McCloy, 18 June 1965, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas (hereafter DDEL), Eisenhower Post Presidential Papers, Secretary's Series, Correspondence Subseries, Box 14, McA--.

[19] Eisenhower to William D. Pawley, 19 April 1955, DDEL, Eisenhower Papers as President, Name Series, Box 25. Pawley.

[20] Barton J. Bernstein, "Reconsidering Truman's Claim of 'Half a Million American Lives' Saved by the Atomic Bomb: The Construction and Deconstruction of a Myth," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 22/1 (1999): 54-95.

[21] Sean Malloy*, Atomic Tragedy: Henry L. Stimson and the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb Against Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 138.

[22] Barton J. Bernstein, "Ike and Hiroshima: Did He Oppose It?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 10 (September 1987): 377-389.

[23] Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, Vol. I, *Soldier, General of the Army, and President-Elect, 1890-1952* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 426, 596.

[24] Bernstein, "Ike and Hiroshima," 383-384. For Bernstein's comments on his exchange with Ambrose, see Ibid., 388, n. 30-31.

[25] One overlooked early skeptic who attributed Eisenhower's experiences in the White House for his 1963 account that he was more forceful in stating his concerns about the bomb to Stimson in 1945 is Richard Rovere, "The Way Was Clear," *New Yorker*, 39 (16 Nov. 1963), 236-37.

[26] For a summary of Gallup Polls on attitudes toward the Korean War, see Frank Newport, "American Public Opinion on Iraq: Five Conclusions," 20 June 2006. http://www.gallup.com/poll/23374/American-Public-Opinion-Iraq-Five-Conclusions.aspx?g_source=korean war mistake&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles

[27] Memorandum of Discussion at the 131st Meeting of the NSC, 11 Feb. 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54,* 15: 769-72.

[28] Memorandum of Discussion at a Special Meeting of the NSC, 31 Mar. 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54,* 15: 825-27.

[29] Memorandum of Discussion at the 143rd Meeting of the NSC, 6 May 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54,* 15: 975-79.

[30] Memorandum of Discussion at the 144th Meeting of the NSC, 13 May 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54,* 15: 1012-17.

[31] Eisenhower, *Mandate*, 178-181. Although Eisenhower did not approve NSC 162/2, which codified the New Look, until October 1953, the ideas therein were present earlier in the year when the administration issued its veiled threats.

[32] James Shepley, "How Dulles Averted War," *Life* (16 Jan. 1956): 70-72.

[33] For skeptical views of the effectiveness of Eisenhower's threats, see Rosemary J. Foot, "Nuclear Coercion and the Ending of the Korean Conflict," *International Security* 13 (winter 1988/1989): 92-112; Sean L. Malloy, "A 'Paper Tiger?' Nuclear Weapons, Atomic Diplomacy, and the Korean War," *The New England*

Journal of History 60 (fall 2003-spring 2004): 227-252; and Edward C. Keefer, "President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korean War," *Diplomatic History* 10 (summer 1986): 267-89. For contrary views that support Dulles's claim, see Michael Schaller, "U.S. Policy in the Korean War," *International Security* 11 (winter 1986-1987): 162-6; Daniel Calingaert, "Nuclear Weapons and the Korean War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 11 (June 1988): 177-202. For contingency planning on the use of A-bombs in the expansion of the war see Conrad C. Crane, "To Avert Impending Disaster: American Military Plans to Use Atomic Weapons During the Korea War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23 (June 2000): 72-88 and *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Michael Jackson, "Beyond Brinksmanship: Eisenhower, Nuclear War Fighting, and Korea, 1953-1968," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35/1 (March 2005), 52-75.

[34] Eisenhower, *Mandate*, 178-181. Memo of Discussion at the 156th Meeting of the NSC, 23 July 1953, *FRUS, 1952-54*, 15: 1420-1423.

[35] Eisenhower Press Conference, 16 Mar. 1955, *Public Papers of the Presidents* (herafter *PPP), Eisenhower, 1955*, 332.

[36] Eisenhower Press Conference, 23 Mar. 1955, ibid., 358. See Eisenhower's comments in his memoirs that he hoped his press conference comments would "have some effect in persuading the Chinese Communists of the strength of our determination." Eisenhower also reveals in his memoirs that he told his press secretary, Jim Hagerty, that if that question came up, he would "just confuse them." Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 477-78.

[37] Ambrose, *Eisenhower,* 2*:* 244-45.

[38] Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, 483.

[39] Ambrose agreed with Robert Divine's earlier analysis that Eisenhower's approach maintained his flexibility. According to Divine, "the beauty of Eisenhower's policy is that to this day no one can be sure whether or not he would have responded militarily to an invasion of the offshore islands, and whether he would have used nuclear weapons." See Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*, 61-66.

[40] Gordon H. Chang's analysis of this episode, using additional declassified documents, concludes that, though Eisenhower's public remarks were ambiguous, there was no ambiguity in Eisenhower's own mind about whether or not he would use nuclear weapons; he was willing and prepared to use them to defend Taiwan if deterrence failed. See Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 116-142.

[41] Richard M. Filipink, Jr., *Dwight Eisenhower and American Foreign Policy during the 1950s: An American Lion in Winter* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 44.

[42] Memo of a Meeting with President Johnson, 17 Feb. 1965. *FRUS 1964-68* 2: 298-308. See also Nina Tannenwald, "Nuclear Weapons and the Vietnam War" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29.4 (August 2006): 675-722.

[43] Emphasis added, "Eisenhower Would Not Bar Atom War in Vietnam," *New York Times*, 4 October 1966, 9. *New York Time*s, 11 October 1966, 35. Filipink, 98-99;

[44] Michael Jackson, "Beyond Brinksmanship: Eisenhower, Nuclear War Fighting, and Korea, 1953-1968," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35/1 (March 2005), 68-70.

[45] For Eisenhower's comments on the Bonus March, see Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends.* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 215-218.
[46] One recent biographer of Eisenhower, Jean Edward Smith, uses the quote as an epigraph. Although Smith acknowledges the Rayner article and that one must approach Ambrose's citations to interviews skeptically, Smith believes "this one rings true." See Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace* (New York: Random House, 2012), 607, 614-15, 849n.
[47] Rives, "Ambrose and Eisenhower: A View from the Stacks in Abilene."
[48] For a valuable discussion on the use of memoirs and other remembrances as sources, see Bernstein, "Ike and Hiroshima," 384-85 and Bernstein, "Reconsidering the 'Atomic General': Leslie R. Groves," *Journal of Military History* 67 (July 2003): 883-920.

"With Complete Disregard for his Personal Safety:" Adventures in Writing Accurate Accounts of Military Combat

Roxanne Mills and Randy Mills
Oakland City University

Abstract
Military historians attempting to write accurate accounts of combat frequently run into the problem of inconsistencies among sources. This is especially true for writers using letters and interviews taken shortly after a combat episode, along with interviews taken many years after the fighting. There is little research available, however, that seeks to examine the dynamics of this problem or that suggests ways of dealing with such inconsistencies. This essay shares the experiences of two coauthors of a book about combat in Vietnam and how the authors confronted the issue of contradictions in various accounts.

"When the Purpose of Narrative Changes"

Military historians wishing to write with reasonable accuracy about instances of battles are often faced with the problem of inconsistencies among different eye witness accounts and other primary sources. In writing earlier books and articles about American soldiers in combat, we too have often been faced with such a problem, but the issue was made especially clear to us while writing a recent book about an Indiana soldier, Richard "Dick" Wolfe, who was killed in Vietnam at the battle of Xom Bung on 6 January 1968. When he died, Wolfe was fighting alongside Alpha Company comrades, all of whom had unexpectedly stumbled onto a well-hidden VC base camp occupied by a much greater force of enemy troops.

While attempting to write a narrative that nailed down the particulars of that day, especially the circumstances of Dick

Wolfe's death, we were soon staggered by the discovery of several conflicts among the accounts we had gathered. Certainly, the fog of battle creates a major obstacle for any historian seeking to write accurate narratives about combat. In this essay, we share some of the problems we encountered in this regard and some of the ways we responded to the problem.

Initially, on first read, our sources regarding the bitter struggle where Dick Wolfe perished seem consistent and often offered rich detail. Sources included diary accounts; the company commander's personal memorandum notebook; the letters of two Alpha Company soldiers written shortly after the battle; official after-battle reports, a personal journal narrative from artillery Forward Observer, Lieutenant John Swartz; a number of personal interviews taken many years after the event; medal citations for several Silver Stars awards and a Bronze Star award; and, an audio tape of military radio transmission of the battle recorded that day. Once we started writing about the portion of the battle where Wolfe died; however, as we started blending these various accounts, we discovered some major differences among them. This included questions as seemingly simple as how many Alpha Company men were on that day's search and destroy sweep and, more importantly, how Dick Wolfe actually performed and died. Much of the inconsistency appeared between accounts given shortly after the battle and those given decades later. There is some prior research that has touched upon this latter issue.

Fred H. Allison, in his article, "Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perceptions over Time," closely examined the differences in two verbal accounts given by the same Marine about a firefight in Vietnam. The first interview was taken shortly after combat and the latter one came thirty years later. His research suggested problems concerning accuracy are embedded in both fresh and later combat veteran interviews.

> Contemporary combat interviews, done within hours of the event, although disjointed and narrowly detailed, are an actuate portrayal of what an individual experienced in combat. They give the most immediate view of the event before the memory has worked to organize and interrupt the event that initially might not have been orderly or

> understandable. . . . Later interviews with veterans are valuable, certainly, and perhaps more understandable to those who are not ensconced in the context of the event. The weakness of later interviews is that one's memory naturally works to either forget the horrific experience or make sense of it. Making sense of it means providing explanations, context, drama, value, significance, and justification. . . . An analogy would be comparing a photograph of an event with a painting done later of the same event. . . . They both portray the event; one is stark, and bland, while the latter is appealing to the eye, evocative, and interpretive.[1]

Prosser found similar results in her work collecting the memories of American WWII combat veterans. Comparing information given at different phases of time and different types of memory artifacts underscored that these veterans' recollections evolved over the course of their lives "as the purpose of [their] narratives changed and events were included or excluded."[2] In short, these "alterations" seemed to occur as time passed and the combat veterans' perspectives changed. Prosser noted, in this regard, that

- letters written at the time of combat tended to describe how they survived the war;
- later memoirs offered an understanding of why they survived; and,
- later interviews typically discussed the actual experiences.

Prosser went on to point out that such changes in memories over time certainly complicated the process for historians attempting to write about combat.

We had learned in one of our own prior studies of the call-up of the Marine Corps Reserve during the Korean War that letters written shortly after combat by veterans and their later interviews often yielded different stories. In our case, however, we used the letters to help interviewees sharpen and refine their memories in several later ongoing interviews. The result, we believed, was a much richer, more detailed, and more meaningful narrative.[3]

Portions of our most recent book about Dick Wolfe's journey in Vietnam reflected both Allison's and Prosser's concerns. For example, a theme with many of the men we interviewed recently involved some anger toward the company commander for going out with fewer men than were available on the day of the Xom Bung battle. Interestingly, we had three accounts from one particular soldier regarding the number of Alpha Company men who fought that day. Sergeant Hylton Leftwich, 4th platoon leader noted in a 2007 interview of the dangerously low number of company troops that he remembered going out on 6 January and the reason for the low number.

> The company commander pointed out to me prior to leaving that we had been to the area three days before and there was nothing there so he said, "We don't have to take as many people with us. Let's just take a bare minimum." So I took twelve guys with me from weapon's platoon [Dick Wolfe's unit] and left the rest back in the rear to kind of sit back and take it easy and help do the details that came up like unloading munitions and food.[4]

In Hylton's 2007 account, the company commander, Captain Dutch McAllister, is seen at some fault for not taking more men. In an earlier phone interview with another former 4th platoon member in 1991, Leftwich underscored the idea of the company going out light when he related a particularly low total of men who went on the search and destroy mission on 6 January 1968, that of "65-68 for the entire company."[5]

But here the plot thickens. In a letter Sgt. Leftwich wrote a few weeks after the battle, the platoon leader noted a higher number of soldiers present than stated in his two interviews given several years after the event. "We had 100 men out that day," he wrote in February of 1968.[6] The one hundred men the sergeant remembered in 1968 was certainly a larger group than the sixty-some soldiers Leftwich remembered in 1991. This higher number, however, given shortly after the fight, closely matched the company commander's own meticulously kept records.

