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On the Consequences of Bombing and the Origins of Spaghetti

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Series Editor: Diane Labrosse | Production Editor: George Fujii

ESSAY BY MATTHEW EVANGELISTA, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

In retrospect I trace the sources of my research and teaching interests to Mr. Delaney's eighth grade social studies class at Parker Junior High School in Reading, Massachusetts. Not that I was particularly interested in social studies or history in those days. Like everyone else in class, I did my best to earn the reward for good behavior our teacher promised us at the end of the year: his famous lecture on the Spaghetti Trees. I barely remember it now, because another impromptu lecture made a bigger impact. On Monday evening, 8 May 1972, U.S. President Richard Nixon had announced the aerial mining of Haiphong Harbor in North Vietnam. The next day Mr. Delaney appeared in class, clearly shaken. He described the risks entailed in mining a harbor where some three dozen foreign ships were berthed, mainly from the USSR and China, in an operation that—we learned later—included a half hour of preparatory shelling from naval destroyers and a diversionary air attack on land targets. Nixon's announcement alone had flashed Mr. Delaney back a decade to the Cuban Missile Crisis and fears of escalation to nuclear war. The danger of war, and particularly the consequences of bombing, have been preoccupations of my scholarship for forty years.

Seventh and eighth grades were the best years of my K-12 education because they were the only ones when I did not have to attend Catholic schools. Unlike St. Agnes, the local parochial school whose closing after I completed sixth grade signaled my liberation, Parker Junior High offered introductory French to eighth graders. I loved studying a foreign language for the first time and I continued with French in high school. Reluctantly I had accepted a scholarship to attend an all-boys Catholic school down the street from where we lived. Its only saving grace was that it offered Russian language, whereas Reading High did not. Robert Hennessy, my Russian teacher, also taught French and modern European literature. Already an avid reader, I eagerly devoured everything in the French canon from Voltaire and Beaumarchais to Sartre and Camus, the Russian classics from Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Gogol, and Tolstoy, and the dissident Soviet writers, such as Andrei Sinyavsky. A school trip to Paris in my junior year—funded by my part-time job as a bicycle mechanic—added foreign travel to my passions for languages and literature. Restless in suburbia, I was impatient to escape to college and explore the rest of the world.

As the first in my family to study beyond high school I ranked my preferences by three criteria: location, location, location. I wanted to be in Boston, preferably Harvard Square. A fan of folk and rock music, as a high-school student I had regularly taken the train to North Station and the red line to Cambridge to buy records and go to coffee houses and music clubs (with a fake ID). My subscriptions to the local alternative weeklies, the *Boston Phoenix* and the *Real Paper*, kept me informed about the music scene, and—along with WBCN's Danny Schechter, the "news dissector"—gave me a political education and a leftwing orientation. Too young for the draft, I nevertheless opposed the war in Vietnam because of the reckless bombing and harm to civilians, and I acted out my anti-militarist sentiments with minor symbolic gestures, such as skipping class (with my mother's tacit permission) the day the Army administered a standardized exam at my school.

At Harvard, I continued studying Russian and French, took a German course in the evening at the extension school, and later an intensive Spanish course. I was never particularly good at languages, but I enjoyed studying them, and the skills

entailed in translation and close textual analysis probably contributed most to the kind of scholarship I pursued. I was accepted into a major called History and Literature, with a focus on Russia, and spent spring semester of my junior year studying Russian in Moscow and the following summer and fall traveling around France and Germany, trying to learn their languages better. In my course on The Cold War, I still draw on my experience of hitchhiking to Berlin in the fall of 1979 to illustrate the implications of a divided Germany: if you got picked up by someone at the inter-German border, you were guaranteed to get to your destination in one ride, because stopping off along the way was *verboten*. I crossed through Checkpoint Charlie for a visit to East Berlin and left just a few days before the arrival of Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, who came to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the founding of the German Democratic Republic and to kiss its leader Erich Honecker on the mouth.

The partial meltdown of the nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island in March 1979 was a turning point in my career path, although I did not recognize it at the time. I was in Moscow and learned the news from my girlfriend (now wife) Joanie back in Cambridge, with a typical few weeks' delay, while the censors read her letters. A Soviet newspaper did put a photo of U.S. antinuclear protesters on the front page, but—contrary to what their placards indicated—the caption described them as opponents of nuclear *weapons*. The link between the two concerns—the safety of civilian nuclear power plants and the danger of the nuclear arms race—eluded me at the time, but not for long. Back in Cambridge for spring semester 1980, I joined the Clamshell Alliance to protest the building of a nuclear plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire, and underwent nonviolence training in anticipation of getting arrested while blocking construction. The utility company cleverly offered to allow a peaceful, legal demonstration on site, so we did that instead, entertained by antinuke musicians such as Jackson Browne and Pete Seeger and enlightened by activists Dick Gregory and Sarah Nelson, among others. For me the most consequential moment of the event came when Kriss Worthington, a member of my “affinity group,” challenged me over the slogan on my hand-painted poster—“The Sun is Safer”—intended to promote renewable solar power as an alternative to nuclear energy. “If you think civilian nuclear power is dangerous,” Kriss admonished, “you should think about nuclear weapons.” I had never done so, but I suspected he might be right.

