

H-Diplo | Robert Jervis International Security Studies Forum

Policy Roundtable Review II-3

Sustaining Conversations between Political Scientists and Historians

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Editor: Diane Labrosse
Commissioning Editors: Jennifer Erickson,
Diane Labrosse, Rosella Cappella Zielinski, and
Mark R. Wilson

Production Editor: Christopher Ball
Copy Editor: Bethany Keenan

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Introduction by Rosella Cappella Zielinski, Boston University, and Mark R. Wilson, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

“Be Curious”

This H-Diplo | RJISSF roundtable features three essays in which authors reflect on the current state of the conversation between historians and political scientists, particularly in the areas of diplomatic history and security studies. Drawing on their own recent efforts to bridge disciplinary boundaries, the authors discuss problems, best practices, and ways forward. As the essays suggest, there are abundant opportunities for historians and political scientists to do more to learn from one another. We hope that readers will come away from this roundtable with new ideas about how they—and their students and colleagues—might cultivate opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and collaboration.

This roundtable does not attempt to present a new account of fundamental differences between political scientists and historians in the fields of diplomatic history and security studies. As the roundtable contributors all suggest, those differences seem to remain similar to the ones described a quarter-century ago, by scholars such as Jack S. Levy, John Lewis Gaddis, Robert Jervis, and Paul W. Schroeder.¹ If anything, the divide between the disciplines is probably deeper today, because political science has become more interested in sophisticated methods, whereas history has done little to move in a similar direction. We recognize that this gulf is deep, and that many political scientists and historians may not share our optimism about opportunities for improved communication. For example, one of the scholars we approached as a potential contributor to this roundtable was quite discouraged about the present state of affairs, telling us, “the disciplines seem farther apart than I can recall in my lifetime.”

Rather than restating the persistent and significant differences between the fields, this roundtable seeks instead to suggest some practical measures that may improve their communication.

Our own interest in bringing together this roundtable grew out of our experiences in an online virtual speaker series, hosted by the Project on the Political Economy of Security, based at the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University.² One of us (Rosella Cappella Zielinski) is a co-director of that Project (launched in 2014) with her Boston University colleague Kaija Schilde. The other (Mark R. Wilson) started attending the workshop regularly in 2020 when it moved online during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that same year, the speaker series started to feature working papers by historians, as well as political scientists. Eventually, Mark joined a group of speaker series co-organizers—including the political scientists Joshua Alley, Florian Bodamer, Benjamin O. Fordham, and Alexander Kirss—who helped Rosella and Kaija to identify potential speakers and discussants. Meanwhile, the workshop became more interdisciplinary. Although the majority of attendees (often around two dozen people per Zoom session) continued to be political scientists, more historians joined the audience, and historians started to appear more regularly among the speakers and discussants.

Our recent experiences in the Boston University workshop convinced us that political scientists and historians both benefit from deeper, more regular interactions. This is not to suggest that those interactions are always comfortable. Indeed, one presenting scholar, facing an interdisciplinary audience, opened their workshop with the line, “I’m sure if I’m going to Mordor or Gondor...”³ But for the most part, we have

¹ Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

² Information on the Project on the Political Economy of Security is available at <https://www.bu.edu/pardeeschool/research/research-initiatives/project-on-the-political-economy-of-security/>.

³ Gondor is a fictional kingdom in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy which is described as the greatest realm of Men. Mordor, in the same trilogy, is a horrid and inhospitable landscape and the base of the evil antagonist

been struck by the ability of authors and audience members to create fruitful conversations, which have been enjoyable and instructive for participants on both sides of the disciplinary divide. As one might expect, the papers by historians tend to be strongest in the areas of original archival research and narrative, whereas the political science papers are typically much better at rigorous hypothesis testing, often using much more quantitative analysis. These differences create the potential for frustration and misunderstanding. But the participants have found that we often learn the most from the papers given by scholars from the other discipline. The tone of the workshop discussions has been overwhelmingly constructive and supportive.

As we enter the mid-2020s, the time is ripe for political scientists and historians, including H-Diplo | RJISSF readers, to collaborate and converse more energetically. This is true for multiple reasons.

First, barriers to communication are lower. As the transformation of the Boston University workshop suggests, one recent development has been the rise of virtual or hybrid events, which can facilitate long-distance interdisciplinary collaboration. Prior to the onset of COVID pandemic in early 2020, professional networking and conversations about new work often happened at disciplinary-specific annual conferences, such as the meetings of the American Political Science Association, the International Studies Association, the American Historical Association, and the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations. Since 2020, it has become much easier and more common to create virtual or hybrid meeting spaces. To take another example, in February 2023 Cappella Zielinski and Wilson participated in a hybrid interdisciplinary conference hosted by the US Military Academy at West Point, on the theme of “Order, Counter-Order, Disorder? Regional and Global Security Orders in the Shadow of Sino-American Competition,” which was co-organized by one of our roundtable authors, Jordan Becker.

A second reason to promote sustained interdisciplinary conversations is related to the ongoing academic jobs crisis. Fellowships and tenure-track job openings in traditional academic departments are declining.⁴ However, for junior scholars who work in the areas of security studies and diplomatic history, there remain several valuable opportunities for fellowships or employment in interdisciplinary centers. For example, there are multiple prestigious fellowships at centers housed in civilian institutions of higher education, such as Clements Center for National Security (at the University of Texas at Austin), the Center for International Security and Cooperation (Stanford University), and the John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding (Dartmouth University). At the same time, institutions in the realm of professional military education (PME) continue to advertise jobs open to political scientists and historians. These jobs are often in interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary departments or centers, at military institutions of higher learning such as the Naval War College, the Army War College, or the US Naval Academy.

A third reason to seek out more interdisciplinary conversations, and perhaps the most important one, has to do with the gains that come from stepping outside one’s own discipline. This benefit is not new, but it may be more than important than ever, as academic fields continue to become more specialized and insular. As we have observed in the Boston University workshop, interacting across the disciplines often provides new ideas about possible sources of evidence and methods for using that evidence. Explanations taken for granted in one field may be challenged, in productive ways, by outsiders. We agree with the recent suggestion of Francis J. Gavin, who has called on scholars to embrace what he dubs the Donnie and Marie [Osmond] Doctrine: “Let curiosity tempt you, to engage a discipline, practice, or method other than your tried and true.”⁵ As

Sauron. We should also note that said scholar got a lot of useful feedback from their workshop experience and has joined again multiple times as an attendee.

⁴ For some recent data for the field of history, see <https://www.historians.org/ahajobsreport2022>; for political science, see <https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/article-details/640bba20e53eff1af3ee1993>.

For recent data for United States higher education broadly see <https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/AAUP%20Data%20Snapshot.pdf>.

⁵ Francis Gavin, “It May Be Different Than You Think,” *Texas National Security Review* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2022-23), <https://tnsr.org/2023/02/it-may-be-different-than-you-think/>

Gavin suggests, and as we have also found, talking across disciplines makes our work richer and more compelling, and more useful to a wider range of audiences.