Alpha Company commander, Captain Howard "Dutch" McAllister, wrote down the number of men going out that day on

a salmon-color 3x5 note card. The card indicated a breakdown as follows: 1st platoon: 27; 2d platoon: 26; 3rd platoon: 23; 4th platoon (weapons platoon): 14. A notation in his memo book showed the same numbers. Thus, the company actually left their base with roughly ninety men.[7] Still, the important question remained as to whether these ninety men represented the bulk of the company at that time.

For writers of combat narrative, the above situation presents a problem. As noted, later thinking on the part of several Alpha Company soldiers, as revealed thought recent interviews, indicated that several men in the company thought their commander made a key mistake that day by not taking out enough available men. Initially, we considered presenting these sentiments in the narrative. This belief, however, was based on the idea that more men were indeed available. In this regard, an ideal sized company roster would have shown roughly forty-four men and three officers per platoon, save the smaller weapon's platoon of twenty-four men or so and a least one officer.[8] Thus, a full strength company on patrol would have then been closer to 150 men.[9] Fortunately, we came into possession of a copy of the official company roster for that month. An examination of this document clearly showed that the company was understrength. In reality, Alpha Company's commander was not able to replace the men lost to DEROS, combat deaths, and injuries. "We were so short-handed," Captain Dutch McAllister remembered in an interview, "that I had to use the weapons platoon [Dick Wolfe's' platoon] like a rifle platoon, and it did not have trained machine gunners which made it far less effective. Any new men would most likely gone to rifle platoons. I was constantly juggling to cover all the missions."[10]

Another important source in finding out the facts concerning company strength the day of the battle was an interview with Captain Ed Chapin, Dick Wolfe's first company commander. Chapin also noticed the understrength problem during the time he was in charge of Alpha Company from June until December of 1967. "We were always short of men. Generally, we were at about two thirds strength if we were lucky. So, being undermanned was par for the course." Being shorthanded, Chapin believed, was a consequence of several factors. "One factor was the people killed or wounded who had not been

replaced. Another factor concerned people having to stand down for a day because of having been on ambush patrol the night before. One platoon was always on stand down each today for perimeter guard duty and people would be on emergency leave, on R&R, etc. Finally, there was the process of DEROS."[11]

The official record bears out McAllister's memory, and by working to find as many sources as we could, we were able to get that part of the story straight. As we worked though the above problems, trying to get the narrative correct, we also came to realize we needed to spend some time writing about the reality of understrength rifle companies during the Vietnam War and did so.

"We're in a Base Camp up Here"

The so-called fog of battle and the passage of time seems often to twist a particular group of soldiers' views of an episode of intense combat into a number of different directions. One can only see a battle from where one stands, and the added aspect of the sudden chaos of combat only adds to memories being inaccurate and certainly limited at best.

On the morning of 6 January 1968, a Saturday, Captain McAllister ordered his men to begin climbing aboard the helicopters that would take them to what had been the termination point of their previous patrol through the area three days before. As soon as all the men were on the ground, McAllister and the other officers formed up the company and "moved out using a clover-leaf movement to provide front and flank security."[12] The company began to sweep "through some thin jungle and then came through a huge rice field."[13] Eventually they arrived at the edge of the rice paddy complex. Dick Wolfe and 4th Platoon were on the tail end of the sweep, picking up drag. Sgt. Leftwich was a part of this latter group and understood clearly the important role played that day by the mortar platoon on the mission. In his 2007 interview, he remembered,

> The company moved in two columns spread out. If we made contact with the enemy, say 1st platoon on the right and 2nd platoon on the left, they would swing around and join together into line formation, setting up a solid line on the

> front. 4th platoon's job was to then close off the rear in a kind of horseshoe shape to prevent any rear ambushes. That's what Charlie would do a lot of times. Have somebody hit you so you'd deploy and try to surprise you from the rear.[14]

As a blazing sun continued to rise, Alpha Company moved away from the rice paddies and toward the tree line of jungle, carefully shuffling up an obscure dirt path running haphazardly up a slight hill.

Around 9:30 A. M., Dick Wolfe and 4th Platoon, still bringing up the rear, finally came up to the edge of a small ragged-looking grave yard. The platoon stopped there and set up a security perimeter as the rest of the company inched cautiously forward. At this time, a few shots rang out, echoing back to where 4th platoon nervously rested. It was thought at first that the firing came from a few snipers, the kind who typically fired and ran. Suddenly, however, Sgt. Leftwich overheard disturbing chatter over the 4th Platoon radio. "I heard a friend, Sergeant Harley Griggs, who was up ahead in 3rd Platoon, say, 'We're in a base camp up here. It's a live one, a new one. It's got *fresh* dirt everywhere.'"

Captain McAllister immediately came on the frequency.

"*Be careful,"* McAllister admonished.

Before Leftwich could turn and talk to his men about what was going on, "more firing occurred up ahead, the company receiving sporadic automatic weapons fire along with RPG rounds."[15] McAllister's reaction to the attack was "to move the second platoon, the platoon behind my command group, to the right of the lead platoon in contact with the enemy, order everyone to lay low and to bring in artillery fire."[16] The company commander was proceeding with the standard response of the search and destroy tactic—make contact with the enemy, then hunker down and let American firepower take over.

After ordered artillery shells smacked the area from where the VC firings had erupted, some Alpha Company men tried to move forward again. Unexpectedly, more fire came from the well-hidden enemy. Forward Observer Lt. John Swartz brought the artillery in again "and worked it close. Then an air observer in a fixed wing plane came and took over a bit. We tried to move again and got shot at some more."[17]

The situation was a bit puzzling. The VC were not just taking a few potshots and fleeing as they usually did. Some of the men began to have dark forebodings. “We had three platoons forward and 4th Platoon back,” Lt. Swartz remembered. “I thought I heard shooting from the rear and got the sickening feeling that there were VC behind us. I rotated and kept an eye in that direction.”[18] The worse, however, was yet to come.

Alpha Company had inadvertently stumbled upon a well-hidden enemy staging area. The fortified positions that the forward point of Alpha Company had walked into protected two full companies of the Phu Loi 1st Battalion. They were heavily armed and also possessed the important advantages of outnumbering Alpha Company at least two to one, knowing the lay of the land, and having the element of surprise.

Once aware that the company was not just being harassed by a few snipers, Captain McAllister now called for an organized retreat back through 4th Platoon and to the relative safety of the rice paddies. Once secured in a defendable perimeter, McAllister would call down fire unmercifully in the form of artillery, helicopter gunships, and planes on the dug-in VC.

It was at this time that the battle transitioned into a fierce struggle for survival. John Swartz, in a personal journal he religiously kept, noticed the sudden change in the battle’s tempo as soon as the CP group had gotten to the edge of the wood line and just before they moved to the first rice paddy.

> The shooting, which had been sporadic before, suddenly grew intense. The VC had poured out of a base camp just beyond the clearing, [This was the area of all the fresh dirt Sgt. Griggs had reported over the radio], a whole regiment of them, and swept around either end of the clearing. They hit us from both sides. [The command company] was out of the woods when they closed in.[19]

The battle now grew fragmented and chaotic, with different elements of the company experiencing different and unique levels of struggle. Captain McAllister, and many platoon leaders were severely wounded at this point, further addeing to the confusion. Dick Wolfe’s group, 4th platoon, now endured the greatest direct blow of the battle, receiving a hurricane force of

small arms fire and rocket propelled grenades as the enemy continued to push their fierce flanking movement.

Hylton Leftwich recalled this most horrific portion of the battle in two later interviews and in a letter written shortly after the battle. His 2007 interview was the most detailed. The plucky sergeant recalled that the platoon had been spread out and placed in "sentry positions" just before "all hell broke loose." Leftwich's platoon kept their posts while the rest of the company passed through on the way to the relative security of the rice paddies. When Leftwich believed the rest the company was through, he hurriedly started going around getting his people together so they too could get out to the safety of the rice paddies. "I went around to each of my men's position and told them, 'pull back through the rear, go back to the rice patties and we'll form up back there. If you can't find me, don't worry about it, just find somebody and stay with them through this mess.'"

Dick Wolfe was the last one of the platoon members Leftwich spoke to at this vulnerable location. "I told Wolfe he needed to get moving as fast as he could back to the rice paddies and added, 'I'll cover you while you're moving.'"[20] At this moment the hardest blow of the VC fell on the retreating men. The attack was a furious, the very high point of the VC assault. It was reported by a gunship that a Viet Cong flag and other enemy banners had suddenly been unfurled from makeshift flagpoles.[21]

Leftwich certainly became aware of the sudden fierceness of the battle. He turned around and looked behind him, seeing "VC coming from every which-a-way. I unloaded about a magazine on them, trying to slow them down. Then I took off."[22]

Scott Washburn, also of 4th platoon, who was standing a few meters from Dick Wolfe, would have the next few minutes seared forever in the mind. "It was as though the earth had opened up and was on fire. The sound was deafening, the smell acrid, and the intensity of battle immediate. It was all pretty hectic—loud, smoky, tracer rounds everywhere, fast, sudden and explosive—with RPGs, mortars and grenades going off."[23] Before Washburn's very eyes, hardly five meters or so away, three men went down, including Dick Wolfe. Washburn was himself struck in the small of his back by fragments from an RPG round on both sides of the spine. Washburn screamed for medical aid.

Despite the harrowing bedlam erupting all around him, Sgt. Leftwich reacted quickly to the call for a medic. Leftwich saw that Wayne Bates, one of the company medics, had come up to the wood line where most of the action was now occurring. "I heard one of my men yell behind me, 'Medic! I'm hit! Medic!' So I looked at Doc Bates. I said, 'Hey Doc let's go. We got one.' He said, 'Okay,' and we jumped up and ran towards the wounded man."[24]

Doc Bates' helmet flew off as he ran. Leftwich hollered and told the medic that he had better put it back on but Bates yelled back that he didn't need it.[25] Luckily, Leftwich happened to be looking up just as the helmetless Bates got to the wounded man. "There were two VC standing there, about 50 feet away, real close. I figured Doc hadn't seen them, so I gave him a shove and pushed him on the ground. I hit the dirt as well. I had my hand on Doc's neck/shoulder somewhere in there, and the two VC were shooting at us, kicking up all kind of dirt around us."

The attack did not last long, the VC apparently figuring they had killed the two Americans. "They quit shooting at us, but I told Doc to wait a second or two before we moved. I wanted to make sure they had left. When I got up, Bates didn't move and I looked and saw that his helmet was still off to the side. He had a crease in his right temple from a fragment wound, something his helmet would have prevented. I knew right away that he was dead."

Leftwich had the presence of mind to move from Bates and go see how bad Washburn's wounds were. "He didn't seem to be too banged up, though he was complaining about his back. I said, 'Can you move your legs?' And he said, 'I think so.' So I said, 'let me see it. Move them.' And he drew them up under him."

Leftwich helped the wounded man up and got him started walking in the direction of where a helicopter was starting to land to pick up the wounded down in the rice paddy. Then the 4th Platoon sergeant ran back up the trail to try and move the rest of his men to safety. At this point in the tumultuous mess, Leftwich lost his memory.

In his 2007 interview, he recalled, "I kind of remember telling myself, Hylton, this is it. It's all over with. You're not going back to the land of the big PX. Right along there is when I blanked out. I don't know of anything that happened until about three

hours later. The only thing I can figure is that I was scared to death."[26] A portion of his Silver Star Award citation, however, suggested what Sgt. Leftwich may have done after he blanked out.