Returning from Seabrook, I joined the increasing number of people who came to see the movement for nuclear disarmament as linked to the anti-nuclear and environmental cause and to opposition to US and Soviet foreign military interventions (in Central America and the Middle East, and in Poland and Afghanistan, respectively). I attended meetings at the American Friends Service Committee, joined the Jobs with Peace campaign, and participated in Survival Summer (1980), a nationwide “teach-in” inspired by the “new Cold War” and the bellicose policies of the late Carter administration and the successor Reagan administration. On campus we formed the Radcliffe-Harvard Peace Alliance and marched for divestment of the university's endowment from South Africa. I quickly found that I was ineffective as a canvasser or activist, but as someone who had studied Russian and lived in Moscow, I enjoyed a certain credibility in describing the Soviet side of the arms race, and I started receiving invitations to give public lectures to local community organizations.

Looking toward my senior year at college—I was on a “five year plan” after having taken a semester off—I decided I would reorient my studies from literature to international politics, and, in particular, the US-Soviet arms race. Fortunately, my major was flexible enough to allow me to write an honors thesis on a historical topic—Soviet military policy in the period following World War II—that was relevant to my political interests, a pattern that has characterized my subsequent scholarship as well. At the time I was working at the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies (IDDS), with funding from the federal work-study program, gathering data on Soviet military deployments and scrutinizing declassified U.S. intelligence reports on microfilm at Widener Library, information that I eventually used in my first published scholarly article, “Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised.”¹ Randall Forsberg, the IDDS founder and director, was then enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard allowed her to serve as my thesis advisor. Randy, who at that time was launching the campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Freeze, became my longtime mentor until her life was cut short by cancer in 2007. In 2019, Cornell University Press published Randy's posthumous MIT dissertation and

¹ Matthew Evangelista, “Stalin's Postwar Army Reappraised,” *International Security* 7:3 (Winter 1982-1983).

magnum opus, *Toward a Theory of Peace: The Role of Moral Beliefs*, edited and introduced by me and Neta Crawford, another IDDS veteran.²

Neta took the advice Randy gave to all of her advisees interested in disarmament, to study military policy at MIT from former Pentagon officials, as she had done. But I went to Cornell instead, following Joanie, who planned to take a job in the neurobiology laboratory of a Cornell professor with whom she had worked at Harvard. At Cornell, Randy directed me to her friend Dr. Judith Reppy, an economist who served on the board of IDDS and was a leading figure in Cornell's Peace Studies Program, which is now named in her honor. She and Peter Katzenstein of the Department of Government became my main intellectual mentors at Cornell. I did not particularly enjoy my courses in political science there, and I was glad I had not majored in the subject as an undergraduate. Theories of International Relations (IR) I found particularly sterile and irrelevant to what I wanted to understand: what drove the U.S.-Soviet arms race and how to end it. I found that theories drawn from realism or bureaucratic politics fit some of the evidence, sometimes for one country more than another, but rarely for both, and that IR theories often reflected explanations for the arms race that were already in the public debates—equally unsatisfactory ones, in my view.

A major breakthrough for me came in studying with Peter Katzenstein and reading his work on comparative foreign economic policy and what came to be known as “domestic structure.”³ In Peter's view, the relationship between the state, society, and the institutions that linked them influenced the degree to which external (realist) or internal (bureaucratic politics) factors would enjoy more explanatory power for a given country's policy. My subsequent work benefited from the comparative, historical methods I learned from Peter, from works by Harvard professors whose courses I had missed there as a student (Theda Skocpol, Barrington Moore, Jr., Alexander Gerschenkron), and from a new generation of scholars of security studies, such as Jack Snyder, John Mearsheimer, and Barry Posen,⁴ many of whom I had met as a graduate student when they gave seminars for the Peace Studies Program. I was pleased when Cornell University Press offered me a contract to publish my revised dissertation, *Innovation and the Arms Race*, in the same series as their books, even before I had finished writing it.⁵

During my time at Cornell, the Department's Kremlinologist, Myron Rush, was on a two-year leave working for the Central Intelligence Agency, so there were no courses offered on Soviet politics or foreign policy. I was fortunate, though, that David Holloway was visiting the Peace Studies Program from Edinburgh. An extraordinary scholar of Soviet foreign and military policy, David provided a model for work at the intersection of history and international relations, and a standard of quality that I still struggle to approach. David was generous enough to conduct two reading courses on Soviet military policy with me and patient enough to allow me a grade of “incomplete” until I could produce research papers suitable to submit for

² Randall Caroline Watson Forsberg, *Toward a Theory of Peace: The Role of Moral Beliefs*, edited and with an introduction by Evangelista and Neta C. Crawford (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

³ Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Policies of Advanced Industrial States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Evangelista, “Domestic Structure and International Change,” in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Doyle, eds., *New Thinking in International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Westview, 1997).