Given that new technologies and practices have lowered barriers to entry to interdisciplinary conversations, that the current and future job market looks to be one in which the number of opportunities in interdisciplinary settings may be higher than it has been previously, and that the benefits of collaboration seem higher than ever, we are especially interested in knowing more about whether the relationship between political science and history has been changing much in recent years, and whether there may be important new opportunities for collaboration and learning.

To explore these questions in a preliminary way, we reached out to colleagues with experiences in interdisciplinary centers or programs, asking them if they might be willing to share ideas about recent experiences, best practices, and other reflections. In the end, we gathered three essays, which their authors generously volunteered. This is an interdisciplinary group. Susan Colbourn, a historian by training, is the Associate Director in American Grand Strategy at Duke University and Associate Director of the Triangle Institute for Security. Political Scientist James Goldgeier is, amongst many titles, a Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford and chair of the State Department Historical Advisory Committee. Lieutenant Colonel Jordan Becker, who received a PhD in War Studies from King's College London, is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at the United States Military Academy in West Point. His co-essayists are the late Bear Braumoeller, formerly of The Ohio State University; Beatrice Heuser, University of Glasgow; and Jeffrey Reynolds, of NATO and the Atlantic Council.

The three pieces overlap and engage with one another, while making distinct points. All three essays—echoing recent calls to “bridge the gap” between scholarship and policy⁶—urge political scientists and historians to serve broader audiences, including non-academic readers and clients. Goldgeier emphasizes the need to sustain conversations as a result of the job crisis and demands from policy schools. Colbourn, who also address the job crisis and need to engage with the respective discipline, addresses foundational best practices based on mutual respect. Becker, Braumoeller, Heuser, and Reynolds provide best practices for when policymakers are directly involved. Finally, we provide a short conclusion that reflects on our newfound best practices when beginning conversations for the first time.

We encourage H-Diplo | RJISSF readers to engage with all three of the roundtable contributions, and reflect on the extent to which the essays resonate with their own experiences.

Participants:

Rosella Cappella Zielinski is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Boston University and non-resident fellow at the Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Creativity at Marine Corps University. She was recently a visiting fellow at the Clements Center for National Security at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *How States Pay for Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), winner of the 2017 American Political Science Association Robert L. Jervis and Paul W. Schroeder Best Book Award in International History and Politics.

Mark R. Wilson is a Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, and a current Andrew Carnegie Fellow, supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. He is the author of the books *The Business of Civil War* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) and *Destructive Creation*:

⁶ Dan Spokoyny, “Bridging the Gap to Nowhere?” Duck of Minerva blog, 17 May 2023, <https://www.duckofminerva.com/2023/05/bridging-the-gap-to-nowhere.html>

American Business and the Winning of World War II (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), and co-editor, with Jennifer Mittelstadt, of *The Military and the Market* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022).

Jordan Becker is an Academy Professor and the Director of the Social Science Research Lab at the United States Military Academy, where he teaches courses in social science methods, comparative politics, and international relations. Previously, he served as an Infantry, Special Forces, and Foreign Area Officer. His work focuses on defense economics and strategic culture and has been published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, the *Journal of Peace Research*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Defence and Peace Economics*, *European Security*, and is forthcoming in the *British Journal of Political Science*.

Bear Braumoeller was a Professor of Political Science, the Baronov and Timashev Chair in Data Analytics, and the Founder and Director of the MESO (Modeling Emergent Social Order) Lab at The Ohio State University. More importantly, he was a friend and mentor to colleagues around the world, and a leading light in our shared efforts at transdisciplinarity. As a social scientist, he used statistics, theoretical and computational modeling, and historical research to explore the causes and consequences of war and to understand international order. He was the author of two books: *The Great Powers and the International System* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) and *Only the Dead* (Oxford University Press, 2019), which tackled the agent-structure problem in international relations and the decline of war thesis, respectively. Braumoeller was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and in 2016 he was a visiting fellow at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, where he took part in a Nobel Symposium on the causes of peace. He also presented research at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

Susan Colbourn is Associate Director of the Program in American Grand Strategy at Duke University and a senior fellow at the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History at the University of Toronto. A diplomatic and international historian, she is the author of *Euromissiles: The Nuclear Weapons That Nearly Destroyed NATO* (Cornell, 2022).

James Goldgeier is a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation, a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution, and a Professor of International Relations at American University's School of International Service. His most recent books are *Evaluating NATO Enlargement: From Cold War Victory to the Russia-Ukraine War* (Palgrave Macmillan 2023), co-edited with Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, and *Foreign Policy Careers for PhDs: A Practical Guide to a World of Possibilities* (Georgetown University Press, forthcoming September 2023), co-authored with Tamara Cofman Wittes.

Beatrice Heuser is a historian and Professor of Social & Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow. Particularly known for her contributions to Strategic Studies, she is a scholar of war, with a particular focus on why people go to war and how they wage war, what means they choose and what strategies, and how they justify them. She is particularly interested in cultural factors, which include particular narratives of the past and how these are drawn upon to argue for particular policies and strategies for the present and future. She is the author of more than 85 articles and books, the most recent of which is *War: A Genealogy of Western Ideas and Practices* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

Jeffrey Reynolds is a nonresident senior fellow at the Transatlantic Security Initiative within the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, and is interested in the relationship between Canada and the United States in an age of profound complexity. Reynolds is an operations researcher at NATO's Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia. He has worked across every aspect of defense transformation at the strategic political-military level. He focuses on new and emerging threats and the power that new capabilities can bring to a changing operational domain. In addition, he is the first honorary fellow with the Policy Insights Forum in Ottawa, Canada, a think tank dedicated to promoting strategic insights regarding defense, foreign affairs, technology, and the economy. Reynolds is a published author on digitalization, partnerships, and strategy.

Essay by Jordan Becker, Department of Social Sciences, United States Military Academy, Bear Braumoeller, The Ohio State University, Beatrice Heuser, University of Glasgow, and Jeffrey Reynolds, Atlantic Council

“Best Practices for Transdisciplinary Research—Learning by Doing”

This essay is observational and aspirational.¹ As an interdisciplinary group of one active duty servicemember and scholar, a political scientist, a historian, and a civilian staff officer, we seek to promote transdisciplinary work via the West Point Security Seminar that began in 2022 in support of the drafting of the NATO Strategic Concept of that year and will continue in honor of our late friend and colleague Bear Braumoeller. Bear was instrumental in the creation of the seminar and died suddenly as we were drafting this essay together.