> While moving through a dense jungle, his unit received a heavy volume of enemy sniper fire from the front and flanks. Shortly after the firing began, his company was ordered to withdraw so artillery fire could be placed upon the insurgents. Sergeant Leftwich unhesitatingly exposed himself to the hostile fire as he sought a position from which he could cover the withdrawal of the platoon's point element. As he was beginning to fall back himself, he noticed six North Vietnamese regulars trying to flank his position. He immediately fired at them, killing four and wounding the others. Then, with complete disregard for his personal safety, he moved forward to check the enemy bodies. While examining the bodies, he became aware of movement to his front and signaled his men to take cover. He then dived behind a large tree as a grenade went off where he had been standing. After the explosion, he emerged from cover, pinpointed the enemy position and threw a grenade which killed two enemy soldiers. As his platoon continued to withdraw, the entire company began receiving intensive automatic weapons and rocket fire from both flanks. Sergeant Leftwich immediately began directing his men in fire and movement tactics in order to enable them to continue their withdrawal. After leaving the wood line, he saw one of his men wounded by shrapnel from a rocket. Again disregarding his personal safety, he ran to the wounded man, gave him first aid then pulled him from the enemy kill zone. Staff Sergeant Leftwich's unquestionable valor in close combat against numerically superior hostile forces is in keeping with the finest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, the 1st Infantry Division, and the United States Army.[27]

Interestingly, Leftwich downplayed the details mentioned in the citation narrative in his later interview in 2007.

> What's in the citation must have taken place after that point, but I don't remember doing anything in the citation. I can't remember it, I just cannot; everything is a blank. Anyway, the next thing I did remember, it was a few minutes after three o'clock, and the part of the battle where 4th Platoon got hit so hard had all taken place around 9:30, maybe 10 o'clock. So, from that period, until about a few minutes after three, I can't recall anything that happened.[28]

Another important source of information about what may have happened to 4th Platoon is found in a portion of a letter Sgt. Leftwich wrote about three weeks after the battle. In some ways, however, the letter only added to the mystery of what occurred.

"What did you find out about this Man Wolfe?"

Fourth Platoon's breaking out into the rice paddies marked the turning point of the battle. As the company finally pulled back from the jungle to allow gunships, jets, and artillery to pound the area north of the rice paddies that day, each platoon began taking an inventory of its men. The list soon revealed a new problem. Two Alpha Company men were still missing. One was Dick Wolfe.

Writing narratives about instances of combat often present unexpected, and perhaps, even unresolvable aspects. So it was to be in this case. What exactly happened to Dick Wolfe before his death, as 4th Platoon was swallowed up in the chaos of explosive and unrelenting enemy fire and how Wolfe finally died remains unknown. Some elements of the story, however, suggested Wolfe may have been held alive captive for a very brief time and then executed. Official records, and a number of other accounts, certainly fail to entirely clean up the matter. Interestingly, some of the accounts on what happened to Wolfe that day differ from his Bronze Star citation, awarded on 29 January 1968.

> Private First Class Wolfe was serving as a rifleman on a company sized search and destroy operation near the village of Chanh Luu in War Zone C. Suddenly, his company was subjected to intensive automatic weapons and recoilless rifle fire from a large hostile force. With complete disregard for

> his personal safety, Private First Class Wolfe immediately moved to an exposed, but advantageous position, and began laying down a devastating base of fire upon the attacking Viet Cong. When several of his comrades were wounded, he dauntlessly braved the heavy enemy fire and moved from position to position helping to evacuate the casualties before air strikes and artillery were called in. While placing devastating fire upon the insurgents to keep them from flanking the friendly unit, Private First Class Wolfe was mortally wounded by an enemy recoilless rifle round.[29]

The citation account does not match other accounts that suggested Wolfe had little time to respond to the attack and was certainly not aggressive in his actions. Scott Washburn, an eye witness recalled, for example, that both Dick Wolfe and another 4th Platoon man, Robert Hilley, were hit by a hail of small arms fire and fragmentation wounds almost immediately. "I saw them both go down when they were hit." Washburn was sure they died at that instance.[30]

Sgt. Leftwich was one of the last Americans to see Dick Wolfe alive, just minutes before the fierce attack. The platoon sergeant felt especially guilty "after he was the last person I spoke with at that area. I don't know whether he had stopped and was waiting on me, or what." That Hylton Leftwich's feelings of guilt remained long after the event can certainly be seen in the 2007 interview.

> I had a special interest in him because of having helped him earlier reconcile with his wife. I always felt bad about the fact that I couldn't remember everything that happened for five or six hours that day. The Wolfe family had every right to be proud of him; he was a good man. He did his job well. He was always ready to do his job. He was a great man. And it really hurt me that he got taken away from me at that point. I'm real sorry. It hurt me for a long time.[31]

Perhaps the most important set of information among the primary sources concerning Dick Wolfe's death was, as noted, a letter Leftwich wrote to Dick Wolfe's best friend, Ralph Davis, a few weeks after the battle. Following the battle, Davis escorted

Dick's body back to Princeton, Indiana. Davis had been given a short leave to do so. At the funeral, the Wolfe family implored Davis to find out the details of Dick Wolfe's death and handed him a card the family had received from the army with the names of men who might be able to share stories about Dick's time in Vietnam and about what happened to Dick Wolfe on 6 January. The Wolfe family also suggested to Davis that he first contact the 4th Platoon sergeant often mentioned in Dick's family letters, Sgt. Leftwich.

In February of 1968, Davis wrote Rosemary and August Wolfe, telling them that he had contacted Dick's platoon sergeant. "I just finished writing the Sgt. Leftwich that Dick mentioned in his letters. If and when I get a reply, I'll let you know immediately. In the meantime, I'll continue corresponding with the others mentioned in the card Joe gave me."[32] Leftwich soon replied to Davis' imploring inquiry. His guilty feelings about being so rough in an earlier letter to Dick Wolfe's wife and for not being able to bring Dick Wolfe out alive are evident in the letter he wrote back.

> Sp4 Davis
>
> I received your letter today. To answer your question, yes, I was with Pfc. Wolfe the day he was killed. I was going to write his wife but thought better of it since I wrote her once after I had a talk with Wolfe. When you write her, tell her to forget what I wrote. It could not be helped what happened to him.
>
> Jan 6, 1968 we went out on just what we thought to be another search and destroy mission. Around 1000 hours [10 a. m.] we had some fire, looked like one sniper. After about 30 minutes we found ourselves in a V.C. camp. All platoons pulled out through us. When we were told to pull back, I went to each security post and told each one to move back to the rice paddies and if they couldn't find the 4th platoon to get with one of the other platoons and stay there until the action was over. I would come and get them. That was the last time I saw him [Wolfe] alive.

I was the last to leave the area. I made a quick check because the V.C. were about 50 meters from me. I popped off a few rounds and ran. I found some of my men in a big group. I pulled them out and moved back. We stopped after moving about 150 meters (some men were dropping behind and we had to wait for them). I made a quick check to see who I had. I saw that two men were missing. Pfc. [Ron] Whitt and Pfc. Wolfe. I didn't have time to call the other platoons to see if they were there.

After air strikes, we went back in. That's when I found Wolfe. By the way, before we moved back in I had Wolfe as Missing in Action. He wasn't with any of the platoon. So I had 3 KIA's (Killed in Action) and 3 WIA's. There were 4 killed in action and 14 wounded in action out of the Co.

Wolfe I believe died right away. When we found him he had two bullet holes in his head and a bad cut on his right arm. He was sitting with his back in an upright position. The head wounds I believe was by a V.C. pistol at close range.

What we hit was two V.C. Co, a force of over 200 men. We had only about 100 out with me that day. We got 101 enemy body count.

Sgt. Hilley was killed that day by a RPG round. [Larry] Clay was and is still Co. Clerk in the rear.

I hope this will answer your questions. Tell his family that I am very sorry this had to happen to them. Pfc. Wolfe was as fine a soldier as I have ever had and I hated to lose him.

If there are any more questions tell, his family to feel free to write me.

S. Sgt. Hylton J. Leftwich[33]

After receiving the Leftwich letter, Davis quickly wrote to the Wolfe family, telling them the letter left him a bit perplexed. "*There were a few things he said in the letter that puzzled me,"*

Davis wrote. The puzzlement of which Davis spoke of in the letter to the Wolfe family arose from the questions of when and how Dick Wolfe died.

Official reports to the family and other Army reports found in this research give a number of various and conflicting causes for Dick Wolfe's death. One maintained a wound to the chest caused by small arms fire killed Wolfe. Other reports noted grenade fragmentations as the cause of death. Wolfe's Bronze Star citation, for example, claimed he was killed by "an enemy recoilless rifle round [RPG]."[34] Leftwich's letter, however, was particularly specific, claiming, as noted, "Wolfe I believe died right away. When we found him, he had two bullet holes in his head and a bad cut on his right arm. He was sitting with his back in an upright position [against a tree]. The head wounds I believe was by a V.C. pistol at close range."[35] Oddly, the "bad cut" on the arm is not mentioned in any other report.

To further muddy the water, Ralph Davis, before he escorted Dick Wolfe's body back to Indiana, was given permission to closely view his friend's body. "The only wound I could see was a large ragged wound in the neck. Someone had filled it in with a kind of pink putty and it didn't come close to matching his skin, which had started to turn black. His hair was full of dirt too. They had so many bodies there [in Saigon] they just couldn't get them cleared up very well."[36] The neck wound was never mentioned in any other account.

That Wolfe was reported to have been sitting with his back in an upright position against a tree also raised more interesting questions. Had the wounded soldier somehow managed to crawl to the tree? Or, was he dragged over to the tree to have his gear stripped off by the enemy. Here, Leftwich's letter at least hinted at the possibility that Wolfe may have been captured alive. There was certainly much confusion about his whereabouts once he was found to be missing.

Another interesting source of information about the battle and Dick Wolfe's fate was an audio tape of the radio chatter recorded during the battle. The tape was made by Lt. Bob O'Connor back at Battalion headquarters and indicated the incredible efforts made to find Dick Wolfe once he had been reported missing. The company had finally pulled back into the rice paddies, and preparations were being made to quickly

saturate the entire jungle area with unrelenting artillery and air bombings. As these plans were unfolding, a deep commanding voice came booming on the air from a hovering helicopter. The speaker was a high- ranking battalion officer.[37]

"Is it my understanding that a man has not been accounted for?"

When the response can back in the affirmative, the high ranking officer ordered the artillery and bombing missions stopped in the area immediately north of the rice paddies. Finding the missing soldier, who had yet to be officially identified, became the top priority, with the officer directing things from hundreds of feet in the sky.

"Check and find where this man was last seen. Then we will have to send up a search party. Maybe he was evacuated?"

Unwounded men on the ground frantically checked among their wounded comrades and among those soldiers who had been separated from their units during the chaotic battle. In the process, it was discovered that the missing man's name was Richard Wolfe. Helicopters and small observation planes soon reported, however, that they did not see Wolfe, living or dead, anywhere on the ground. This presented a bit of an odd mystery as other casualties had been spotted where 4th Platoon had been hit so hard and where most of the causalities had been taken. This situation gave a brief hope that Wolfe was somehow alive and hiding on the ground, or that he had been wounded and taken out but placed in another platoon group.

The airborne commander's impatience grew as the operations on the ground to find Dick Wolfe faltered.

"What did you find out about this man Wolfe? Was he hit? Find him so we know where to drop bombs and napalm."[38]

Finally, when it seemed most of the enemy had fled the immediate area, a search party was sent in. John Chomko, Captain McAllister's RTO, was in the party and the next day he wrote of the sad scene that they discovered.

> After the airstrikes, and everything was over, we started back in with a new CO, who was the intelligence officer for the battalion. First we went in looking for a man who was unaccounted for. Searching around, we found him with 3 bullet holes in his head and there was also a knot on his head. Here is what the medic thinks. The fellow was knocked out and the VC came up to him, stripped him of his stuff and shot him 3 times. I knew this fellow real well, I was in his platoon before I became the CO's RTO.[39]

Sgt. Leftwich though it odd that Dick Wolfe's body was some distance away from where he had last been seen and that Wolfe was propped up against a tree. To some, this suggested the wounded soldier was alive when captured and was perhaps dragged to the tree, stripped of all his gear and then executed with three quick pistol shots to the head. Thus, the medic's guess that Dick Wolfe was knocked out at the time he was shot may have been wishful thinking or may have been told for Wolfe's family's sake.

