

Peace, War & Social Conflict

Section of the American Sociological Association

Website: www.peacewarconflict.org

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Letter from the Chair

National Security and the Politics of Protest

It turns out that President Obama started thinking about national security issues well before he started his career in electoral politics. On Independence Day, *The New York Times* reported that he had published a piece musing on the future of nuclear weapons in Columbia University's student newspaper while he was a college student there (Broad and Sanger 2009). In the Spring of 1983, the future president reported on a few of the groups on campus working to engage young people in the politics of war and peace. Their efforts, he noted, were part of a larger nuclear freeze campaign that had captured the imagination of the American public, seeming to provide an alternative approach to the costs and dangers of a forever-escalating nuclear arms race. Obama hoped that the citizens' movements in the United States and Western Europe would provide an impetus for work toward a "peace that is genuine, lasting, and non-nuclear."

No doubt, there's little to distinguish Barack Obama's report in a student paper from hundreds of similar pieces written by hundreds of young people similarly engaged by the movement and politics of that moment. The single critical difference is that only one of the student authors went on to become President of the United States, and is now in a position to advance alternative policies about nuclear weapons—and terrorism and gays in the military. More significantly, hundreds of authors, and thousands of others: organizers, musicians, attorneys, poets, engineers, physicians, and even academics paid a little more attention to the politics of national security at some point in their lives, and now comprise a citizenry that can respond to these alternatives.

The young Obama displayed no particular expertise on the physics or politics of nuclear weapons. As a student concerned with democracy and justice in America, however, he

had to pay attention to the movement which put nuclear weapons on a broad public agenda. He saw that the movement had invigorated student organizations on campus, and democratic politics more generally. No doubt, he noticed that faculty teaching sociology, political science, literature, and physics, were talking about nuclear war weapons more than they had previously. And he saw that elected officials had to respond to repeated questions from the press about the wisdom of their policies. The movement made people pay attention to activist concerns.

As a student, I paid a great deal of attention to the nuclear freeze movement. Searching for a politically relevant topic, I wrote my dissertation on it, and thought that by the time the time my book appeared (Meyer 1990), the movement and my concerns with it were largely over. I was wrong, of course, on every count. Nearly thirty years after the movement's hey-day, the record of its influence is decidedly mixed. Most obviously, the technological arms race hasn't been *frozen*, and several new states became nuclear powers. But the cold war seems now almost a distant memory, and the United States and the states of the former Soviet Union now deploy only about a third the number of nuclear weapons that they had deployed in the 1980s. America's president, first schooled in these issues by a social movement, has articulated a goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

The story of Obama's student journalism on war and peace raises fundamental issues relevant to our studies of peace, war, and social conflict. In the summary tale of his *Columbia Sundial* article, we can see the importance of citizen action in garnering attention for the critical national security issues of the day—indeed, any day. We can also see the much longer term results of social movements, which may affect rhetoric, politics, and policy over the short term, but also can exercise very long term effects by educating the public and training activists. Of course, these lessons are not limited to the nuclear freeze or nuclear weapons.

The issues that concern military and movement leaders today: the politics of terrorism and military intervention; balancing civil liberties and security; the public debt to service people; and the qualifications and composition of the armed forces in a democracy, will certainly resurface again and again. The way they resurface, and the extent of public awareness and interest when they do, will affect future national security politics and policies. The work that activists do—and the work we as scholars do—can thus have an impact far beyond what we may be able to see in the frame of one meeting or even one career. Although we might wish for a clearer answer about the outcomes of our efforts, it’s hard to imagine a more encouraging one.

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Meyer, David S. 1990. *A Winter of Discontent: The Nuclear Freeze and American Politics*. New York: Praeger.

David S. Meyer (University of California, Irvine)

Section Conference Activities

Monday, August 10, 6:15-8:30, Reception, Lone Mountain 100, University of San Francisco.

Business Meeting, Tuesday, August 11, 11:30-12:10, Parc 55 Hotel.

Section Sessions

Tue, Aug 11 - 8:30am - 10:10am Building: Parc 55 Hotel

Peace, War and the State

Organizer & Presider:: Ann M. Hironaka (University of California-Irvine)

Prætorian Militarization and Children’s Life Chances, Steven Carlton-Ford (University of Cincinnati)

Natural Resource and Governance Capacity as Predictors for War, Leda E. Nath (University of Wisconsin at Whitewater), Margarita V. Alario (University of Wisconsin-Whitewater)

Changing Popular Support for the Democratic Progressive Party and the Taiwan Independence Movement in Taiwan, Dongtao Qi (Stanford University)

Framing Trends in Prestige Press Presentations of War and Occupation, Ann M. Strahm (California State University-Stanislaus)