For the last two years, we have sought to move toward transdisciplinary research centered on the Department of Social Sciences at West Point, aiming to address “wicked problems” facing security policy professionals and elected officials. While this H-Diplo | RJISSF roundtable focuses on collaboration between historians and political scientists, we think the conversation fits in a wider discussion of transdisciplinarity. We use a basic definition of transdisciplinarity as “characterized by the inclusion of non-academic stakeholders in the process of [interdisciplinary] knowledge production.”² For the purposes of this roundtable, we therefore evaluate our own, faltering, attempts at doing so through key characteristics associated with the concept of transdisciplinarity.³

Big Questions

First, we sought “to focus on the theoretical unity of knowledge, in an effort to transcend disciplinary boundaries.”⁴ In 2022, we addressed a set of questions that the staff of NATO’s Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was grappling with as they prepared the alliance’s first new Strategic Concept in twelve years, a major policy effort.⁵ Each essay in the public-facing written output of that seminar was authored by at least one academic and one practitioner,⁶ and several featured non-anglophone historians.⁷ In 2023, our topic (international order and ordering) was broader, and we sought to further transcend disciplinary boundaries by

¹ This essay reflects the views of the authors alone and should not be considered official US Government policy. Our dear friend and colleague Bear Braumoeller died as we were preparing this essay. We can only hope that it does his memory justice.

² Cyrille Rigolot, “Transdisciplinarity as a Discipline and a Way of Being: Complementarities and Creative Tensions,” *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 7, no. 1 (September 22, 2020): 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-00598-5>.

³ Mark G. Lawrence, Stephen Williams, Patricia Nanz, and Ortwin Renn, “Characteristics, Potentials, and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Research,” *One Earth* 5, no. 1 (January 21, 2022): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2021.12.010>.

⁴ Lawrence et al., “Characteristics, Potentials, and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Research.”

⁵ NATO, “2022 Strategic Concept,” June 29, 2022, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>; Benedetta Berti, “Address to West Point Seminar on NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept,” speech given at NATO Strategic Concept Seminar Workshop, West Point, New York, February 2022.

⁶ Jordan Becker, Michael Duda, and Douglas Lute, “From Context to Concept: History and Strategic Environment for NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 489–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082959>.

⁷ Eric Kim et al., “NATO’s Position and Role in the Indo-Pacific,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 510–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082956>; Ernest Herold, Olivier Schmitt, and Stanley Sloan, “NATO’s Strategic Concept: Responding to Russia and China,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 558–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082949>.

connecting political scientists, historians, linguists, legal scholars, and philosophers, and again also sought to transcend geographic boundaries.

In so doing, we ended up combining insights on linguistics, computational methods, and historiography to produce useful policy insights. The extent to which we were successful will become more visible as the research produced in 2023 goes through the peer-review process and, over time, in the extent to which transdisciplinary research networks evolve around the problems of international ordering and security that the 2023 seminar addressed. An example of this, for now, however, is a panel which two of us (Bear Braumoeller and Beatrice Heuser) collaborated to lead as, respectively, a political scientist and a historian. The panel discussed papers by both military and civilian researchers using methodologies ranging from process tracing to computational social science. The authors of those papers were delighted and energized to receive feedback from differing perspectives, and the policy-focused paper we are writing will be more useful to its readers thanks to the variety of disciplines represented.

That brings us to the next key feature of transdisciplinarity, the “involvement of non-academic societal actors as process participants.”⁸ Such actors were involved in our 2023 seminar from top to bottom, and engaged with the research process and with academics. The keynote address for the seminar came from the key recipient of our research outputs: the Chairman’s Action Group (CAG) of the Office of the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The CAG’s important questions and thoughts shaped not how the panelists’ papers were researched, but how the chairs and discussants thought about synthesizing and connecting that research to broader theoretical and policy questions. Like the 2022 edition of the seminar,⁹ the 2023 edition featured scholar-practitioner collaboration all the way down, with each panel featuring some mix of academic and non-academic actors. The research outputs will reflect this intellectual and professional diversity.

Relevant Problem Set

In 2022, each research team also focused on a “specific, complex, societally relevant, real-world problem”¹⁰ that was outlined in concert with the NATO policy planning team.¹¹ Similarly, the 2023 seminar featured sixteen Working Groups, each dedicated to a broad type of strategic challenge to international order and ordering. Scholars and practitioners worked on issues ranging from the challenges posed by China’s domestic ordering to those of finding common ground with states like China on notions of ordering and justice. In so doing, we also sought to “proactively support action or intervention”¹² with specific, actionable policy

⁸ Lawrence et al., “Characteristics, Potentials, and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Research,” 47.

⁹ Darrell Driver, Linde Desmaele, Seth Johnston and Paul Post, “Return to Realism? NATO and Global Competition,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 497–501, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082958>; Justin Magula, Michael Rouland, and Peter Zwack, “NATO and Russia: Defense and Deterrence in a Time of Conflict,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 502–9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082957>; Rose Gottemoeller, Kathryn Hedgecock, Justin Magula, and Paul Poast, “Engaging with Emerged and Emerging Domains: Cyber, Space, and Technology in the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 516–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082955>; Bryan Frizzelle, Julie Garey, and Isak Kulalic, “NATO’s National Resilience Mandate: Challenges and Opportunities,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 525–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082954>; Fenella McGerty, Dominika Kunertova, Madison Sargeant, and Andrew Webster, “NATO Burden-Sharing: Past, Present, Future,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 533–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082953>; Robert Bell, Daphne Karahalios, Jarrett Reckseidler, and Michael Rosol, “Still Fit for Purpose? Reassessing and Revising NATO’s Core Tasks,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 548–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082951>; Mark Webber, Lawrence Chalmer, Martayn Van de Wall, and Hazumo Yano, “The Strategic Concept and Strategic Coherence,” *Defence Studies* 22, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 564–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2022.2082950>.

¹⁰ Lawrence et al., “Characteristics, Potentials, and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Research,” 47.

¹¹ Berti, “Address to West Point Seminar on NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept.”

¹² Lawrence et al., “Characteristics, Potentials, and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Research,” 47.

recommendations. The 2022 seminar certainly achieved this goal by shaping what would become NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept.

Human-Focused

Finally, we sought (and continue to seek) to orient our work toward bettering the human condition, while reflexively and “consciously contemplating the broader context.”¹³ Our working groups will remain in place to provide research insights to policymakers throughout the year, and will reconvene in February of 2024 to both assimilate lessons learned from 2022 and 2023 and build on successes to help support better policy. We operate in accordance with a transdisciplinary ethos, and we hope that our work will serve to inform policymakers while also improving research by ensuring real-world engagement.

Thinking about the Future of Interdisciplinary Research in Security Studies

While transdisciplinary research continues to evolve, we believe our recent seminars represent a solid base from which to move toward the full potential of this new way of working together. We have four simple rules: focus on big questions that interest both policy professionals and academics and cross disciplinary boundaries; seek broad and diverse participation, geographically, functionally, methodologically, technologically; curate a mix of generalists and specialists to optimize the balance between depth and breadth of discussion; and produce outputs for a primary policy “client” and work with his or her team to ensure the questions and responses generate novel and relevant ideas. Finally, we host a facilitated symposium that brings participants together, using the convening power of an institution like West Point or the lure of an attractive locale like Rome to maximize participation.