"His Dauntless Courage in the Face of Heavy Enemy Fire"

We now come to perhaps the most complicated problem we faced in writing this particular combat narrative: how much to trust medal citation narratives to describe what happened that day at the battle of Xom Bung. It is true that Dick Wolfe and other 4th Platoon members steadfastly stayed as ordered to guard the company's retreat to the rice paddies and thus ended up in the most vulnerable position once the VC fully engaged in their formidable flanking movement. But Dick Wolfe's Bronze Star citation, as noted, seemed to bear little resemblance to other accounts of the frenzied battle. Alpha Company companion Robert Hilley, according to eye witness accounts gathered in our research, also died at the same instance as Wolfe, apparently going down early in the sledgehammer like attack. But his citation, like Wolfe's, made his last moments seem particularly heroic.

> Specialist Hilley was serving as squad leader on a company size search and destroy operation in Binh Duonh Province when his unit was engaged by a large hostile force. Within a

few seconds the contact erupted into violent fighting, and the unit sustained several causalities. With complete disregard for his own personal safety, Specialist Hilley charged the enemy force and laid down a devastating base of fire, halting the enemy advance. Ignoring the hostile fire, he took an exposed position where he could direct effective cover fire upon the enemy, while his wounded comrades were evacuated. When the withdrawal appeared to be complete, he began to pull back to the perimeter his unit was establishing. Before he reached the safety of his own lines, he spotted several wounded men who had not been able to move back to the rest of the unit. He immediately rushed to their assistance, knowing that artillery support fire and air strikes would soon be called on the area. He worked feverishly to treat and prepare the wounded for evacuation. As the evacuation was nearly completed and the last casualties were being brought to the safety of the perimeter, Specialist Hilley was mortally wounded by enemy fire. His dauntless courage in the face of heavy enemy fire and his great concern for the lives of his fellow soldiers undoubtedly were directly responsible for saving many lives.[40]

So how to account for the inconsistencies between Wolfe's and Hilley's medal citations and other battle accounts? If Wolfe and Hilley did indeed carry out such acts, who reported it? Fourth Platoon member Scott Washburn recalled "I don't think anyone was rushing around engaging enemy fire and assisting other wounded men. As I remember the action I saw and was engaged in, all 3 KIAs (Dick Wolfe, Bob Hilley and Doc Bates) were within my eyesight and were killed as I lay wounded."[41] Sgt. Leftwich, in his later two detailed interviews and his earlier heart-felt letter to the Wolfe family, told of no specific heroic acts on Wolfe's or Hilley's part.

Company Commander Dutch McAllister, who received a Silver Star award for his actions that day, reflected in a recent interview that such award recommendations were "a multi-faceted thing. The key factor in awards for combat bravery was typically eyewitnesses. No eyewitnesses usually meant no awards. Furthermore, in the case of higher ranking officers, the

citations were sometimes ludicrous. Men killed in combat without eyewitness often went without awards, even when merited."[42]

The process was also muddied by the fog of battle. At Xom Bung, the almost immediate chaos, once the enemy flanking movement began in earnest, plus the early severe wounding of McAllister and other key leaders such as 4th Platoon leader Sgt. Dempsey only added to the confusion of figuring out later what may have actually happened. Recommendations required signature by the commanding officer or his authorized representative. Yet, in some cases, especially after a shattering battle where unexpected casualties occurred, "a battalion commander might order a man up for a medal," with little information regarding what may have actually occurred. [43]

Coming directly to the battle field and seeing first-hand the terrible pounding Alpha Company had taken may have indeed caused the battalion commander to order up the medals for some of those killed, especially in the sector where 4th platoon took it on the chin. In this regard, Lt. O'Connor was aware of a clerk back at battalion headquarters "who had a way with words. If he was given some general information about a soldier's action, he would write up a smooth strong citation narrative."[44]

Altogether, eighteen Purple Heats and at least five Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars and an Army Commendation Medal with V device for valor would be awarded to Alpha Company men for their acts of bravery during the Battle of Xom Bung. Most of the medal citations from the battle matched up well with eyewitness accounts. John Chomko, McAllister's radio operator, for example, carried out his brave acts in front of a number of witnesses, coolly "calling for gunships and an extraction helicopter" to evacuate wounded men while under heavy sniper fire as a severely wounded Captain McAllister lay bleeding at his feet in the mud of a rice paddy. Chomko also effectively brought the battalion commander, Lt Col. Pfanzelter, up to speed when Pfanzelter arrived at the tumultuous scene.[45] Lt. John Swartz's actions, which brought his Bronze Star, also had many witnesses. The forward observer had bravely called in artillery fire amazing close to where he lay and for "what little I could do to keep things together for the company on the radio before Pfanzelter showed up."[46] Melvin Hawkins, a Black medic, received a Silver Star for working on wounded soldiers and

getting them evacuated "while under heavy sniper fire in dense jungle."[47] Lt. Jim Hinson received the Silver Star and one of his squad leaders, Private Jerry Peck, received the Army Commendation Medal for their heroic efforts to keep the retreat of Alpha Company as smooth as possible when moving to the relative safety of the rice paddies. And even though Hylton Leftwich, 4th platoon's plucky little sergeant, could not remember carrying out the acts his Silver Star citation told of, what he was witnessed doing that day was arguably more than worthy of such an honor.

The existence of such concrete data for the above awards certainly makes Dick Wolfe's and Robert Hilley's medals more curious. There are a few possible explanations, however, for these two men receiving medals of valor for supposed actions in combat despite possible discrepancies. In Wolfe's case, his closeness to Sgt. Leftwich and Leftwich's ongoing guilt, as noted in his letter and later interviews may have influenced the 4th platoon sergeant to recommend the medal. Wolfe was also very popular with officers, other sergeants, and enlisted men in the company, being very well respected for carrying out his duties. It may have also helped Wolfe's cause that he was married and had a small baby boy back home. Many in the company also knew he was having trouble with his wife. The unexpected furiousness of the battle and the discovery of Wolfe's battered body with his clothes and gear removed and three gunshots to the head, likely brought further sympathy.

Perhaps the soldier in the company with the most on his mind the day of the long sweep on 6 January was Dick Wolfe's close friend and fellow 4th Platoon comrade, Robert Hilley. Dick Wolfe's letters to his family back home offered a tantalizing clue to why Hilley might have also received a medal. Wolfe had earlier written his family, telling them the happy news that his 4th platoon buddy had apparently reached his DEROS date and was supposed to go home the next day. But Wolfe had also mysteriously added in his letter that the army . . . "had messed up on the date" and that Hilley "was about to go crazy."[48] Captain McAllister's official DEROS list, a document he kept so he would better know when to request replacements, showed Hilley's Deros as 4 January 1968.[49] Yet, on 6 January, he trudged alongside Dick Wolfe on the tedious search and destroy mission.

If his DEROS date was 4 January, he should have already left the Alpha Company base camp before the sweep. Standard Field Operation Procedures sent out to 2nd Battalion companies on 25 June 1967 noted that "The policy of leaving individuals in the rear area 15 days prior to DEROS remains in effect. Commanders are reminded that this policy is not mandatory. This privilege should be extended to deserving individuals who have earned this award. Final decision concerning disposition of personnel under this policy remains with subordinate commanders."[50] Guilt then may have prompted another medal recommendation. Further complicating the matter for the historian, however, is the existence of another DEROS list showing Hilley had been given the wrong information and still owed the army another week or so in the field.

Conspicuously absent too from the battle was any citations for valor for Wayne Bates, the dutiful company medic who died fearlessly running to give aid to wounded 4th Platoon soldier Scott Washburn. Dutch McAllister was especially bothered by this odd and heartbreaking omission. "It disturbs me to this day that Doc Bates got nothing for his heroism that day, and it makes me wonder if the colonel may have also recommended an award for Bates and it fell through the cracks somehow."[51]

"We Found It"

As noted, prior research by Allison and by Prosser regarding the accuracy of veterans' stories about combat, especially information given over a long period of time is often fraught with inconsistencies. Using multiple sources of such data to write about a combat event can further muddy the water. Our efforts to write accurately about the battle of Xom Bung, and particularly about the fate of Dick Wolfe, led us to wrestle with a number of discrepancies in the data we had collected. These discrepancies caused us to confront issues such as how many Alpha Company men went out on the day of battle, how many men were actually available, how reliable medal citations were, and how Dick Wolfe died. The first two questions were essential to answer as they brought into doubt the leadership of the company commander. Fortunately, official records were available which helped us accurately discern that Captain McAllister used all the men available and did a commendable job when under fire.

We also quickly discovered that medal citation narratives are perhaps best taken with a grain of salt when using them to help reconstruct a combat event. In dealing with this aspect of the writing, we also struggled with whether or not to question the reported actions of valor of some of the men who perished and had received medals. In this case, we presented all the information we had and left it up to the reader to decide. The questions surrounding Dick Wolfe's efforts and final death reminded unclear, and we decided again to present all the available conflicting information to the reader, allowing this part of the story to stand forever as a sad mystery.

Some aspects of the battle were indisputable. The intense firefight had indeed been a brutal and traumatic event. After the death of Wolfe and three others, the war went on for the men of Alpha Company, leaving those who survived the task of dealing with lingering ghosts. The day after the battle, the weary men went back to the bloody battleground and the crater-filled bunker complex area in a clean-up operation. John Swartz recorded his impressions of the day in his personal journal. "The fight was dubbed 'The Battle of Xom Bung,' in honor of a little village somewhere near. The grand total of VC killed was 101. The unit we had mulched up was the 'Phu Loi Battalion,' which hadn't been seen for some time, and everyone wondered where it was. We found it."[52]

Notes

[1] Fred H. Allison, "Remembering a Vietnam War Firefight: Changing Perceptions over Time." *The Oral History Review,* 31(2) 2004, 82.
[2] Michelle Prosser, *Memories of Combat: How World War II Veterans Construct Their Memory Over Time.* Master of Arts Project, Kansa State University, 2014.
[3] See Randy Mills and Roxanne Mills *Unexpected Journey: A Marine Corps Reserve Rifle Company in the Korean War*, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2000.
[4] Authors interview with Hylton Leftwich.
[5] Notes of Hylton Leftwich phone interview with Scott Washburn, 1991.
[6] Letter from Hylton Leftwich to Ralph "Butch" Davis, 18 February 1968.
[7] Authors' interview with Howard "Dutch" McAllister.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Yet another narrative written by Alpha Company member Jerry Peck placed the number who went out that day at 145.
[10] Authors' interview with Dutch McAllister.
[11] Authors' interview with Ed Chapin.
[12] Authors' interview with Dutch McAllister.
[13] John Chomko letter to Jim and Marsha, 7 January 1968.

[14] Authors' interview with Hylton Leftwich.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Authors' interview with Dutch McAllister.
[17] Lt. Swartz Journal.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Authors' interview with Hylton Leftwich.
[21] Battle of Xom Bung audio record; 1st Division Daily Staff Journal Log.
[22] Authors' interview with Hylton Leftwich.
[23] Authors' interview with Scott Washburn.
[24] Authors' interview with Hylton Leftwich.
[25] Lt. Swartz Journal.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Award of Silver Star, Hylton J. Leftwich.
[28] Authors' interview with Hylton Leftwich.
[29]Richard Wolfe Award of the Bronze Star Citation, 29 January 1968.
[30] Authors' interview with Scott Washburn.
[31] Authors' interview with Hylton Leftwich.
[32] Butch Davis letter to August Wolfe, February 1968.
[33] Hylton Leftwich letter to Ralph Davis, 16 February 1968.
[34] Richard Wolfe Award of the Bronze Star Citation, 29 January 1968.
[35] Hylton Leftwich letter to Ralph Davis, 16 February 1968.
[36] Authors' interview with Butch Davis.
[37] We were not always able to ascertain whose voices were whose in the audio. Lt. Bob O'Connor, who recorded the audio, believed they were most often a Major Walker, the battalion's Operations officer and Lt. Col. Pfanzelter.
[38] Battle of Xom Bung audio tape.
[39] John Chomko letter to Jim and Marsha, 7 January 1968.
[40] *The Gadsden Times,* 16 April 1968.
[41] Authors' interview with Scott Washburn.
[42] Authors' interview with Dutch McAllister.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Authors' interview with Bob O'Connor.
[45] *The Electrical Workers' Journal,* August 1968, 55-56.
[46] Lt. Swartz Journal.
[47] Obituary for Melvin L. Hawkins, *The Buffalo News,* 21 December 2012.
[48] Dick Wolfe letter to Rosemary Wolfe, 3 January 1968.
[49] Original document in the possession of Dutch McAllister.
[50] Department of the Army, Headquarters 2D Battalion 18th Infantry, APO 96345.
[51] Authors' interview with Dutch McAllister.
[52] Lt. Swartz Journal.

