This fall marks the golden anniversary of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. This is an interesting moment in our history to try to understand both the global and institutional changes the Center has seen over the past fifty years. We have a good deal not only to celebrate but also to reflect upon.

A simple comparison of the issues that gave rise to the creation of the Weatherhead Center with those drawing the attention of scholars and policy makers today shows that there are indeed intractable problems of perennial concern in the modern world. The Center for International Affairs was founded at the height of the cold war, when military expenditures hovered—at least temporarily—at around 10% of U.S. gross domestic product. Today, at a time of war and insecurity, the United States considers a 2008 military budget of $624.8 billion, approximately 4–5% of its GDP. The year of the Center’s founding, 1958, was a year consumed with fears of nuclear escalation. In the Quemoy-Matsu crisis with China that year, President Eisenhower considered but ultimately declined to give the 7th Fleet commander authority to order nuclear strikes against China, while Russia promptly informed the U.S. president that it would come to China’s aid should the United States attack. Appropriately, “The future of WMD and the nuclear non-proliferation regime” will be the focus of one of our anniversary conference roundtables.

Nineteen fifty-eight also witnessed the United States involved militarily in the Middle East. Viewed as a key battleground in the cold war, the United
States sent combat troops into Lebanon that year—the legacy of which continues to this day. For one of the plenary sessions, the fiftieth anniversary conference will again take up the subject of “Peace and Conflict in the Middle East.” From the cold war, to conflicts over national self-determination, to the war on terror, the Middle East has always been a core area of interest for this Center’s scholars and affiliates.

Of course, the world is now a far different place from that in which this research institution was initiated. Concerns about nuclear balance have been overtaken by concerns about proliferation. Multilateralism had a very different role in American foreign policy in the years leading up to the establishment of Harvard’s new center. The United States had only recently invested heavily in a broad array of cooperative multilateral institutions—the United Nations, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund—and was for the most part serious about working with and through them. Multilateralism can no longer be taken for granted as a central tenet in U.S. foreign policy, to say the least. In 1958, no one had heard about HIV or worried about the treatment of AIDS victims. Only a handful of international agreements addressed human rights issues. In 1958, if you mentioned terrorism, Raul Castro’s kidnapping of fifty American and Canadian military personnel and civilians in Cuba would have come to mind. Today, it is associated with the words “global” and “transnational” and nears the top of the list of American security threats. Finally, who could have imagined in 1958 that in which this research institution was initiated.

The keynote speaker for our fiftieth anniversary celebration reflects many of the challenges and changes our world has seen since the founding of the Center. In his lifetime, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu, his people, his church, and his nation have had to face some of the most difficult issues of the late twentieth century. His opposition to apartheid, his commitment to stopping AIDS and treating its victims, his advocacy of inclusiveness for his church, and his dedication to peace distinguish him as one of the most significant social figures as well as humane individuals of our time. We look forward to welcoming him and hearing his words on November 15, when he will offer the Warren and Anita Manshel Lecture in American Foreign Policy at Harvard entitled “Goodness Triumphs Ultimately.”

This November we will also welcome back to our midst the Fellows whom we have had the pleasure to know and work with over the years. The Fellows bring to our research center the valuable perspective of practitioners. The Fellows Program is as old as the Center itself; established in 1958, it has brought prominent and promising individuals from the policy world to mingle with, learn from, and be a resource to our students and faculty. Their reunion will be one of the highlights of our anniversary celebration.

The Center’s milestone anniversary will be marked by a combination of serious intellectual exchange as well as socializing. The theme chosen for the fiftieth anniversary is “Intractable Problems”—of which only a sampling has been alluded to above. This theme will draw attention to some of the most challenging policy issues the world has faced over the years. Some of these are relatively new, while others have deep roots in history and have occupied the attention of scholars at the Center for decades.

As we put the past fifty years into perspective, we aim to bring into better focus the problems the world will face in the future. The next half century will provide challenges new and old. The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs is well positioned to continue to make important contributions to the academic world as well as policy debates in the half-century to come.

Beth A. Simmons, Center Director
These Weatherhead Center affiliates from both the past and the present received awards at the 2007 national meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA).

Leonard D. White Award
For the best doctoral dissertation in the field of public administration, Daniel W. Gingerich, Graduate Student Associate (2002–2006), received the Leonard D. White Award for his dissertation, “Corruption in General Equilibrium: Political Institutions and Bureaucratic Performance in South America.” The chair of Gingerich’s thesis committee was Jorge I. Domínguez, former Center Director; Chair, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies; Antonio Madero Professor of Mexican and Latin American Politics and Economics; and Vice Provost for International Affairs, Harvard University.

Heinz I. Eulau Award
For the best article published in the American Political Science Review, Daron Acemoglu, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate James A. Robinson, Professor of Government, received the Heinz Eulau prize for “Economic Backwardness in Political Perspective,” American Political Science Review 100 (February 2006).

Franklin L. Burdette/ Pi Sigma Alpha Award
Awarded annually for the best paper presented at the previous year’s annual meeting, Kenneth Scheve, Graduate Student Associate (1998–2000), received the Franklin L. Burdette/ Pi Sigma Alpha Award for his paper, “Political Institutions, Partisanship, and Inequality in the Long Run.”