While we are excited by the promise of our seminar's approach, we remain far from offering anything approaching a transdisciplinary ideal. Transdisciplinary research is not “simply a matter of gathering the various actors figuratively ‘around the table’ to openly discuss the issue, expecting that this mere act will give rise to the new, robust insights or pathways forward that are being sought.”¹⁴ Getting the right mix of participants into the conversation is important, as is having a facilitator who is skilled at navigating transdisciplinary discussions. We also seek progressivity—building from year to year, assimilating lessons, and improving. We aim to balance depth with breadth, without eliminating either one. The approach enables scholars and practitioners to focus deeply on their fields while also enabling that expertise to circulate among a more diverse group than they would typically work with.

We see potential for our work together to support the operationalization of our seminar and transdisciplinarity in general for empirical study¹⁵; we are willing to be studied and study ourselves! We do have three small suggestions for ourselves and for colleagues who seek effective collaborations that are complementary to their work within their disciplines. After all, “there is no transdisciplinarity without disciplinarity.”¹⁶

First, we may seek to broaden our horizons of transdisciplinary engagement further. Our own efforts in the seminar discussed above have included political scientists, linguists, filmmakers, science fiction writers, area

¹³ Lawrence et al., “Characteristics, Potentials, and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Research,” 47.

¹⁴ Lawrence et al., “Characteristics, Potentials, and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Research,” 59.

¹⁵ Joshua Newman, “Promoting Interdisciplinary Research Collaboration: A Systematic Review, a Critical Literature Review, and a Pathway Forward,” *Social Epistemology* 0, no. 0 (February 12, 2023): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2023.2172694>.

¹⁶ Basarab Nicolescu, “Methodology of Transdisciplinarity—Levels of Reality, Logic of the Included Middle and Complexity,” *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering & Science* 1 (January 1, 2010): 20, <https://doi.org/10.22545/2010/0009>.

specialists, legal scholars,¹⁷ philosophers, computer scientists, and strategists. Engagement with physical scientists—particularly in areas such as arms technology and nuclear deterrence (both of which we are pursuing in 2024)—would enrich our scholarship both substantively and methodologically. Moreover, we aim to increase the involvement of non-Western scholars.

Second, we should engage in habitual (as opposed to punctual) collaboration and production of knowledge. Our annual work cycle and moves toward establishing standing working groups may support this goal, but they risk falling prey to the fallacy of the gathering table noted above. The substantive projects we pursue may be more important than the act of gathering itself.

Third, this habitual collaboration could be structured around questions developed collaboratively with practitioners, focused on broad challenges that go beyond technical problems. By sharing such questions between practitioners who are constantly solving technical and operational problems on the fly, and researchers whose job it is to read and think about more structural challenges, practitioners and scholars can gain a better shared understanding of the landscape of challenges, which should lead to asking better questions that result in more useful answers.

Finally, we must make a habit of systematically associating our peer-reviewed academic output with shorter pieces for non-experts. Doing so serves at least three functions. First, it engages our work with professionals working on societal problems in the real world. Second, it engages our work with one another—academics working in disparate fields, but with substantive interests in problems that defy mono-disciplinary solutions. We should consider one another non-experts, and seek to communicate clearly and simply across disciplines. Scholars who are interested in problems of, say, nuclear deterrence may simply be unable to keep up with academic output across all the disciplines that influence the issue, and short, jargon-free, policy-oriented pieces can convey the gist of one expert's research to another. In seeking “popular” venues in which to dialogue on the substantive issue with non-academics, we are also opening that dialogue to academics in other disciplines. Finally, non-expert communication helps individual scholars situate their work with broader societal problems and receive feedback from those engaged with managing them.

Our Plans Going Forward—Seeking Best Practices

We want to get better at inter- and trans-disciplinary research. We think that our annual seminar is an important vehicle to do that. With only two years of experience using the format discussed above, we are not confident in our ability to identify best practices with precision and reliability.

We do, however, think there are a few areas in which our seminar format differs notably from typical academic or policy seminars, and that may facilitate trans-disciplinarity and policy-academic engagement.

Specific Output

First, our seminar has a very specific output: a special report for a senior official (NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg in 2022 and the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the transition of that position from General Mark Milley to General Charles Q. Brown in 2023). By bringing together scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners from the Joint Professional Military Education enterprise, civilian academia, and multinational military and policy entities to produce this report, we think we are moving in the direction of trans-disciplinary research and writing.

¹⁷ Daphne Karahalios, “International Law, Order, and Justice,” Lieber Institute West Point, April 24, 2023, <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/international-law-order-justice/>.

A Welcome Table

Second, the makeup of each working group and panel was eclectic, mixing pure academics from differing fields with policy professionals with and without academic backgrounds. This created a diversity of perspectives, methodologies, and aims, and resulted in very broad-ranging conversations. In 2024 and beyond, we will seek to improve this mix with even more deliberate selection of participants, and focused alignment of research interests and professional backgrounds; by ensuring that scholars and practitioners are matched appropriately and work in their *substantive* areas of expertise, we hope to make the most of collaboration across *disciplinary* or methodological boundaries.

Mix of Backgrounds

Third, the makeup of the chair/discussant team on each panel reflected the academic/policy mix amongst panelists. By having an academic with a strong policy background pair with an academic with a more purely academic focus, we sought to provide useful feedback to authors on both a) theoretical and methodological suggestions to improve their papers, and b) framing suggestions to help answer important policy questions identified by the seminar's policy "clients." Going forward, we will aim to curate chair/discussant teams more assiduously, ensuring the greatest possible degree of complementarity between academic and policy expertise. We will also aim to invite a senior policy leader to partner with each working group, to help better identify broad sets of research questions that may enable scholars to better identify the policy relevancy of their work.

Capture Ideas and Mix with Articles

Fourth, by employing rapporteurs on each panel, we seek to a) facilitate the development of panel-level essays by ensuring a high fidelity capturing of not just the panelists' presentations, but of the interchange between panelists, chairs, discussants, and other panelists; and b) facilitate mentoring of young researchers and policy practitioners through the act of co-authoring panel-level essays that feed the overarching special report. In 2024 and beyond, we will select rapporteurs who have an adequate level of academic expertise and professional experience to add value to the panel-level essays, but who can also benefit from such mentorship.

Empower Colleagues

Finally, as we transition from a growth phase into a consolidation phase, we will seek to further empower colleagues at the working-group level to ensure the curation identified in the points above. We think we are onto something here, and we are convinced that we can do it much better. We are eager to receive feedback from H-Diplo | RJISSF readers, and to receive paper and panel abstracts from them for the 2024 version of our seminar.

We cannot yet claim any major breakthroughs in transdisciplinarity—even in our two small fields. Nor can we claim to have operationalized it as an object of study. But our aspirational transdisciplinary seminar holds promise.