Sakharov's Dilemma: Pursuing Nuclear Disarmament during the Human Rights Revolution

Paul Rubinson
Bridgewater State University

Abstract
The Soviet physicist Andrei Sakharov, a veritable human rights icon, maintained his whole life that the world's priority must be nuclear disarmament. But during the 1970s, the pursuit of nuclear disarmament was the hallmark of détente between the superpowers. Détente offended human rights activists because it appeared to legitimize the Soviet Union, notorious for its noxious treatment of dissidents. While Sakharov's actions demonstrated a fervent commitment to human rights, his rhetoric consistently—and paradoxically—prioritized nuclear disarmament. For their part, Soviet authorities evinced little concern for Sakharov's disarmament ideas but greatly feared his influence as a human rights activist. Sakharov never reconciled these conflicting goals, and although the human rights revolution he helped inspire played a part in bringing down the Soviet Union, it did not substantially challenge the nation-state system's dedication to nuclear deterrence.

A Marriage for Human Rights

On June 9, 1981, in Butte, Montana, after a long journey from Massachusetts, two men faced each other in a courthouse, preparing to wed. When the ceremony began, Aleksei Semyonov, a young graduate student in mathematics, joined hands with the bald, older man next to him: his longtime friend, publisher Edward Kline. The men then exchanged wedding vows, creating a marriage recognized by only a few states at the time, including Montana.

Despite its appearances, the marriage in Montana was not a gay marriage but rather marriage-by-proxy. Semyonov was the stepson of Andrei Sakharov, the physicist infamously exiled within the Soviet Union for his dissident stands in favor of a variety of human rights concerns. Kline, for his part, stood-in for Semyonov's true bride, 25-year old Liza Alekseyeva, who was forbidden by the KGB to leave the Soviet Union. By marrying Alekseyeva by proxy according to the laws of Montana, Semyonov and his revered stepfather hoped the Soviet government might relent and permit her to leave, allowing the newlyweds to reunite in the United States.[1]

According to Sakharov, Alekseyeva was being detained in the Soviet Union in order to punish him. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Sakharov's actions had run afoul of Soviet authorities. The so-called father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb had stumped for free speech, campaigned for human rights, denounced sham trials of dissidents, criticized the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and repeatedly argued for nuclear disarmament. Such defiance—met with harsh state repression—inspired countless scientists around the world when Sakharov called them to action. "Western scientists face no threat of prison or labour camp for public stands," he wrote in 1981, "[b]ut this in no way diminishes their responsibility."[2] Just as Kline was willing to participate in the unconventional proxy marriage if it would help Sakharov and his family, many activists found themselves ready and willing to embrace new approaches in their fight against the Cold War. Previous opposition to the Cold War had taken numerous forms, including antinuclear activism, the eruptions of 1968, and third world nationalism. While dissent continued in many forms, the cause of human rights emerged (or re-emerged) during the 1970s as a new way to challenge Cold War orthodoxy.

A number of influential scientists, particularly those in the United States, had established a tradition of opposing nuclear weapons during the Manhattan Project and continued doing so well into the 1970s. But in the years after the Vietnam War and into the 1980s, many politically active scientists began shifting their attention to human rights; they went to such great lengths to help their imprisoned and repressed peers in places like Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, the Philippines, and the Soviet Union that

human rights became an essential part of the scientific discipline. At the January 1980 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in San Francisco, the one-time dean of the National University of Uruguay told attendees that since 1973 his school had been devastated by a military takeover, after which 144 university employees lost their jobs and 35 more were indicted for "various crimes." Mario Otero stated that "[m]ost scientific research came to a standstill, and many hundreds of scientists fled the country," while state security agencies controlled all teaching jobs. "Scientific research in an atmosphere of academic freedom," Otero said, "simply does not exist today in Uruguay."[3] Scientists and physicians in the United States and Western Europe subsequently worked as individuals and in associations to enact boycotts and publicity campaigns to help their peers, a transformation that occurred simultaneously with a broader trend toward human rights for activists around the world in general.

While the movement addressed victims of human rights abuses worldwide, a great deal of interest in human rights arose because of Sakharov, as well as his fellow Soviet scientists Yuri Orlov and Anatoly Schaharansky. But Sakharov, the man at the very heart of this transition, is upon closer analysis a bit of an enigma. Like a number of his peers overseas, such as Leo Szilard, Sakharov played an essential role in creating nuclear weapons only to later embrace nuclear disarmament. Despite this notable shift, however, he ultimately became known primarily as a human rights icon—the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize was just one of the accolades he received for his work (and suffering) in that field. Historical accounts of Sakharov trace his arc from antinuclear activist to human rights martyr, beginning in the mid-1950s when he struggled with Nikita Khrushchev over fallout from nuclear testing. In the words of Donald Kelley, "Sakharov launched his fledgling career as a prophet concerned about the future of mankind in a nuclear world." During the late 1950s and early 1960s, he explored other issues, including education reform and anti-Lysenkoism, but his priority remained opposition to nuclear testing, activism which culminated in the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. As the 1960s progressed, he increasingly pursued human rights activism, becoming for many the embodiment of human rights suffering, while nuclear

disarmament took a back seat to his other efforts. Another biography describes how the "father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb" became a human rights activist, the first Russian to win the Nobel Peace Prize, and the "personification of conscience" during the latter days of the Soviet Union.[4] In his recent biography of the physicist, Jay Bergman has perceptively shown how Sakharov's dissent heavily influenced Mikhail Gorbachev and therefore the Soviet reforms of the 1980s. By analyzing Sakharov in his Soviet context, Bergman offers a cogent vision of him as a steady voice linking numerous political and social causes that morally rejected the status quo, as well as a dissident acting ethically within an unethical system.[5] But an analysis of Sakharov's writings on disarmament reveal a somewhat different Sakharov, one less certain about the importance of human rights in the world. Previous interpretations of Sakharov have downplayed the oddity that he himself, rather frequently and rather adamantly, stated that nuclear arms control and disarmament should be the world's priority. With historians increasingly seeing human rights as critical to the end of the Cold War, and with Sakharov playing such an important role in these histories, why did the icon of human rights prioritize nuclear disarmament over human rights?

Nuclear Weapons, Human Rights, and the Cold War

Many historians trace the arc of the Cold War primarily through the nuclear arms race, while others emphasize human rights movements in the ending of the Cold War (although the two are not necessarily exclusive). According to the histories focused on nuclear weapons, escalations in the arms race or progress on arms control and disarmament indicated a concurrent escalation or de-escalation of the global conflict. Martin Sherwin, Gar Alperovitz, and Campbell Craig and Sergey Radchenko are but a few historians who put atomic weapons at the start of the Cold War.[6] Others, including Marc Trachtenberg, highlight the role of nuclear weapons in pivotal Cold War transitions, including the shift to détente.[7] Nuclear weapons also play a role in accounts of the end of the Cold War that emphasize Ronald Reagan's military buildup, Gorbachev's reduction of the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan, and nuclear weapons agreements such as the

Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty.[8] To the extent that scientists like Sakharov are considered in such works, it is also through the prism of nuclear weapons: scientists created the weapons that overshadowed the global conflict and at various times championed their development or contested their primacy.[9]

Such a perspective portrays the Cold War as a military conflict with nuclear weapons at its center—fought through proxy wars and the arms race from Berlin to the Third World with the threat of thermonuclear war always lurking. World leaders recognized the primacy of nuclear weapons; they were the Cold War's "infrastructure of fear," in Mikhail Gorbachev's words.[10] One recent history of the Cold War expresses the fundamental importance of nuclear weapons to the conflict's trajectory. Among other factors, Carole Fink has written, "the advent of the atomic bomb utterly transformed international relations. Once both sides possessed weapons capable of not only destroying the other's territory and population but also contaminating large parts of the earth, the Cold War developed into a rigid struggle driven by fear and a costly arms race. While nuclear weapons intensified several major Cold War crises, the threat of atomic warfare also served as a brake on the superpowers."[11] Meanwhile, histories of nuclear weapons, such as those by Ronald Powaski and Joseph Siracusa, naturally emphasize the military nature of the Cold War. Even histories that focus on the influence of transnational movements in challenging the Cold War, such as Lawrence Wittner's epic history of the antinuclear movement, define the clash between activists and the nation-state system in relation to nuclear weapons and militarism.[12]

Works relying on new evidence and interpretations have not necessarily overturned the conception of the Cold War as a military conflict. Melvyn Leffler has argued that change occurred in the 1980s with Reagan's military buildup and the decision to negotiate from strength. This stance led to policies as varied as pursuit of the Strategic Defense Initiative and support for the Contras and the Mujihadeen. And while Gorbachev was a new leader, one way he differed dramatically from his predecessors was in his approach to nuclear weapons. For Leffler, the almost-groundbreaking discussions of nuclear disarmament at Reykjavik, along with the actual disarmament achieved by the INF treaty were all major turning points in the Cold War's later

stages.[13] John Gaddis, meanwhile, sees nuclear weapons dominating the Cold War until the 1980s, when real power came to rest in "intangibles," such as "courage, eloquence, imagination, determination, and faith." Western leaders like Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II abounded with these qualities, while the Soviets noticeably lacked them, instead stubbornly and hopelessly clinging to a defunct ideology that refused to acknowledge reality. Nevertheless, the important actions (as opposed to words) of these western leaders often involved nuclear weapons developments and agreements including the SDI and the INF.[14]

A different historiographical approach to the Cold War puts very different people at the center of the culmination of the conflict. Instead of statesmen, activists in the 1970s forged transnational networks based on a global vision that destabilized the Eastern Bloc. Technological innovations such as satellites, fax machines, and cable television; economic policies such as airline deregulation; and new diplomatic approaches such as *ostpolitik* and the Helsinki Accords enabled ordinary people to transcend the superpower divide and in the process discredit regimes in both East and West. Quite frequently the people involved in this movement against the Cold War invoked the concept of human rights in their challenge to the bipolar world. While the superpowers protected themselves from each other by building up nuclear deterrents, many of the people within these nations felt their governments had neglected the ideals promised by their ideology. When Gorbachev attempted to reform the Soviet government and economy, he unintentionally cracked opened a door through which eager human rights activists rushed, and in the aftermath communist rule was no longer feasible. The power of the people, not explosive power, ended the Cold War.[15]

Ultimately, Sakharov's own life reflected these different interpretations even as the Cold War was still going on, as his dilemma showed how human rights appeared to be at odds with arms control and disarmament. In the 1970s, U.S. and Soviet leaders pursued détente for their own reasons, but they agreed on the primary means of achieving it: arms control agreements to stabilize the Cold War and make it less dangerous. At the same time, human rights activism grew because of détente (especially

after the Helsinki agreements) but also in opposition to it—the Soviets were the ultimate violators of human rights, and détente appeared to condone this behavior. The following essay posits Sakharov as the embodiment of the contradictions and conflicts that détente posed for opponents of the Cold War, and I argue that while Sakharov's rhetoric prioritized disarmament, his actions helped create a powerful human rights movement that often gets credit for ending the Cold War. As a consequence, Sakharov appears as more of a contradiction than previous accounts suggest.

Sakharov's Transformations

U.S. scientists long played a role in advocating for nuclear arms control and disarmament, from publications such as the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to individuals like Barry Commoner, from the government insiders of the President's Scientific Advisory Committee to left wing activists like Linus Pauling. After the Franck Report, the Acheson-Lilienthal Proposal, and the test ban campaign of the 1950s and early 1960s, many politically active scientists continued to advocate for measures aimed at stemming the arms race well into the late 1960s and early 1970s, including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.