Tue, Aug 11 - 12:30pm - 2:10pm Building: Parc 55 Hotel

The Effects of the Iraq War on the U.S. Military and Peace-Making

Session Organizer and Presider: Lisa A. Leitz (Hendrix College)

Partisanship & American’s Reactions to the War in Iraq, Emanuel Gregory Boussios (Hofstra University)

Self-interpretation as a Social Phenomenon: An Examination of Reflexivity in Military Policies on Conscientious Objection, Kimberly A Spring (New School for Social Research)

Building and Maintaining a Post-9/11 all Volunteer Military Force, David R. Segal (University of Maryland), Karin De Angelis (University of Maryland-College Park)

American Soldier’s Attitudes toward Peace and Other Non-war Work, Morten G. Ender (United States Military Academy)

Tue, Aug 11 - 2:30pm - 4:10pm Building: Parc 55 Hotel

War & Peace by Other Means

Session Organizer and Presider: Kurt Schock (Rutgers University-Newark)

Interdependency and the Burden of Friendship: Explaining the Nonviolent Revolution of Iran, Daniel P. Ritter (University of Texas-Austin)

From Tilling the Land to Blocking Streets: High-risk Activism and the ‘Moment of

Repression', Louis Edgar Esparza (State University of New York-Stony Brook)

The Roots of Islamist Insurgency: Egypt, 1986-1999, J. Craig Jenkins (The Ohio State University), *Thomas Maher (Ohio State University)

Suicide Bombings and Cleric Statements in Pakistan, 1997-2007, Bridget Rose Nolan (University of Pennsylvania)

Understanding Western Transnational Terrorism, Christina Fuhr (Oxford University)

Discussant: Stephen Zunes (University of San Francisco)

Refereed Roundtables

(Organized by Meredith Kleykamp)

Tue, Aug 11 - 10:30am - 11:30am Building: Parc 55 Hotel

Table 1

Civil Society and State Terror, Jeremy Scott Forbis (University of Dayton)

The Sources of Insecurity in the Third World: External or Internal?, Taekyoon Kim (Johns Hopkins University)

Understanding Counterinsurgency: the Conflict Between Military and Civilian Logics, Rahul Mahajan (University of Wisconsin, Madison)

Table 2

Goffman as Conflict Theorist: Dramatizing the Art of Repression Management, Lester R. Kurtz (George Mason University), Lee A. Smithey (Swarthmore College)

Think Pink: Codepink, Third Wave Feminist, and the Anti-War Movement Organization, Ryanne Pilgeram (University of Oregon)

The Peace Corps and the American Empire: An Analysis of U.S. Cultural Imperialism, Stokes (University of Pittsburgh)

Table 3

Exploring the Concept Collective Memory: Restorative Social Processes after Conflagration, Mary J. Gallant (Rowan University)

The Color of Camouflage: interracial relations in the military, Liora Sion (Northwestern University)

Married Active-Duty Service Members: Quality of Life and Work Satisfaction, Brenda L. Moore (State University of New York-University of Buffalo), James Stewart (Pennsylvania State University)

General Announcements

Adrienne Redd, adjunct professor of sociology, Arcadia University, is requesting an exchange of editorial attention and advice. Wanted: editing barter for the purpose of refining scholarly papers and a book in progress on the perception and evolution of the nation-state. My research will address a possible expansion upon historical Westphalian properties such as sovereignty, boundedness, protection, social welfare, international laws and convention, inclusion in political dialogue, and modernity and secularity of the nation-state. Please contact Adrienne Redd adrienne@redd.com 215-885-7713. I live in the Philadelphia area and enjoy meeting in person with collaborators.

www.adrienneredd.info

Dan Lohaus has completed *When I Came Home*, a film about homeless veterans in America: from those who served in Vietnam to those returning from the current war in Iraq. The film looks at the challenges faced by returning combat veterans and the battle many must fight for the benefits promised to them. Through the story of Herold Noel, an Iraq War veteran suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and living out of his car in Brooklyn, *When I Came Home* reveals a failing system and the veteran's struggle to survive after returning home from war. To purchase an educational copy, go to <http://www.newday.com>. ASA members get a 10% discount to bring the cost down a bit. The discount code for ASA Members is 5FTUBT, good through Sept 15th, 2009. When you go to the link above, you'll see a box for "discount code" by the pricing info - just enter the code there.

Joyce Apsel was awarded the NYU Distinguished Teaching Award 2008-2009.

Juanita Firestone received the Southwestern Women's and Gender Studies Association's Elizabeth Esterchild Professional Paper Award for the best professional paper submitted to their conference last spring in Las Vegas. The paper, "Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military Reserve Component: A Preliminary Analysis," was co-written with Richard J. Harris. SWGSA awarded \$200.