Essay by Susan Colbourn, Duke University

“It Takes Two To Tango”

When asked to contribute to this roundtable, the first thing I did was pull *Bridges and Boundaries* off the bookshelf and flip to the book’s pair of concluding essays by Robert Jervis and Paul Schroeder. A political scientist and a historian, respectively, Jervis and Schroeder tackle an age-old question: what distinguishes a historian who studies international politics from a political scientist who does the same?¹

The Jervis-Schroeder exchanges were required reading during my comprehensive exams. I might have read any number of books, articles, or reviews to cover material in a major field that spanned 350-some-odd years of international history. But even in that crowded landscape, Jervis and Schroeder made the cut. I can only speculate as to the reasons why, but presumably it is because my supervisor, Robert Bothwell, understood the obvious: that our field—the history of modern international relations—is part of a larger conversation, one that includes countless political scientists.

My career trajectory since graduate school underscores that reality. Like many up-and-coming historians of international relations in the last decade or two, I found that most of my professional opportunities - at least in the academic world - came in interdisciplinary spaces with an express desire to bring historians and political scientists together. After finishing my doctorate in 2018, I spent two years as a postdoctoral fellow at a place that pioneered the genre, Yale’s International Security Studies program, followed by a year at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies as part of a cohort of historians and political scientists who were working on transatlantic relations. For reasons personal and professional, I opted to stay in that kind of environment, taking a staff position with a fair amount of program planning.

I have had the chance to see the exchange between historians and political scientists up close and personal as a scholar—and as an administrator. Based on that experience, I want to highlight three things that might inform how we engage with one another: (1) respect for our disciplinary differences, (2) planning for interdisciplinary exchange, and (3) the very real constraints on the future of collaboration and exchange between historians and political scientists.

If I were to distill this down into one best practice, it would be a seemingly simple principle: to meet the other discipline on its own terms.

History and political science are not the same. The two disciplines tend to approach questions in different ways, ones that form the basis of so many of the stereotypes about what divides us (e.g., details vs. generalizability). Historians often sit more comfortably with multicausal explanations while political scientists search for parsimony. Even when we share methodologies, we remain distinct in the questions we pose. Doing archival research does not make a political scientist a historian. Our disciplines are more than our methodologies, and the kinds of questions we pose and prioritize are different. “Historians,” as Schroeder put it, “are less enamored of parsimony and more comfortable with inconsistency than political scientists in part because of a still more basic difference in their approaches: the tendency of political scientists to treat the common subject matter, international politics, as behavior, while historians insist on treating it as human conduct.”²

¹ Robert Jervis, “International History and International Politics: Why Are They Studied Differently?,” in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 385-402, and Paul W. Schroeder, “International History: Why Historians Do It Differently than Political Scientists,” in Elman and Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries*, 403-16.

² Schroeder, “International History,” 408.

Meeting the other discipline on its own terms means acknowledging those differences and accepting them as part and parcel of speaking across disciplinary boundaries. This observation might sound so obvious as to be meaningless. But I have found that, in practice, it is anything but.

Some of the best practices for sustaining a conversation between historians and political scientists, to my mind, boil down to basic interpersonal awareness and respect. Few scholars want to be converted or told - either explicitly or implicitly - that their work would be better if only it conformed to the other discipline's norms and conventions. It should go without saying that most historians do not love being treated like case study machines or archival research assistants. And I have no doubt that political scientists have similar grievances about how some historians malign or dismiss their discipline.

I point this out not to repeat old stereotypes but to underscore a point for anyone hoping to bring historians and political scientists together for collaborative work. If you are planning a conference, for instance, take some time to consider what the default settings are in your planning.³ Who are you inviting? If the entire room is filled with historians rounded out by a token political scientist or two, is it really going to produce an interdisciplinary conversation where the historians and political scientists are equals? Or is the law of numbers going to win out with much of the conversation driven by historians and shaped by their priorities? For the political scientists in the hypothetical room, what are they getting out of that kind of experience?

These same considerations matter at every stage in the process. Take, for example, the publication of a collaborative project with multiple contributors, like an edited collection or special journal issue.⁴ Where are you, as the organizer, proposing to publish? Is it an outlet that is truly open to divergences in disciplinary norms? Your contributors might come from various disciplinary backgrounds, but that doesn't mean the anonymous reviewers do. And so, you might build in some extra time to look at the reviewers' feedback to ensure the peer review process doesn't beat the intellectual diversity and methodological pluralism out of the final product. On at least one occasion, a panel commentator has found little more to say about a paper I presented than, "wow, there's a lot of archives cited here." A compliment, to be sure, but not exactly something I hadn't considered prior to the panel!

If I were to put a finer point on it, interdisciplinary exchange cannot be tacked on as an afterthought. Adding a handful of people from the other discipline will not automatically make it a success. If a conference or project is designed primarily with the interests of one discipline in mind, that fact will not be lost on those involved.

If there is anyone left to be involved, that is. It is entirely possible that, before too long, we won't have any historians left in the academy. That is hyperbole, I hope, but anyone who cares about historians and political scientists communicating and collaborating should be worried. Current trends threaten to decimate the history side of the equation. "The academic job market is abysmal," as two historians and regular contributors to H-Diplo, Michael Brenes and Daniel Bessner, wrote in the spring of 2019. "To even call it a 'market' is an exaggeration; it's a more like a slaughterhouse."⁵ And that was before the pandemic added yet more reasons for universities to abolish lines and strike items from the budget.

³ Jervis and the ISSF team, led by James McAllister, planned such a conference in 2010. See Jervis's Keynote address, "International Politics and Diplomatic History: Fruitful Differences," H-Diplo/ISSF (12 March 2010): <https://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Jervis-InaguralAddress.pdf>.

⁴ For two such publications, see Robert Jervis, Diane Labrosse, Stacie Goddard, and Joshua Rovner, *Chaos Reconsidered: The Liberal Order and the Future of International Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023) and Jervis, Francis J. Gavin, Joshua Rovner, and Labrosse, eds., *Chaos in the Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the 21st Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

⁵ Daniel Bessner and Michael Brenes, "A Moral Stain on the Profession," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 26, 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-moral-stain-on-the-profession>.

Historians who study international politics are in no way insulated from these pressures. A series of interdisciplinary postdoctoral fellowships might provide a few years of respite, but they can also delay the inevitable; there still are not enough tenure-track jobs for all of us to remain in the academy. A growing number of historians, myself included, have landed in these interdisciplinary centers, but as academic administrators who carve out time to continue doing history when they can alongside a full-time job of other responsibilities. Invariably, that will shift the terms on which the two disciplines are meeting.

Those historians who are landing traditional academic jobs are scarcely a source of comfort for the long-term health of the field. With many landing in policy schools or professional military education, we are careening toward a replication crisis. When the next generation of scholars wants to train as a diplomatic historian or a military historian, where will they go? Call me a pessimist, but I doubt many are going to go to, say, a policy school to train to be a historian.

Even for the handful of historians with a stable academic job and an inclination to collaborate with political scientists, other trends seem poised to make that more difficult. In political science, the center of gravity seems to be moving ever more toward quantitative methods. As political science changes as a field, these developments threaten to reduce the shared language and narrow the potential meeting ground for historians and political scientists interested in understanding international politics. (I have struggled on more than a few occasions to give meaningful comments on political scientists' papers about alliance politics; I don't speak the right kind of math!) Some of these observations are, it must be said, based on what I see happening primarily in the United States. Elsewhere, what bounds or defines disciplines differs markedly. In the British system, for instance, programs like War Studies would not neatly fit the narrative or assumptions I have sketched out.