Sakharov fit squarely within that tradition, although of course his status as a Soviet scientist made him somewhat unique, as the Soviet Union tolerated far less dissent in general (though it officially—and cynically—supported the goal of nuclear disarmament). In the early 1950s Sakharov worked on the Soviet hydrogen bomb at a facility he referred to as "the Installation," and his layer cake design, tested on August 12, 1953, yielded a modest 400 kilotons but still achieved a thermonuclear reaction. In recognition of this achievement, he was retroactively awarded a PhD and made a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Further honors included the Stalin Prize, the title of Hero of Socialist Labor, and a dacha, all of which would help protect him from government reprisals in later years. Immediately after 1953, he continued to improve ways of triggering fusion, and this work culminated in another H-bomb, tested on November 22, 1955—just about one year after the American bomb. This bomb, more sophisticated in its design, "had essentially solved the problem of

creating high-performance thermonuclear weapons," in Sakharov's words. The successful test allowed the Soviets to achieve explosions in the megaton range with a much smaller quantity of materials. More awards followed and elevated his status even higher, though he remained essentially unknown to the general public in the West.[16]

Looking back in the 1980s after two decades as a victim of his government's draconian laws, Sakharov nevertheless explained that, similar to most Manhattan Project scientists, he had no regrets about his time as a weapons scientist. Work on the H-bomb had been satisfying at the time, he explained, because the science was engrossing and weapons work an act of patriotism. With "a true war psychology" Sakharov and his fellow scientists believed that by building nuclear weapons, the sacrifices of World War II would not be in vain.[17] These weapons, he explained, had been worth making because the United States needed to be deterred, and the weapons he made contributed to international peace. Free of guilt, he felt that to keep peace, it was necessary to make horrible things. "I and everyone else who worked with me [on thermonuclear weapons] were completely convinced of the vital necessity of our work, of its unique importance," he recalled. "What we did was actually a great tragedy, which reflected the tragic nature of the entire world situation, where in order to preserve the peace, it was necessary to make such terrible and horrible things."[18]

Sakharov's views of nuclear weapons started to change not while designing weapons but while testing them, as he came to realize that radioactive fallout clearly threatened the lives of civilian noncombatants. Preparing for the 1953 thermonuclear test, Sakharov and his colleagues ignored the fallout problem until just before the day of the test, resulting in an emergency evacuation of nearby residents.[19] After the 1955 H-bomb test, he toured the testing grounds and saw fires, shattered windows, thick smoke, and dead and dying animals. "I experienced a range of contradictory sentiments," he wrote in his memoirs, "perhaps chief among them a fear that this newly released force could slip out of control and lead to unimaginable disasters." The deaths of a young girl and a soldier, killed accidentally from the force of the explosion, he explained, "heightened my sense of foreboding. I did not hold myself personally responsible for their

deaths, but I could not escape a feeling of complicity."[20] At a celebration that same evening, Sakharov offered a toast that expressed his newly awakened conscience. "May all our devices explode as successfully as today's," he offered, "but always over test sites and never over cities."[21] To his enduring humiliation, a military officer rebuked Sakharov almost immediately by responding to the toast with a crass joke. Sakharov would always remember the slight.

As the 1950s progressed, Sakharov worried more and more about the biological effects of nuclear tests. In a 1957 article he harshly criticized testing, writing that "each and every nuclear test does damage. And this crime is committed with complete impunity, since it is impossible to prove that a particular death was caused by radiation. Furthermore, posterity has no way to defend itself from our actions. Halting the tests will directly save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, and it also promises even greater indirect benefits, reducing international tension and the risk of nuclear war, the fundamental danger of our time."[22] At one point, Sakharov even estimated that every 1 megaton test ended 10,000 lives. Despite the fact that he was speaking out against Soviet tests, Sakharov received no punishment for his statements—in fact, Khrushchev had personally approved the article. Sakharov had access to policymakers because of his status, and at one point he convinced his immediate superiors to speak to Khrushchev about a test halt, though Khrushchev rejected the proposal.[23]

In 1958, the United States and Soviet Union each began an unverified moratorium on nuclear testing. But Khrushchev was under continuous pressure to resume tests, and by July 1961 he had decided to do so. Sakharov, agonizing over every test at this point, decided to tell him that the Soviet Union had no technical knowledge to gain from resuming tests. At a high level meeting, Sakharov boldly passed Khrushchev a note, writing that, "a resumption of testing at this time would only favor the USA. . . . [T]hey could use tests to improve their devices. They have underestimated us in the past, whereas our program has been based on a realistic appraisal of the situation. . . . Don't you think that new tests will seriously jeopardize the test ban negotiations, the cause of disarmament, and world peace?" Khrushchev responded later in front of the entire Central Committee

Presidium. "He's moved beyond science into politics," he said about Sakharov. "Here he's poking his nose where it doesn't belong. You can be a good scientist without understanding a thing about politics…. Leave politics to us—we're the specialists. You make your bombs and test them, and we won't interfere with you; we'll help you. . . . Sakharov, don't try to tell us what to do or how to behave. We understand politics. I'd be a jellyfish and not Chairman of the Council of Ministers if I listened to people like Sakharov!"[24]

The scolding from Khrushchev, Sakharov later wrote, gave him "an awful sense of powerlessness. After that I was a different man. I broke with my surroundings. It was a basic break. . . . The atomic question was always half science, half politics. . . . It was a natural path into political issues. What matters is that I left conformism. It is not important on what question. After that first break, everything was natural."[25] Notably, though Khrushchev was irritated by Sakharov, the physicist at this point faced no serious reprisals or consequences for his stance on nuclear weapons.

The tests resumed, and the more they increased in frequency and size, the more Sakharov fretted about fallout. Deciding to speak up again, Sakharov continued to have access to Khrushchev, but not influence over him. Calling the Soviet leader directly before a series of tests, his arguments to cancel the tests proved in vain, and Sakharov later cried about the "terrible crime" of testing and promised to redouble his efforts to end biologically harmful tests. By 1963, after the near-miss of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Sakharov's proposals to reconsider a test ban had gained traction, and he took some credit for the 1963 Moscow Treaty, as the LTBT was known in the Soviet Union. For the next five years he remained at the Installation to work on arms control, though his world would soon transform again.[26]

Emboldened by the safety of his elite position, Sakharov began to step beyond arms control arguments and into broader political issues, but in contrast to the minimal reaction to his antinuclear actions, he found himself quickly punished. In January 1968 he began writing an essay on the role of the Soviet intelligentsia. He wrote after hours, late into the evenings at the Installation, and although he knew the authorities would not like what he was writing, he made little effort to keep it secret. By late

April, in the heady days of the Prague Spring, he had a polished draft of an essay titled “Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom.” Spread throughout Moscow as *samizdat*, the essay caught the attention of the KGB, who grew concerned that it might make its way into the western press. While a *New York Times* correspondent refused to accept the essay, a Dutch journalist passed it along and on July 6 it appeared in the Dutch press. By July 10 Sakharov himself heard a BBC report on the document, and by one estimate the essay was reprinted some eighteen million times between 1968 and 1969. Sakharov himself explained that the essay laid a theoretical foundation for his future activism, and it therefore touched on a wide range of subjects.[27]

The essay is perhaps best known for introducing the concept of convergence—Sakharov’s vision for a future political system that encompassed the best of the capitalist and socialist systems while discarding each system’s failures. Quite naturally, “Progress,” addressed nuclear weapons: All of humanity, Sakharov wrote, was divided and threatened by “universal thermonuclear war.” But because of their destructive power, relative affordability, and imperviousness to defense, nations could not resist relying on nuclear weapons. This situation left the world constantly in danger of nuclear war which, he wrote, “would be a means of universal suicide.”[28] But the essay ranged far beyond nuclear weapons, addressing intellectual freedom, the Vietnam War, world hunger, threats to the environment, and also human rights. In his prescriptions for solving the world’s problems, he included the declaration: “All anticonstitutional laws and decrees violating human rights must be abrogated.”[29] Although fairly tame by western standards, “Progress” marked a dramatic shift for Sakharov away from his place of privilege and toward the opposite end of Soviet society.

From Disarmament to Human Rights

Sakharov’s tentative expansion into the field of human rights, as manifested in “Progress,” occurred just before a vigorous growth in the spirit of human rights during the 1970s. Much of this growth coalesced around international organizations, such as Amnesty International, and agreements like the landmark Helsinki Accords, which obligated the Soviet Union to respect

human rights in exchange for recognition of the post-World War II borders in Eastern Europe. For its part, the Soviet Union took this new human rights activism much more seriously than antinuclear efforts. While Sakharov's advocacy of a nuclear test ban did little to harm his career, his "Progress" essay got him upbraided and fired.[30] Afterward he began to draw more attention to the importance of human rights, and as this activism increased, so he increasingly ran afoul of Soviet authorities.

Over the next two decades, he would demand free speech, campaign for human rights, denounce the arrests of dissidents, criticize the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and endure a hunger strike over the right to emigrate. He opposed the death sentences given to an alleged counterfeiter as well as accused hijackers, spoke out against the rehabilitation of Stalin that occurred after Khrushchev's ouster, and participated in a campaign to prevent the ecological destruction of Lake Baikal. He attended dissident trials, bearing witness to the abuse of state power either in the audience or holding vigil outside, and helped form the Human Rights Committee in 1970. Other activities included advocating for the rights of Crimean Tatars, defending Pablo Neruda from persecution by the Chilean government, and arguing with fellow human rights iconoclast Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.[31] This list—hardly exhaustive—suggests that he had little time, understandably enough, for antinuclear efforts; it also brings into stark relief the gap between his actions and his rhetoric, as he continued to voice the belief that nuclear disarmament was the most important of causes while simultaneously sacrificing himself for the cause of human rights.

Such defiance—met with harassment, surveillance, and eventually harsh repression—inspired countless activists around the world, though when he gained notoriety overseas it was more for human rights rather than disarmament. Amnesty International's profile of Sakharov in 1974 painted him as a "dissenter… internationally recognized as a voice of protest in the USSR" and further explained that he had "shifted from protest of Soviet nuclear testing in the Khrushchev period to intervention on behalf of political dissidents."[32]

It was Sakharov's fate to be known more for his human rights activism than for arms control or disarmament

achievements. The 1975 Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony Speech, given by Aase Lionaes, chairman of the Nobel Committee, described him as "one of the great champions of human rights in our age . . . [who] has emphasised that Man's inviolable rights provide the only safe foundation for genuine and enduring international cooperation." Lionaes frequently mentioned Sakharov's "Progress" essay and linked him to Helsinki: "Andrei Sakharov's great contribution to peace is this, that he has fought in a particularly effective manner and under highly difficult conditions, in the greatest spirit of self-sacrifice, to obtain respect for these values that the Helsinki Agreement here declares to be its object." The speech did mention disarmament in addition to his "struggle for human rights," but the two causes were not quite equal.[33]

The Nobel Prize assured Sakharov of a greater audience, and the ensuing exposure in the West enabled Sakharov to inspire scientists' activism for human rights, a movement that focused on areas well beyond the Soviet Union. The same year that Sakharov won the Nobel, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) distributed petitions increasing awareness about human rights violations and asking for support for the defense of scientists suffering overseas. In response, more than twenty-five percent of the NAS's members expressed "a desire for a more active and visible posture." This sentiment led the NAS to form its Committee on Human Rights in 1977, which the organization heralded as "new departure . . . toward persecuted scientists." Whereas "silent diplomacy" had been the norm, the committee intended to "open up a public channel of protest" on behalf of scientists. As one Columbia University professor put it, "Silence kills."[34]

Scientists concerned about human rights frequently turned academic and professional conferences into occasions for activism. In 1978, scientists and physicians from around the globe descended upon Buenos Aires to attend the International Cancer Congress (ICC) in the hopes of contributing to the defeat of the dreaded disease. But because of scientists' new identity as human rights activists, some attendees concerned themselves not with those attacked by deadly cancer cells, but another contagion: Argentina's abysmal disdain for human rights. According to Amnesty International, 15,000 people had been

"disappeared" over the previous two-and-a-half years, including "many scientists" who "lost their jobs as university professors and research workers when the military came to power in March 1976." In addition, the Argentine government officially acknowledged about 4,000 "persons detained at the disposal of the Executive Power." Their official status made these prisoners no less a concern in the eyes of U.S. scientists since the government willfully deprived them of their right to defend themselves in court.[35]

The Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility of the AAAS issued a declaration that called upon scientists and scientific organizations "to initiate on-site investigations in Argentina, on an urgent basis" on behalf of "imprisoned Argentine scientists who have been denied due process of the law." Accordingly, a group of roughly 35 scientists and physicians attended the ICC with the intention of participating in actions and events aimed at aiding scientific political prisoners.[36] At the ICC, the concerned doctors met with the mothers of "the disappeared" for a silent vigil at the Plaza de Mayo, discussed human rights with Argentine activists, met with an Argentine government official, and attended mass with the families of the disappeared. On the final day of the ICC, 75 doctors from eight countries signed a petition expressing "solidarity" with their "Argentinian colleagues." The statement closed by connecting progress in human rights with progress in science: "If Argentina wishes to continue its distinguished role in the world community of science . . . improvement [in human rights] is mandatory."[37] Scientists, once so synonymous with arms control and disarmament, had transformed into human rights activists.