Marnia Lazreg gave a lecture on the "strategic role of torture in counter-insurgency wars," on June 15 at the

School of Social Science of Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University in Mostaganem, Algeria. The talk was given in French. Members of the national and local press reported on the lecture.

Sharon Erickson Nepstad was a Visiting Fellow last Fall at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame University. In January, she joined the faculty at the University of New Mexico, where she is professor of sociology and director of religious studies.

The Peace Alliance is a Washington group keeping the "Campaign for a U.S. Department of Peace in the forefront. Go to www.ThePeaceAlliance.org.

The Peace and Justice Studies Association Conference will be held at Marquette University October 8-11, 2009. Proposals are still being accepted.

Thomas D. Hall will be, in Fall 2009, director for Colgate University's Santa Fe Study Group co-sponsored by Native American Studies and Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Essays, Op-Eds, Etc.

Useful Videos for Teaching Social Conflict and Violence in Colombia

By Mauricio Florez-Morris, Ph.D., Citizens and Political Participation Research Group, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Bogotá, Colombia

This review of five documentaries addresses different aspects of the social conflict in Colombia. As a case study, the Colombian conflict is interesting not only because of the length of the time that the internal struggle has been going on, spanning as it does more than four decades, but also because of its far-reaching ramifications. The multiple influences of the illegal drug trade on the conflict are a factor that raises the level of complexity to more than simply a struggle between the "haves" and the "have nots". The fact that American society is one of the main markets for illegal drugs produced in Colombia, and that the U.S. government is actively involved in supporting the Colombian government in the war against guerrillas and drug lords, makes this a relevant topic for courses that are taught in the U.S. on social conflict and violence.

Winner of the 2006 Society for Visual Anthropology Award for Excellence, *La Sierra: Urban warfare in the barrios of Medellin, Colombia* (2004) offers an in-depth look at the life experiences of members of Bloque Metro, an urban paramilitary group in Medellin, Colombia. The first part of the film covers the members' on going fight against urban guerrillas of the ELN (National Liberation

Army) for control of their neighborhood. The second part, after the victory of the paramilitaries, shows a struggle with members of another paramilitary group, the Cacique Nutibara, for control of the locality. The film offers an inside look at how urban paramilitaries live, their social relations with the community, and their attitudes toward life and violence. It also depicts how being a member of a paramilitary group means having authority in the community. This is illustrated by showing the subjects performing functions such as providing security, imparting justice, and organizing social gatherings. In the case of Edison, the leader of the group, one can see how his prestige allows him to break social rules, an example being having several girlfriends at the same time while fathering children with most of them. If the decision is taken to assign this movie in a course, it would be a good idea to let the students know that it contains violent images of combat and corpses.

Carlitos Medellin (2003) focuses on a 13-year-old boy who, according to the narrator, lives on the most violent street of the most violent neighborhood (Santo Domingo Savio) in the most violent city (Medellin) in the most violent country (Colombia) in the world. Throughout the movie, Carlitos visits neighbors carrying a statue of the Virgin Mary, allowing them to interact with the statue by opening their hearts and talking to the virgin about their lives and about problems in the community. A recurring theme in the documentary is people's resentment at the killing of relatives, which is putdown to a lack of protection by the police and the excesses of FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) urban guerrillas who control the neighborhood. By underlining the community's distaste for violent actions, the documentary provides valuable insights for understanding why there is little or no support for guerrilla groups in some poor urban communities. The film also shows explicit images of a morgue containing the corpses of people who have been shot dead.

El bogotazo: La historia de una ilusión [El Bogotazo: the history of an aspiration] (2008) traces the roots of the current Colombian conflict back to the assassination of Liberal Party leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán on April 19, 1948. Gaitán was a popular leader who was famous for his speeches defending underprivileged groups in society, and he managed to be critical of the political establishment while holding several important political posts in the government. The shooting of Gaitán led to an explosion of popular rage and spontaneous acts of random violence that were aggravated by police battalions rising up in support of the protest. These events were further complicated by the presence of international delegates to the Ninth Pan-American Conference, who were meeting to form the Organization of American States (OAS), and by the influence of young Latin American radicals, including Cuban Fidel Castro, who were protesting about this conference and who joined the armed struggle in the early hours of civilian unrest.

Plan Colombia: Cashing in on the drug war failure (2008) presents a radical perspective on the Colombian conflict that can easily be integrated with other course material from a critical sociology viewpoint. Nevertheless, as an academic documentary it has several shortcomings, such as including or omitting facts in order to bolster its political perspective. For instance, the strong criticism of government policies on the aerial fumigation of coca crops, which according to the movie has had negative side-effects on the population, contrasts with the fact that no mention is made of government efforts to foster manual coca plant eradication programs. The role guerrillas play in the illegal drug business is significantly understated, and key political events, such as the decision by the Pastrana administration to end the peace talks with the FARC, are presented without any context. One main conclusion that the video draws is that poverty drives peasants to grow crops for the illegal drug business. This is an interesting topic for a class discussion, since there are many countries with similar or lower levels of poverty and with lower levels of peasant involvement in the illegal drug business.