The future, as I see it, is far from bright. It is a tragedy. By most metrics, this should be a golden age of conversation and collaboration in security studies, international relations, or whatever else you want to call our omnibus umbrella field. We have a cohort of exceptional scholars who have gone through lots of programs, fellowships, and assorted professional development opportunities designed to forge connections between historians and political scientists. I have been fortunate to do many of them, like the Clements Center's Summer Seminar and the International Policy Summer Institute put on by Bridging the Gap. By building those ties early, these initiatives should form the foundation of decades of collaboration and intellectual exchange. But the reality is that this training and exposure, however prestigious the outlet or exclusive the cohort, does not make it possible for the vast majority of the historians who participate to stay in the profession. And, as the old saying goes, it takes two to tango.

I am under no illusions that the job market in political science is much better. I see all the hallmarks of panic that have long plagued history: fewer job postings, lots of hand-wringing, and a litany of articles about declining undergraduate enrollments in political science and the discipline's waning relevance. If we want a vibrant ecosystem where historians and political scientists are in conversation, we need to do everything in our power to make sure there are two academic disciplines left to converse.

The two disciplines are not the same. And that is a good thing. Let's do what we can to try and keep it that way. But to do so, we are better working together to make the case that, yes, the study of international politics is still integral to the mission of the modern university and worth investing in.

 Essay by James Goldgeier, American University

“Bridging Gaps.”

At my stage of career, it is easy to write grouchy pieces complaining that things are not as they used to be.¹ Not only is it generally a good thing, however, that things are not as they used to be, but in the specific case of historians and political scientists engaging with one another, there are two big reasons for optimism, although each comes with a serious concern. One is the proliferation of policy schools that rely on faculty from these and other disciplines to work together. The other is the flourishing of programs bringing together early career scholars from these two disciplines who are eager to produce policy-relevant research.

I was fortunate to enroll in a PhD program where historians and political scientists worked closely together, including co-teaching classes and even having joint faculty appointments. I was trained in political science, a field that at the time valued area studies. I also participated in what was then known as the Berkeley-Stanford Program on Soviet International Behavior. We had graduate students and faculty from both disciplines (and others) who were engaged in seeking to better understand the sources of Soviet conduct and what the United States should do about it. We would not have questioned the need for historians and political scientists to learn from one another, particularly to produce more policy-relevant work. After all, one of the central figures in the Berkeley-Stanford program was Professor Alexander L. George, who refined the idea of structured, focused comparative case studies, or using history to inform political analysis of key national security challenges for the purpose of improving policy.²

Even at that time, though, leading figures in the field complained about the trajectory of the two disciplines and the lack of interaction between them. Writing in 1987, historian John Lewis Gaddis argued, “The barriers to communication we have created—which grow largely out of the political scientists’ determination to be ‘scientific’ and the historians’ equal determination not to be—ought not to get in the way as much as they do.” He was concerned about the resulting lack of effort to connect to the policy community, which he considered both a supply-side and demand-side problem. He wanted policymakers to utilize scholarly work, and he wanted scholars to seek to provide their expertise to practitioners. But as he put it,

It would be helpful if policymakers could approach issues of international peace and security from an angle of vision that would take into account *both* sequence *and* system—both the approach of the historian and that of the political scientists—and that would relate resulting conclusions to current concerns without falling into the traps of antiquarianism, presentism, and conceptual poverty that have afflicted the historians, or the pitfalls of scientific hubris, methodological constipation, and linguistic incomprehension that have encumbered the political scientists.³

¹ The author is grateful to Frank Gavin and Elizabeth Saunders for comments on an earlier draft, and to Mauricio Bello for research assistance.

² Alexander L. George, “Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison,” in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed. *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1979); George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); George, David K. Hall, and William R. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971); George, *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980).

³ John Lewis Gaddis, “Expanding the Data Base: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Enrichment of Security Studies,” *International Security* vol.12, no. 1 (Summer 1987), 14, 21. Scholars at the Teaching, Research, and International Policy (TRIP) program have found that policymakers’ demands for scholarly work varies by issue area, with trade and development practitioners using academic work much more than those in the national security community. See Paul C. Avey, Michael C. Desch, Eric Parajon, Susan Peterson, Ryan Powers, Michael J. Tierney, “Does

Writing a decade later in the same journal as Gaddis, political scientist Jack Levy stated, “Historians often complain about the abuse of history by international relations theorists, and international relations theorists often complain about the atheoretical orientation of much historiography.”⁴

Into the 2000s, a major challenge remained one that Gaddis had articulated nearly twenty years earlier: namely, that political science and history were unable to generate policy-relevant analysis. Political scientist Francis Fukuyama wrote looking back on his field in the 1980s and 1990s, “Foundations ceased to fund area studies programs, money for language training and fieldwork evaporated, and requirements were changed from knowing languages and history to learning quantitative methods....In fact, most of what is truly useful for policy is context-specific, culture-bound and non-generalizable.”⁵ And in 2017, historian Hal Brands commented on his discipline, “Although diplomatic history may have halted its long decline within the academy in recent decades, it has simultaneously—and not coincidentally—become afflicted by three fundamental problems. Diplomatic history has become less intellectually cohesive; less concerned with traditional issues of war and peace, diplomacy, and statecraft; and less engaged with policymakers on the questions they care about most.”⁶

Despite these legitimate concerns, political scientists use archival sources and historical methods to answer important foreign policy questions. One need only read Lindsey O’Rourke’s writing on the relative effectiveness of U.S. covert actions, or Elizabeth Saunders’s illumination of the sources and nature of presidential use of military force.⁷ Historians with deep understandings of political factors to inform their research and to make it relevant for today include Susan Colbourn, who explains the history and implications of the Euromissiles crisis, or Sarah Snyder’s analysis of US human rights policy.⁸ The nuclear field has long featured academics deeply steeped in both history and political science, most notably Robert Jervis.⁹

Scholars also use their expertise to contribute directly to policy. A number of political science PhDs with functional or country expertise hold positions in the Biden administration, including Vipin Narang and Celeste Wallander at the Department of Defense.¹⁰ Historian Alex Bick led the “Tiger Team” exercise in the run-up to the February 2022 expansion of the Russian war against Ukraine, and two members of the State Department Office of the Historian served on short-term details in response to a request by the Department’s Bureau of European Affairs in the aftermath of the launch of Russia’s full-scale invasion.¹¹

Social Science Inform Foreign Policy? Evidence from a Survey of US National Security, Trade, and Development Officials,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 1 (March 2022): 1-19.

⁴ Jack S. Levy, “Too Important to Leave to the Other: History and Political Science in the Study of International Relations,” *International Security*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997), 22.

⁵ Francis Fukuyama, “How Academia Failed the Nation: The Decline of Regional Studies,” *Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 22.