Despite having caused so much support for human rights, Sakharov did not immediately acknowledge the geopolitical shift away from arms control and disarmament—in fact he often argued that nuclear disarmament should take precedence over human rights. Attending a 1975 vigil for Sergei Kovalev at the exact moment he was being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in absentia, Sakharov made his case for prioritizing nuclear disarmament over human rights and in the process weighed in on the dispute between détente and human rights. "It is absolutely unacceptable—even for a goal as important as respect for human rights—to make conduct in that area a

precondition for disarmament negotiations," he announced. "Disarmament must have first priority." In his 1975 book *My Country and the World*, Sakharov wrote, "The unchecked growth of thermonuclear arsenals and the build-up toward confrontation threaten mankind with the death of civilization and physical annihilation. The elimination of that threat takes unquestionable priority over all other problems in international relations…. This is why disarmament talks, which offer a ray of hope in the dark world of suicidal nuclear madness, are so important."[38]

Although he often spoke of prioritizing disarmament over human rights, Sakharov also occasionally attempted to unify the two causes, reflecting perhaps the difficulty he had in putting one before the other. In his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech, delivered by Elena Bonner on December 10, 1975, he mentioned both together. Sakharov began by describing the award as "a manifestation of tolerance and of the true spirit of détente." But since the award specifically praised his human rights contributions, he added that it made him "particularly happy … to see that the Committee's decision stressed the link between defense of peace and defense of human rights."[39]

Sakharov's Nobel lecture, also read by Elena Bonner, attempted this convergence, arguing that disarmament could not happen without respect for human rights. "I am convinced" Bonner read to the audience of luminaries, "that international confidence, mutual understanding, disarmament, and international security are inconceivable without an open society with freedom of information, freedom of conscience, the right to publish, and the right to travel and choose the country in which one wishes to live." Much of the lecture discussed a two-step plan for disarmament, and reframed the Helsinki agreement as an avenue toward a real disarmament agreement.[40]

Sakharov's rhetorical emphasis on disarmament stood in substantial contrast to the way Soviet authorities viewed his power. For the KGB in particular, Sakharov's human rights activities posed an exponentially greater threat to the Soviet system than anything related to disarmament. According to Joshua Rubenstein and Alexander Gribanov, the editors of *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov*, "once Sakharov began openly to question Kremlin policies and campaign on behalf of imprisoned human rights activists, the KGB felt compelled to remove his

security clearance and place him under constant surveillance."[41] From this one can infer that his antinuclear activism did not inspire much fear. During the 1970s, the KGB grew very much concerned about democratic movements, including dissidents, *samizdat*, refuseniks, and activist networks. Accordingly, the KGB worried tremendously about Sakharov's work with the Human Rights Committee and "came to the conclusion that he could become a leader [of Moscow human rights activists] and that his philosophy could help provide a common approach for a growing and diverse culture of popular discontent."[42] The KGB essentially admitted that Sakharov's human rights activities caused more concern than his antinuclear stands, as the KGB apparently began keeping a file on him only in 1968, the year of the "Progress" essay (although the editors of the published version of his file insist that he had to have been monitored before that).[43]

By its own account, the KGB feared not his antinuclear efforts but the links Sakharov forged (or even might possibly have potentially forged) between government opposition groups, such as Ukrainian nationalists and human rights activists in Moscow.[44] Yuri Andropov, the head of the KGB at the time, revealed this fear in a memo, writing that dissent movements' "main thrust is to create, by using every form of political pressure, a situation that could cause a certain deformation in the structure of Soviet society. . . . The hysteria stirred up lately in the West around the names of Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn is directly subordinated to these goals and represents the product of a prearranged and coordinated program." Sakharov, he wrote, "is definitely degenerating into anti-Sovietism. . . . [And] the anti-Soviet campaign attacks many aspects of our social and political structure and the Soviet way of life." The KGB not surprisingly erred in seeing a conspiracy at work. In Rubenstein and Gribanov's words, "the KGB had a fundamentally flawed understanding of what Sakharov and his fellow activists were up to. Andropov and the KGB represented the human rights movement to the Politburo as a kind of political opposition, a political movement that was too dangerous to recognize. But the human rights movement was not primarily a political phenomenon. It was a loosely organized movement of activists

who were taking a stand, each in his or her own way, against lies and oppression."[45]

The KGB did recognize Sakharov's deep opposition to nuclear weapons, with one report stating: "Having made a great contribution to the creation of thermonuclear weapons, Sakharov felt his 'guilt' before mankind, and, because of that, he has set himself the task of fighting for peace and preventing thermonuclear war." (Though Sakharov in his memoirs claimed to have no feelings of guilt.) Another report noted that he discussed nuclear weapons with a Canadian journalist, going so far as to describe his statements in the interview as "highly confidential and constitute[ing] a state secret." But the concern raised related not to Sakharov's identity as antinuclear activist but rather "someone who opposes Soviet foreign policy and who seeks to compromise this country's position at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe."[46] No such judgment had been passed on him when his activism consisted solely of opposition to nuclear fallout.

Détente, Disarmament, and Human Rights

By the time Sakharov had become known worldwide as a human rights activist and to the Kremlin as a subversive, Cold War geopolitics had moved toward détente, a transformation manifested in Nixon's trips to China and the Soviet Union, trade agreements between the superpowers, and arms control agreements including the NPT and the ABM treaty. But a number of social activists and conservative politicians in the United States grew skeptical about coexisting with the communist behemoth, and shifted attention away from the successful arms control negotiations and toward Soviet failures to respect human rights. Détente, according to this strange coalition, appeared to excuse Soviet human rights violations, and while very few objected in principle to the goal of nuclear disarmament, many people believed that with the Soviet Union seemingly growing more "evil," it made little sense to weaken the West's nuclear deterrent. Opponents of détente feared that treating the Soviet Union like a legitimate nation excused—and maybe even rewarded—the Soviets for disregarding human rights which, they argued, should take precedence over collaboration, coexistence, and disarmament. Congressional

Cold Warriors moved against détente by adding the Jackson-Vanik amendment to a trade agreement, for example, that made the deal contingent on the Soviets easing emigration restrictions on Soviet Jews. Among politically active U.S. scientists, growing sentiment for human rights turned into actions which included boycotts of U.S.-Soviet scientific exchange in defiance of détente and scientific internationalism.[47]

Nuclear disarmament, of course, meant less of a threat to humanity, which sounded like a type of support for human rights. After all, Article 3 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights announced each human's right to "security of person." But to the anti-détente segment of U.S. society, the easing of tensions ignored human rights by portraying the Soviet Union as a legitimate nation rather than the repressive master of the people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. So the rise of détente actually in many ways conflicted with the rise of human rights. In the House of Representatives, Donald Fraser (D-MN) led a push against détente and for human rights in 1974; his Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, part of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, issued *Human Rights in the World Community: A Call for U.S. Leadership*, which declared, "we have disregarded human rights for the sake of other assumed interests."[48] Further on, the document tried to refocus U.S. policy: "Men and women of decency find common cause in coming to the aid of the oppressed despite national differences. Through their own governments and international organizations, they have both the opportunity and responsibility to help defend human rights throughout the world."[49] One of the subcommittee's recommendations suggested that the State Department "upgrade the consideration given to human rights in determining Soviet-American relations. While pursuing the objectives of détente, the United States should be forthright in denouncing Soviet violations of human rights and should raise the priority of the human rights factor particularly with regard to policy decisions not directly related to national security."[50] The subcommittee also worried that détente had the potential to subvert U.S. ideals: "Traditionally, the United States has not hesitated to criticize violations of human rights in the Soviet Union and other Communist states. Current U.S. policy, however, has made it clear that Soviet violations of human rights

will not deter efforts to promote détente with the Soviet Union. . . . Certainly it is in the interest of national security to find areas of cooperation with the Soviet Union. But cooperation must not extend to the point of collaboration in maintaining a police state."[51]

Fraser's perspective on détente contrasted with Sakharov's insistence on prioritizing nuclear disarmament, but the physicist had much in common, perhaps surprisingly, with Henry Kissinger's views of détente. On July 15, 1975, in Minneapolis, the Secretary of State defended the policy in an address titled "The Moral Foundations of Foreign Policy."[52] Since the hostility between the United States and Soviet Union made nuclear war increasingly likely, Kissinger stated, "[w]e have an obligation to see a more productive and stable relationship despite the basic antagonism of our values."[53] He mentioned the growing "rebellion against contemporary foreign policy," and how that opponents described détente as "excessively pragmatic, that it sacrifices virtue in the mechanical pursuit of stability." He also recognized the "clear conflict between two moral imperatives," human rights and peace. But "[i]n an era of strategic nuclear balance—when both sides have the capacity to destroy civilized life—there is no alternative to coexistence."[54] Treating the Soviets like a legitimate nation, he hoped, would make them act like a legitimate nation: "The American people will never be satisfied with simply reducing tension and easing the danger of nuclear holocaust. Over the longer term, we hope that firmness in the face of pressure and the creation of incentives for cooperative action may bring about a more durable pattern of stability and responsible conduct." The "[c]ritics of détente must answer," Kissinger declared, "Are they prepared for a prolonged situation of dramatically increased international danger? Do they wish to return to the constant crises and high arms budgets of the cold war? Does détente encourage repression—or is it détente that has generated the ferment and the demands for openness that we are now witnessing?" He closed by directly asserting, "We do not and will not condone repressive practices."[55]

While even Kissinger was trying to reframe détente and disarmament as consistent with human rights, Sakharov continued to place disarmament above all else. Even when he

was exiled to Gorky in January 1980 for denouncing the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, he criticized the Soviet Union's actions more for their effect on nuclear arms control rather than human rights. The invasion of Afghanistan, as he saw it, was regrettable because it would make impossible the ratification of the SALT-II agreement, which "is so vital to the entire world, in particular as a necessary first step toward disarmament."[56]

One way to understand Sakharov's dilemma is to view his contradictory words and actions on disarmament and human rights as complex and intertwined with his personal life and his interpretation of Cold War geopolitics. According to Bergman, Sakharov had, by the time of his Gorky exile, come to see the Soviet Union as essentially evil. Reprisals against his own children and step children, including refusing them admission to university, preventing them from traveling overseas, and even threatening them with violence, made this unmistakably clear to him.[57] In addition to innumerable show trials, the imprisonment of dissidents in psychiatric hospitals, and his own exile, the incursion into Afghanistan convinced Sakharov of the need to use nuclear deterrence to contain the Soviet Union, which he saw as a pathologically aggressive nation. But empathy with people suffering under the yoke of Soviet rule convinced him of the dire need to press the Soviet Union on human rights, and the Carter administration noticeably disappointed Sakharov when in his opinion it downplayed human rights in order to gain arms control agreements.[58] But Sakharov still favored arms control and disarmament talks, arguing that they should continue even if the Soviets continued to violate human rights. Negotiations should make sense, he argued—they should not allow the Soviets to gain an advantage. Since Sakharov believed that the Soviet leaders respected only strength he even at one point approved of the United States building more nuclear weapons.[59] While Sakharov certainly recognized the importance of human rights, nuclear disarmament was listed first when he voiced his priorities. He frequently stated that scientists had an obligation to the "moral improvement of humanity," in Bergman's words. "But he was also aware that this moral improvement required first of all that the moral degeneration of humanity, which in a nuclear

age could lead to the obliteration of everyone and everything, be brought to a halt."[60]