¡Colombia Vive! 25 años de Resistencia [Colombia alive! 25 years of resistance] (2008) is a comprehensive documentary that addresses key political and social episodes in recent Colombian history, from 1982 to 2007. It begins by describing a euphoric period marked by events such as the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the peace talks of the Betancur administration with some guerrilla movements. It ends with the reelection of President Alvaro Uribe and the demobilization of more than 30,000 members of paramilitary groups. A major feature of the film is that it shows interviews with all the main parties involved in the Colombian conflict. Although the lack of English subtitles limits its use in most courses, this documentary can be very helpful for students planning to write about Colombia and in need of a basic background to its modern-day history.

References

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¡Colombia Vive! 25 años de Resistencia. Mauricio Gómez. 240 minutes. 2008. Bogotá, Colombia. Produced by Caracol Televisión & Revista Semana. Distributed by FM Discos & Cintas S.A. Calle 74 # 11-81. Phone: 3136130.

El Bogotazo. La historia de una ilusión. Mauricio Acosta. 50 minutes. 2008. Bogotá, Colombia. Produced by The History Channel, Mazdoc and Caracol Televisión. Web: www.mazdoc.com

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PW&SC Section Member Research and Publications

Bonds, Eric. 2009. "Strategic Role Taking and Political Struggle: Bearing Witness to the Iraq War." *Symbolic Interaction* 32:1-20.

Coy, Patrick G., Gregory M. Maney and Lynne M. Woehrle. 2009. "Blessing War and Blessing Peace: Religious Discourses in the U.S. During Major Conflict Periods, 1990-2005," *Pushing the Boundaries: New Frontiers in Conflict Resolution and Collaboration*, Volume 29 of *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Rosemary O'Leary, Catherine Gerrard, and Rachel Fleishman, editors, Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Group.

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Smithy, Lee A. 2008. "Grassroots Unionism and Conflict Transformation." *Shared Space* (6):51-68.

Wittner, Lawrence S. 2009. *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement*. Stanford University Press. Confronting the Bomb tells the dramatic, inspiring story of how citizen activism helped curb the nuclear arms race and prevent nuclear war. This abbreviated version of Lawrence Wittner's award-winning trilogy, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, shows how a worldwide, grassroots campaign—the largest social movement of modern times—challenged the nuclear priorities of the great powers and, ultimately, thwarted their nuclear ambitions. Based on massive research in the files of peace and disarmament organizations and in formerly top secret government records, extensive interviews with antinuclear activists and government officials, and memoirs and other published materials, *Confronting the Bomb* opens a unique window on one of the most important issues of the modern era: survival in the nuclear age.

Section Listservs

Section Announcement Listserv:

Please send your announcements to any of the following officers and they can post your announcement to the listserv: Chair, Chair-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer, and immediate Past Chair. Announcements are automatically sent to all section members via email. Messages are routed via peace_war-announce@listserv.asanet.org.

To be excluded from the list, email infoservice@asanet.org. A marker will be placed on

your record so that your e-mail address will be excluded when the distribution list is refreshed. ASA will refresh the distribution list on a bi-monthly basis or as needed.

Section Discussion Listserv:

To join the section discussion listserv you must send an email as described below:

1. In the address field type in majordomo@listserv.asanet.org; leave subject field blank;
2. In the text of the message type **subscribe peace_war**
3. Make sure there is nothing else in the message (no signature)
4. Send the message. You will receive confirmation, and an authorization key with which to confirm that you really want to join the list. Once you reply positively to that you will get a welcome message.

The section's discussion list, at peace_war@listserv.asanet.org, unlike the section announcement list, is not "prepopulated" with e-mail addresses of section members. Individuals must subscribe.



Join the Section on Peace, War and Social Conflict, or Renew Your Membership

If you are a member of the ASA, now is the time to consider showing your support for the work of the Section on **Peace, War and Social Conflict** by joining the section or renewing your membership. To do either online, you can go to

<https://www.e-noah.net/ASA/Login.asp> ZX

If you are not already a member of the American Sociological Association, and would like to join the Association and the Section, you can do so online by going to

<https://www.e-oah.net/ASA/Profile/General.asp?S=1>

Any questions you might have regarding membership in the association can be addressed to membership@asanet.org; or you can telephone the ASA at 202-383-9005, ext. 389.

Questions about membership in the section may be directed to Yuko Whitestone at ywhitstone@socy.umd.edu