⁶ Hal Brands, “The Triumph and Tragedy of Diplomatic History,” *Texas National Security Review*, vol. 1, no. 1 (December 2017), 133

⁷ Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

⁸ Susan Colbourn, *Euromissiles: The Nuclear Weapons That Nearly Destroyed NATO* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022); Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

⁹ Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

¹⁰ A more expansive list of those PhDs serving in the Biden administration can be found at Francis J. Gavin, “The Gap Has Been Bridged!” *Texas National Security Review*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Fall 2022): 3-7.

¹¹ Ellen Nakashima and Ashley Parker, “Inside the White House Preparations for a Russian Invasion,” *The Washington Post*, 14 February 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/02/14/white-house-prepares-russian-invasion/>; State Department Office of the Historian, Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, Minutes, 7-8 March 2022, <https://history.state.gov/about/hac/March-2022>.

Other direct involvement in government by PhDs in both disciplines includes service across the intelligence community.

It is easy for disciplinary departments to silo themselves from other disciplines and lose the ability to communicate across campus for research and teaching. That is why public policy and international affairs schools offer a major opportunity for political scientists and historians to engage with one another. These are typically multidisciplinary programs, with undergraduates majoring in international affairs and Master's students concentrating in a variety of professional training programs. While some of these schools have PhD programs, they are not as prominent as they are for disciplinary departments at major research universities. Because of the teaching demands, the policy schools need to hire area studies experts and diplomatic historians, and engagement takes place through a variety of formats, including research talks and performance reviews.

Pursuing policy-relevant scholarship means focusing on solving problems that matter to practitioners.¹² That scholarship can contribute to theoretical and methodological debates, but that is not its sole purpose. All of this matters to policy school deans, who as one recent article noted, “want it all.” They want their faculty to pass muster with their disciplines as well as to contribute work that reaches broader public and policy audiences (although the evaluations for tenure and promotion still skew heavily toward the former).¹³ But the attractiveness of policy schools for political scientists and historians who want to go beyond disciplinary audiences for their work raises challenges. Training PhD students in policy schools, for example, can be liberating for faculty who want to escape narrow disciplinary concerns, but particularly when it comes to hiring historians on the faculty, the policy schools are dependent on history departments for training future diplomatic and military historians. If the only academic jobs available to those types of historians are to be found in policy schools, future generations of history PhDs will not be available for those schools to hire.

Due to concerns that political science and history were becoming increasingly less relevant to policymakers than they should be, scholars have developed a number of programs to create opportunities for academics, especially early in their career, to network with one another in order to promote greater interaction and more contributions to policy and public debates. These include the Clements Center Summer Seminar in History and Statecraft, the International Policy Scholars Consortium and Network (IPSCON), and the Bridging the Gap (BTG) initiative.¹⁴ While these programs are hugely beneficial to PhDs, they do let disciplinary departments off the hook for providing the kinds of training these programs offer, something also true in political science with respect to qualitative methods courses, given the opportunity for students to attend the annual Institute for Qualitative and Multi-method Research (IQMR).¹⁵

Elizabeth Saunders and I wrote an essay for H-Diplo on one of our favorite articles: political scientist Fred Greenstein and historian Richard Immerman's analysis of the discussion about Laos between Dwight

¹² For an argument that the social sciences should follow the natural sciences and organize in multi-disciplinary ways around solving problems, see Stephen Van Evera, “U.S. Social Science and International Relations,” *War on the Rocks*, 9 February 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/02/u-s-social-science-and-international-relations/>.

¹³ Michael C. Desch, James Goldgeier, Ana K. Petrova, and Kimberly Peh, “Policy School Deans Want It All: Results of a Survey of APSIA Deans and Top-50 Political Science Department Chairs on Hiring and Promotion,” *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 23, no. 1 (February 2022): 41-70. The peer-reviewed Bridging the Gap series at Oxford University Press is one effort to bring theory and policy-relevance together, seeking to publish books “that address leading contemporary global challenges and do so with theoretically grounded policy recommendations that are accessible to audiences beyond academic subfields in political science and other disciplines.” See Bridging the Gap Book Series guidelines, <https://bridgingthegaproject.org/btgseries/>.

¹⁴ The websites for these centers and programs can be found at <https://www.clementscenter.org/>; <https://sais.jhu.edu/kissinger/ipscon>; <https://bridgingthegaproject.org/>.

¹⁵ The IQMR website notes that it has trained “nearly three thousand graduate students and junior faculty” since its founding more than two decades ago. See <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/research/center-for-qualitative-and-multi-method-inquiry/institute-for-qualitative-multi-method-research>.

Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy the day before the latter's inauguration in January 1961. Four attendees created records of what was said, and these records differ greatly. Greenstein and Immerman wrote after reviewing the documents, "No absolute answer is possible to the question of what Eisenhower told Kennedy, and, above all, what he meant." Saunders and I were writing about the article in the context of the importance of presidential tapes, since we noted that even if we had a tape of that meeting, and could hear for ourselves what was said, while

it would have answered the literal questions of "what Eisenhower told Kennedy," it would not necessarily have told us "what he meant" or perhaps more importantly, what the protagonists, particularly those who would go on to make decisions, heard. If those present at the meeting came away believing different things about the meaning of the participants' words, that in itself is more important than a scholar's interpretation after listening to [a hypothetical] tape.¹⁶

Thinking about the remarkable divergence in participant accounts of that meeting (notes written not for future scholars, but for those engaged in making policy at that moment) helps us understand how we can better bring different disciplinary voices to bear on our understanding of history and policy. If we are writing about those high-level meetings in order to assess policy outcomes and help shape policy futures, we need to know how documents are created and how presidential decisions get made. We need to know about the politics underlying the conversations. Did it matter that it was a Republican president who had served two terms as president passing along his thoughts to his Democratic successor, who had yet to take office? How much did the worldview of those taking notes matter to what they wrote? What were their own biases through which they filtered the conversation?

There are times when we want to pursue scholarship because we want to answer a question for ourselves. After all, if we aren't passionate about a topic, we cannot sustain the effort necessary to interrogate it (and then write it up!). But younger scholars in particular are less and less satisfied with writing just for themselves or for a small group of people in their field. They want to engage wider audiences. In an age when their work can reach people through social media, blog posts, and podcasts, they want to write about questions whose answers matter to policy and public audiences.¹⁷ Bringing historical understandings and conceptual frameworks together enhance what scholars can do to help shape these broader conversations in order to solve problems that matter for communities, countries, and the world. Ultimately, we do not need to know exactly what Eisenhower told Kennedy about Laos, but we study that meeting, and the different takeaways, because we do need to understand how and why U.S. policy toward Southeast Asia got formulated the way it did. That policy and its outcomes are relevant not just for our understanding of the 1960s, but they reverberate today as the United States once again is engaged in strategic great power competition around the globe.

Historians and political scientists have much to contribute together to improve policymaking and public understanding. Perhaps the greatest reason for optimism regarding the interaction of the disciplines is the existence and popularity of H-Diplo | RJISSF, where scholars in both disciplines engage with one another on a regular basis.