Sakharov's exile to Gorky in 1980 only further increased western agitation on his behalf—that year, the Federation of American Scientists distributed bumper stickers that read, "Release Andrei Sakharov," and later smuggled a computer in to him.[61] Upon being exiled, however, he made a statement reaffirming his commitment to disarmament. He declared, "I am for giving priority to the problems of peace, the problem of averting thermonuclear war."[62] Even allowing for modesty—that he may have been trying to refute the claims of his enemies that he was an irrepressible egomaniac—his statements downplayed his own plight and reflect an adamant belief that disarmament was more important than human rights. In a wide-ranging, open letter to the *New York Times*, he wrote: "I feel that the questions of war and peace and disarmament are so crucial that they must be given absolute priority even in the most difficult circumstances. It is imperative that all possible means be used to solve these questions and to lay the groundwork for further progress. Most urgent of all are steps to avert a nuclear war, which is the greatest peril confronting the modern world."[63] Out of six statements that he declared from exile, four of them dealt with disarmament. Years later, reflecting on his life, he described nuclear disarmament as "surely the goal of all reasonable people." Even if human rights were achieved, he wrote, "we would still face a protracted and dangerous period of transition."[64]

The Threat of Human Rights

During his time in Gorky, which included hunger strikes to get permission for his wife and step-son's fiancé to travel, the theft of the manuscript of his memoirs, and pressure from his scientific colleagues, he reversed the thinking from when he worked on the H-bomb and became convinced that the Soviet Union, rather than the United States, was the nation that needed to be deterred. Naturally only the United States possessed a nuclear arsenal capable of deterring the Soviets. So while he worried about nuclear war, he saw a role for nuclear weapons in the world. But since he still worried about nuclear weapons, the evolution of his thinking would eventually convince him that

nuclear deterrence was no longer credible. And yet this change in mindset did not lead to a subsequent shift in priorities away from disarmament. Worried as he was about a conventional Soviet attack in Europe, he reconciled his desire to deter the Soviets with his wish to end the nuclear arms race. The answer was to build up the U.S. arsenal of conventional weapons until the United States reached parity with the Soviet Union, a concept he described as conventional deterrence.[65]

Upon receiving the Szilard Award in 1983, he explained how conventional deterrence could be used to deter the Soviets while still pursuing nuclear arms control and disarmament. "I am convinced that nuclear deterrence is gradually turning into its own antithesis and becoming a dangerous remnant of the past. The equilibrium provided by nuclear deterrence is becoming increasingly unsteady; increasingly real is the danger that mankind will perish if an accident or insanity or uncontrolled escalation draws it into a total thermonuclear war." It was therefore "necessary to strive for nuclear disarmament," while deterrence had to shift to conventional forces.[66] This allowed Sakharov to endorse arms control and disarmament without seeming to recognize the legitimacy of the Soviet government.

In a 1983 open letter to Sidney Drell, one of many U.S. scientists concerned with disarmament (and with Sakharov's plight), Sakharov further explained conventional deterrence. In spite of the dangers of nuclear war, the weapons remained useful for deterring the Soviets, he wrote, but they did not deter conventional aggression. Expecting a Soviet military incursion into Europe, Sakharov believed that "it is necessary to restore strategic parity in the field of conventional weapons," even though this would entail drastic restructuring on the part of the West. This allowed him to reconcile his desire to deter the Soviets with his passion for disarmament. "On the whole I am convinced that nuclear disarmament talks are of enormous importance and of the highest priority," he wrote to Drell. "They must be conducted continuously—in the brighter periods of international relations but also in the periods where relations are strained—and conducted with persistence, foresight, firmness and, at the same time, with flexibility and initiative."[67]

By this time, détente had ended and disarmament had regained mainstream favor in the West. Sakharov, however, had

maintained the same vision for almost thirty years, explaining in his memoirs, written during the 1980s, that "my fervent and paramount dream continues to be that they will be used only to deter war, never to wage war," words that echoed his toast after the 1953 thermonuclear test.[68] Late in life, while the Soviet Union was undergoing *glasnost* and *perestroika*, he held to his antinuclear principles, writing in his memoirs: "The first issue on which I spoke out publicly was the danger of thermonuclear war, and I have repeatedly stressed that this peril must take priority over all other concerns."[69] Sakharov had long preached the importance of openness for the reform of Soviet society, but he ultimately thought eliminating nuclear weapons would be more transformative for the world. He may not have been wrong about that, but it was political and social reform that transformed—eliminated, even—the Soviet Union.

By any measure, Sakharov's legacy lies in the realm of human rights. His activism involved human rights much more than disarmament, and human rights were responsible for the Soviet government's repression of him. Nuclear weapons were not irrelevant to the Soviet government's treatment of Sakharov—the KGB and other government figures used his nuclear knowledge as an excuse for essentially incarcerating him in Gorky. Authorities forbid him and Bonner from associating with citizens of capitalist countries "since these contacts result in the disclosure of secret information that can cause serious harm to the country's defenses." Claiming that Sakharov's draft memoir contained "secret" information about nuclear weapons, and that sending it abroad would be "detrimental to national security," the KGB, sensibly by its standards, stole the manuscript.[70] In a 1986 interview with the communist French newspaper *l'Humanite*, Mikhail Gorbachev maintained this fiction: "It is common knowledge that [Sakharov] committed actions punishable by law. … Measures were taken with regard to him in accordance with our legislation." Claiming that the physicist "lives in Gorky in normal conditions," the Soviet leader added that Sakharov "still possesses information that concerns secrets of special importance to the state and for this reason cannot go abroad."[71] But this should not be mistaken as evidence that the Soviet government feared his antinuclear stance. Soviet authorities were notably more concerned (at least

ostensibly) with Sakharov's potential to leak nuclear information; his criticism of the arms race was safe in that it implicitly criticized the United States.

Far more alarming to the KGB than Sakharov's antinuclear views was his alleged role in a brewing conspiracy involving dissident groups. "Members of these organizations established contacts with certain foreign anti-Soviet centers and, for purposes of discrediting the Soviet state and public order, collected and assembled libelous materials," a KGB report stated. Sakharov "incites aggressive circles of capitalist countries to interfere in the domestic affairs of socialist states and to embark on military confrontation with the Soviet Union. . . . Sakharov has also undertaken measures to unify anti-Soviet elements inside the country and incites them to engage in extremist acts." The Nobel Peace Prize was reward and compensation from the West for these "hostile activities." Far from fearing his antinuclear statements, the KGB even asked him to write about disarmament and SDI in return for his passage to Moscow when he was freed from exile in 1986. Upon his return to Moscow in 1986, the KGB nevertheless continued to keep tabs on him, and at his funeral ceremonies in 1989, observed by the KGB, a sign read: "Even dead you terrify them."[72]

Understanding Sakharov

While Sakharov argued in words that disarmament was his priority, his actions more often served the cause of human rights. Nuclear war threatened the entire world, but in some ways it had become removed from the daily life of a Soviet dissident. His own life confronted (at least) two very different dangers: thermonuclear war and the nature of the Soviet Union. "We must liquidate the ideological monism of our society," he once stated. "The uniform ideological structure that is anti-democratic in its very essence—it has been very tragic for the state."[73] And it was the repressive structure of Soviet society that Sakharov helped bring to an end. The KGB was perhaps correct to fear the human rights movements of the 1970s and 1980s, given the peaceful protest that contributed to the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, nuclear weapons dwindled in number, but world arsenals remain

potent, and nations around the world continue to see them as the ultimate in national defense.

Sakharov's life ultimately challenged the Soviet system far more than the global nation-state system predicated on nuclear weapons and mutually assured destruction. One reason for this may have been Sakharov's areas of influence. During the era of the test ban debate, he had access to Khrushchev to an extent and attempted to change policy. But as he spoke out in other areas the KGB and Soviet government punished him and his access diminished. Human rights became an issue over which he could have influence, not least because his own human rights were being violated. By demonstrably suffering for causes including free expression, free association, and the right to travel, he was able to inspire activism and expose Soviet hypocrisies. As the KGB recognized, Sakharov was, in acting for human rights, attacking the Soviet Union where it was particularly vulnerable. Sakharov's steadfast emphasis on disarmament shows the difficulty it took to recognize that despite their destructive power, nuclear weapons were less effective as agents of change than idealistic causes and activists.

Notes

[1] "The Kremlin vs. Liza and Aleksey," *New York Times*, June 17, 1981, A30; "Dissident's Setpson Married by Proxy," *New York Times*, June 10, 1981, A1; "Marriage at a Distance," *New York Times*, June 14, 1981, Sec. 4, 7; Cathleen McGuigan, "Newsmakers," *Newsweek*, June 22, 1981, 49.

[2] Sakharov, "The Responsibility of Scientists," *Nature*, vol. 291, 21 May 1981, 185.

[3] Bruce Kiernan, "Science and Human Rights," *Science*, New Series, Vol. 207, No. 4435 (March 7, 1980), 1062–63.

[4] Donald Kelley, *The Solzhenitsyn-Sakharov Dialogue: Politics, Society, and the Future* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 97. Gennady Gorelik, with Antonina Bouis, *The World of Andrei Sakharov: A Russian Physicist's Path to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii, xv.

[5] Jay Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason: The Life and Thought of Andrei Sakharov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[6] Martin Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and its Legacies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, 3rd edition), Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Vintage, 1996), Campbell Craig and Sergey Radchenko, *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[7] Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[8] Robert McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 165–68.

[9] See for example, Sherwin and Kai Bird, *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (New York: Knopf, 2005), Benjamin Greene, *Eisenhower, Science Advice, and the Nuclear Test-Ban Debate, 1945–1963* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), Sarah Bridger, *Scientists at War: The Ethics of Cold War Weapons Research* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), Zuoyue Wang, *In Sputnik's Shadow: The President's Science Advisory Committee and Cold War America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), Paul Rubinson, "'Crucified on a Cross of Atoms': Scientists, Politics, and the Test Ban," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (April 2011), 313–49, and Rubinson, "The Global Effects of Nuclear Winter: Science and Antinuclear Protest in the United States and the Soviet Union during the 1980s," *Cold War History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 2014), 47–69.
[10] Quoted in Joseph Siracusa, *Nuclear Weapons: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 116.
[11] Carole Fink, *Cold War: An International History*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 2.
[12] Ronald Powaski, *March to Armageddon: The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1939 to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, Powaski, *Return to Armageddon: The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1981–1999*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, Siracusa, *Nuclear Weapons*, Lawrence Wittner, *The Struggle against the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement*, three volumes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, 1997, 2003).
[13] Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 346–421.
[14] Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 195–96.
[15] Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: An International History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Barbara Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), Petra Goedde, William Hitchcock, and Akira Iriye, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, John Prados, *How the Cold War Ended: Debating and Doing History* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2010), looks at the differing interpretations of the end of the Cold War.
[16] David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 315; Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 193.
[17] Sakharov, *Memoirs* 97.
[18] Quoted in Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason*, 62–76.
[19] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 171–72.
[20] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 193–94.
[21] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 194. This was Sakharov's paraphrase of his toast rather than the exact words he used at the time.
[22] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 202–04.
[23] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 207–08.
[24] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 216–17. In his memoirs, Sakharov points out that the statements are based on his recollection rather than original documents.

[25] Joshua Rubenstein and Alexander Gribanov, eds., *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 14.
[26] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 225–32.
[27] Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 280–88.
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Randy Mills, Editor
Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences
138 N. Lucretia
Oakland City University
Oakland City, Indiana 47660
rkmills@oak.edu