⁴ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962); Jack L. Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁵ Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

publication. I benefited from another year with David when he moved to Stanford and I received a doctoral fellowship to work on my dissertation there under his guidance. My fifth and last year as a Ph.D. student I spent at the Brookings Institution in the company of leading policy-oriented scholars, as I scoured the academic job listings and confronted the two-body problem with Joanie, who planned to start medical school. Thanks in part to Cornell economist Alfred Kahn's deregulation of the airlines, flights to interviews were cheap for her and we both managed to end up at the University of Michigan.

My job at Michigan was to teach Soviet politics and foreign policy at the graduate and undergraduate level in the Department of Political Science. Aside from a lackluster undergraduate course in Soviet Government at Harvard and the independent reading courses on Soviet military policy at Cornell, I had never formally studied those subjects. At Cornell my focus had been on International Relations, with a second major field in Comparative Politics, emphasizing Europe, and I designed my *cv* accordingly, listing those fields as my teaching and research interests. Peter Katzenstein took one look at it and said, "you're not going to teach European politics, so you should put down 'Soviet politics'—you speak Russian, after all." So I did. Since I wasn't invited to interview for a single IR job, and received several job offers to teach Soviet politics, I feel that I owe my career to Peter in more ways than one.

The summer before moving to Ann Arbor I treated myself to a crash independent-study course in Soviet politics, reading one after the other Merle Fainsod's *How Russia is Ruled* and Jerry Hough's thorough revision, *How the Soviet Union is Governed*.⁶ Fall semester 1986 was an extraordinary time to study the USSR, thanks to the reformist ferment unleashed by Mikhail Gorbachev. I remember when I first met Bill Zimmerman, the senior Soviet specialist at Michigan, and he told me that he had stopped traveling to the Soviet Union. "You've seen one line, you've seen them all," he explained. He soon changed his tune, brushed up his Russian, and reengaged in studying and visiting what became an increasingly fascinating and rapidly changing place. Having published my book on the sources of the U.S.-Soviet arms race, I shifted my interest to the people who were trying to end it—particularly the nongovernmental scientists and physicians engaged in transnational efforts across the Cold-War divide. I knew several of the US participants personally and I came to understand that they had conceived a theoretical understanding of how they could bring about change: working with their Soviet counterparts, they sought to promote moderation and compromise on one side and then collaboratively to convince the other side to reciprocate. Some successful efforts had been achieved in the years following Joseph Stalin's death, thanks to the work of organizations such as the Pugwash movement of scientists.⁷ But in Gorbachev the transnational network found someone willing to undertake unilateral initiatives of restraint sufficiently dramatic to convince even Ronald Reagan to go along.

I began work on a book about these transnational activists in the mid-1980s, but didn't finish it until the end of the 1990s. By that time the USSR no longer existed and many Soviet-era archives had opened up. I was able to work in several of them and interview participants in the events I described. Judging by the positive reception of *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War*, I was right not to rush to finish it.⁸ Not that it was my choice, exactly: My wife gave birth to both of our daughters while attending medical school, so I spent a lot of time at home with them, writing only when I managed to get them to take their naps. One morning in mid-August 1991 I received a call at home from a local

⁶ Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Jerry F. Hough, with Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union is Governed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

⁷ Evangelista, "Blurring the Borders of a New Discipline: The Achievements and Prospects of Pugwash History," in Alison Kraft and Carola Sachse, eds., *Science, (Anti-)Communism and Diplomacy: The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs in the Early Cold War* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); "The Pugwash Conferences and the Global Cold War: Scientists, Transnational Networks, and the Complexity of Nuclear Histories," *H-Diplo Article Review Forum* 852 (25 April 2019); <https://hdiplo.org/to/AR852>.

⁸ Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). The book won the Marshall Shulman Book Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in 2000, and the Jervis-Schroeder Prize of the American Political Science Association, for the best book in international history and politics in 2001.

radio station asking for a comment on the latest, breaking news from Moscow. What news, I asked? Mikhail Gorbachev had been deposed by a coup. He managed to return to office, thanks to Russian President Boris Yeltsin's rallying of the opposition, but Yeltsin soon extracted his price: the breakup of the USSR and the emergence of an independent Russia, along with the remaining 14 constituent Soviet republics. In January 1992, I showed up for the first lecture of my course, Soviet Politics and Government—too late to change the title—and told my students I had become doubly obsolete: “my” country had ceased to exist and the problem I was studying, the superpower nuclear arms race, no longer seemed a problem. Unlike many colleagues, who became specialists on the post-Soviet world, I shifted my attention elsewhere, although I did write one more book devoted to Russia: *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?*⁹ It proved unfortunately prescient in anticipating the increasing authoritarianism of President Vladimir Putin.