¹⁶ See the contribution to the H-Diplo/ISSF Forum 25 on the Importance of White House Presidential Tapes in Scholarship by James Goldgeier and Elizabeth N. Saunders, at https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/6679338/h-diploissf-forum-25-importance-white-house-presidential-tapes#_Toc54975110.

¹⁷ Jordan Tama, Naazneen H. Barma, Brent Durbin, James Goldgeier, Bruce W. Jentleson, "Bridging the Gap in a Changing World: New Opportunities and Challenges for Engaging Practitioners and the Public," *International Studies Perspectives*, 27 March 2023, <https://academic.oup.com/isp/advance-article/doi/10.1093/isp/ekad003/7086648>.

Concluding Thoughts by Rosella Cappella Zielinski, Boston University, and Mark R. Wilson,
University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

The essays in this roundtable highlight the ongoing importance of sustaining conversations between historians and political scientists. Jim Goldgeier points to recent changes in employment opportunities, which have made it even more important for the two disciplines to productively engage with each other. Susan Colbourn, also noting the grim nature of the academic job market, argues that we can have better conversations if people become more reflective and deliberate, with the goal of creating exchanges that are respectful and sincere. In their co-authored piece, Jordan Becker, the late Bear Braumoeller, Beatrice Heuser, and Jeffrey Reynolds draw on their own recent efforts at West Point to explain how the inclusion of policy stakeholders in the process of knowledge production can foster sustained conversation amongst historians and political scientists.

We are hoping that this roundtable may encourage a new round of conversations, among H-Diplo | RJISSF readers and others, about best practices and ways forward. We encourage readers to reach out to us and the other roundtable authors, to continue the discussion. We intend to extend the conversation, in the coming months, in a variety of settings, conferences, workshops, journals, and online resources including H-Diplo | RJISSF.

We recognize the challenges involved in this project. As the roundtable contributors suggest, supporting a new generation of scholars and their cross-disciplinary exchanges can be undermined by the difficult job market, along with transformations in higher education that may not favor traditional humanities and social science disciplines. Some improvements will be difficult to attain without action by leading graduate programs in political science and history. As the roundtable authors suggest, those programs should be doing more to encourage their students to engage in real world interdisciplinary problem solving. We believe that those programs should be adjusting their training of students, in ways that will simultaneously enrich research projects, enhance students' employment prospects, and improve conversations across the disciplines. This task seems most urgent in the field of history, which is overdue for a significant move to include more training in elementary quantitative methods. Many political scientists, meanwhile, would benefit from some more training in archival research. In a mid-twenty-first century information environment, as artificial intelligence reduces the need for humans to provide summary and basic analysis of extant data, a new generation of scholars will benefit from having a toolkit that positions them as the discoverers of new evidence.

Reforming graduate education and making university-trained scholars more directly involved in public policymaking are long-term projects that require large resources. But we can also do much to improve conversations between political scientists and historians in the shorter run, at low cost. We conclude here with some ideas about best practices that we learned through the building of the Boston University Political Economy of Security Workshop:

Start Small and Create Strong Foundations

Start with a small group of people who seem open to interdisciplinary conversations. Develop healthy social norms and build out. In our one-hour online workshops, we have the presenter of a pre-circulated paper open with a very brief comment. We then hear several minutes' worth of comments and questions from a discussant, who ideally not only has some expertise on the subject matter of the paper, but can also explain it to an interdisciplinary audience. For the open Q&A part of the sessions, workshop leaders and longtime participants can model constructive, positive comments to the visiting speaker. One reason that Mark, as an 'outsider' historian, quickly became comfortable in our workshop is that by the time he joined, workshop leaders such as Rosella Cappella Zielinski, Kaija Schilde, and Ben Fordham had already established a friendly environment, in which it had become normal for participants to converse in a culture of respect and curiosity.

Make Interdisciplinary Aims Explicit.

Presenters of papers need to be informed in advance about the interdisciplinary character of the audience, and the interdisciplinary ambitions of the workshop. As we have learned from experience, authors often need to be encouraged to share work in which they are tentatively reaching across disciplines. It is often this work, rather than the perhaps more polished pieces in which authors are operating more narrowly in their own field, that provides for richer discussions.

Encourage Reflective Framing of Comments

Participants should be encouraged to be honest about where their comments are coming from. Audience members can use language such as “I’ve been trained to look at comparable problems in a slightly different way; have you considered X?” While this may seem obvious, it is critical to remember that as none of us are trained in each other’s respective discipline, we often start with considerable ignorance about how the other might approach the topic at hand. As someone who has been around many historians (with previous fellowships at the Dickey Center and Clements Center), Cappella Zielinski has appreciated the framing used by Wilson, who often begins his comments, including comments on papers focused on quantitative analysis, with language such as, ‘As a historian I would approach this in this manner...’

Come Together over Stories

While many have addressed what divides the two disciplines, both political scientists and historians share an interest in telling stories. Ultimately, most of them are presenting narratives about past events and developments. This is a rich common ground, on which both sides have huge contributions to offer.

Be Curious, Not Judgmental

Here we take inspiration from a TV series that gained some popularity during the COVID pandemic: “Ted Lasso.” In season 2 of the show, Ted turns the tables on a bully, who has underestimated his prowess in the sport of darts. Ted claims he has long been influenced by the phrase “Be Curious, Not Judgmental,” which he (mis)attributes to the poet Walt Whitman. We embrace the sentiment. It is not enough to just ask someone from another discipline about their work. We also need to be genuinely curious. Why does someone approach a research question in the manner they do? What motivates them? What shapes them? What constrains them? Only once you get to the root of why someone does what they do, by being curious, can you truly start to sustain conversations.

We believe it is appropriate to conclude with some words of wisdom from an important member of the H-Diplo | RJISSF community, the late Robert Jervis, who founded what became RJISSF in 2009 with the express intention of forging an interdisciplinary site for discussions among political scientists and historians.⁴⁶ Over a decade ago, Jervis reminded us that differences between fields should be understood as productive. “These differences,” Jervis wrote, “produce tensions between political scientists and international historians

⁴⁶ On the founding of RJISSF, and Jervis’s intentions, see Diane Labrosse, “Bob Jervis and H-Diplo/ISSF,” in Richard H. Immerman, Diane Labrosse, and Marc Trachtenberg, eds., *H-Diplo | ISSF Tribute to the Life, Scholarship, and Legacy of Robert Jervis: Part I*, 4 February 2022 | <https://issforum.org/to/JervisTribute-;1-12-20>; <https://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Jervis-Tribute-1.pdf>

that we should not expect to be resolved. Indeed, they should not be because the diversity of perspectives benefits us all. The point is not to convert others to our viewpoint, but to understand theirs.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Robert Jervis, “International Politics and Diplomatic History: Fruitful Differences,” H-Diplo/ISSF (12 March 2010): <https://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Jervis-InaguralAddress.pdf>.