Exploring Russian violations of human rights and the laws of war in Chechnya piqued my interest in international law. Analysis of legal documents and application to real-world cases seemed to draw on skills similar to the ones I had learned in my literature classes in high school and college and I found I enjoyed the subject, even as I became increasingly disillusioned about the constraining impact of law on military conflict. Following a sabbatical from Michigan and a leave of absence at Harvard's Kennedy School, I returned to Cornell to join the faculty of my old department and worked with colleagues David Wippman and Henry Shue to learn about legal and ethical approaches to international politics. In the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001, we collaborated on a number of projects on the laws of war, sponsored by the Peace Studies Program.¹⁰ Cornell encourages combining our teaching and research interests. At Michigan I had several colleagues at the Center for Russian and East European Studies who studied Yugoslavia, and, along with many others, I was appalled at the level of destruction that attended the country's breakup, and, in particular, the organized campaigns of sexual violence and “ethnic cleansing.” Inspired by feminist writers ranging from Virginia Woolf to Slavenka Draculić and Cynthia Enloe, I began teaching seminars on gender and nationalist violence in comparative perspective.¹¹ I found that my students responded particularly well to movies that addressed these issues, even as I chose ones where the gender dynamics were not the main focus. I wrote a book that drew on analysis of feature films to study the role of gender in nationalist conflicts in Algeria, Chechnya, Québec, and former Yugoslavia. It was a labor of love (by which I mean it was hard to find a publisher), as I was able to return to my early interest in Francophone countries and Russian language, literature, and culture, and carry out close textual analysis of documents and visual analysis of film.¹²

My current project also constitutes a return to roots of sorts. As a graduate student in 1984, I was invited to attend a conference at Bellagio on Lake Como in Italy, my first visit to that country, even though my father's parents had emigrated

⁹ Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002).

¹⁰ In addition to my own book, *Law, Ethics, and the War on Terror* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), these collaborations produced several edited volumes: *New Wars, New Laws? Applying the Laws of War in 21st Century Conflicts* (Ardley: Transnational Publishers, 2005), with David Wippman; *The American Way of Bombing: Changing Ethical and Legal Norms, from Flying Fortresses to Drones* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), with Henry Shue; *Do the Geneva Conventions Matter?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), with Nina Tannenwald.¹¹ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1938); Slavenka Draculić, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (London: Hutchinson, 1991) and *Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of the War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993); Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1938); Slavenka Draculić, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (London: Hutchinson, 1991) and *Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of the War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993); Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹² Evangelista, *Gender, Nationalism, and War: Conflict on the Movie Screen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).¹³ On Isodarco, see Paolo Foradori, Giampiero Giacomello, and Alessandro Pascolini, eds., *Arms Control and Disarmament: 50 Years of Experience in Nuclear Education* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

from there. I met other young scholars, such as Mark Kramer, Condoleezza Rice, and Thomas Risse, two of whom have remained lifelong friends. I stayed on an extra week, traveling to another conference in Venice hosted by the International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts (Isodarco). Twenty years later I attended my second Isodarco conference as a lecturer at Andalo in the Dolomites, and have subsequently attended and organized many courses there.¹³ That first trip to Italy kindled a love for the country that my family readily shared as we spent as much time as possible there on vacations and sabbaticals and worked on learning Italian. I began teaching regularly at several Italian universities, published some work on Italian politics and history,¹⁴ and settled on what I called my “retirement project” (because I suspected correctly it would take a long time) on the impact on Italian civilians of the Allied air campaign during World War II. *Bombing among Friends* circles me back to Mr. Delaney’s class and his fear for the human consequences of military conflict, but in the meantime I’ve managed to learn from first-hand experience that spaghetti doesn’t grow on trees.

Matthew Evangelista is President White Professor of History and Political Science in the Department of Government at Cornell University, where he served as department chair and as director of the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies. He teaches at the ASERI Graduate School of Economics and International Relations of the Catholic University of Milan, and serves on the *comitato scientifico* of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi in Turin.

¹³ On Isodarco, see Paolo Foradori, Giampiero Giacomello, and Alessandro Pascolini, eds., *Arms Control and Disarmament: 50 Years of Experience in Nuclear Education* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

¹⁴ Matthew Evangelista, ed., *Italy from Crisis to Crisis: Political Economy, Security, and Society in the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2018).