Sage Best Paper Award
Given to the best paper in the field of comparative politics presented at the previous year’s APSA Annual Meeting, Lily L. Tsai, Graduate Student Associate (2002–2004); Academy Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies (2005–2006 and 2007–2008); Assistant Professor of Political Science, MIT, received the Sage Best Paper Award for her paper, “Informal Institutions, Accountability, and Public Goods Provision in Rural China.”

Best Book Award
Given for the best book on European politics and society published in the previous year, Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate Daniel Ziblatt, Assistant Professor of Government and of Social Studies, received the Best Book Award for his book Structuring the State: The Formation of Italy and Germany and the Puzzle of Federalism (Princeton University Press, 2006).

Greg Leubbett Best Article Award
Given for the best article in the field of comparative politics published in 2005 or 2006, Macartan Humphreys, Academy Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies (2002–2003 and 2005–2006); Assistant Professor of Political Science, Columbia University, and Jeremy Weinstein, Stanford University, received the Greg Leubbett Best Article Award for “Handling and Manhanding Civilians in Civil War,” American Political Science Review 100 (August 2006). The co-recipient of the award was Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate Torben Iversen, Harold Hitchings Burbank Professor of Political Economy, and David Soskice, Duke University, for their article, “Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Distribute More than Others,” American Political Science Review 100 (May 2006).

William H. Riker Book Award
Given for the best book on political economy published during the past three calendar years, Daron Acemoglu, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate James A. Robinson, Professor of Government, received the William H. Riker Book Award for Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Karl Kaiser
Ralph I. Straus Fellow; Professor of Political Science, Emeritus, University of Bonn; Former Director, German Council on Foreign Relations, Karl Kaiser was elected as a member of the American Philosophical Society. The American Philosophical Society is the oldest learned society in North America and goes back to a proposal by Benjamin Franklin in 1743: “promoting useful knowledge.” It elects academics and practitioners from the United States and abroad who have distinguished themselves. Early foreign members included the Marquis de Lafayette, Thaddeus Kosciusko, and Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier.

APSA Awards

Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award
Awarded annually for the best book on government, politics, or international affairs, Daron Acemoglu, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate James A. Robinson, Professor of Government, received the Woodrow Wilson prize for Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Charles E. Merriam Award
The Merriam Award was established by the Association to recognize “a person whose published work and career represent a significant contribution to the art of government through the application of social science research.” First presented in 1975, the award was revived in 1995 and is presented biennially. 2007 recipient: Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate Robert D. Putnam, Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy.

Best Paper Award
For the best paper given at an Urban Politics Section panel at the previous year’s APSA Annual Meeting, Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate (1995–2001) Michael Jones-Correa, Professor of Government, Cornell University, received the Best Paper Award for “Electoral Representation of New Actors in Suburbia.”

Greg Leubbett Best Article Award
Given for the best article in the field of comparative politics published in 2005 or 2006, Macartan Humphreys, Academy Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies (2002–2003 and 2005–2006); Assistant Professor of Political Science, Columbia University, and Jeremy Weinstein, Stanford University, received the Greg Leubbett Best Article Award for “Handling and Manhanding Civilians in Civil War,” American Political Science Review 100 (August 2006). The co-recipient of the award was Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate Torben Iversen, Harold Hitchings Burbank Professor of Political Economy, and David Soskice, Duke University, for their article, “Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Distribute More than Others,” American Political Science Review 100 (May 2006).

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Twenty-seven Harvard College juniors received summer travel grants from the Weatherhead Center to support their thesis research on topics related to international affairs. Since their return in September, the Weatherhead Center has encouraged these Undergraduate Associates to take advantage of the resources of the Center’s research environment. During the spring 2008 semester, the students will present their research in a conference (February 21–23) that is open to the Harvard community. Four Undergraduate Associates write of their experiences in the field:

Simi Bhat
Environmental Science and Public Policy
Rogers Family Research Fellow
Traveled to New Delhi and Jammu to research environmental identity in internally displaced people of Kashmiri origin.

Seeds of Thought
For people who have traveled hundreds, even thousands of kilometers away from their homeland to a foreign and often foreboding place, the most significant question to ask them is how do the two lands differ and what can be done to make their experience of the latter a little bit more comforting and similar to that of the former. At least, this is the opinion that I formed during my research this summer.

The people I spoke to were Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the valley of Kashmir. In 1989 nearly 200,000 people fled to the cities, most eventually settling in Jammu, and many of them remaining in New Delhi. In the eighteencen years since their migration, these IDPs have moved into new homes and constructed new lives, some pursuing the same professions they had left in the valley.

However, several thousand of these IDPs still live in government-provided camps, struggling to raise extended families in a space of a few square meters in area. One may think that for these people, food and shelter are much more important concerns than the vague concept of “environment.”

My research this summer proved differently. Far from being a concept buried in the back of their minds, the environment played an active role in the decisions of IDPs, particularly those in camps. People expressed to me in great detail their religious experiences of the divine caves and springs of Kashmir, longing for the physical proximity of their extended families, and even recounted the exact construction materials from which they made their houses.

It should not seem so surprising that the environment had such an important role to play in the IDP’s memories of Kashmir and hopes for the future; after all, the environment subsumes so many daily concerns—food and shelter among them. However, the extent to which some people clung to their past environments was dramatic.

Some had saved old pinecones or gathered walnuts from recent trips back to the valley, simply to keep in whatever small space they had as mementos from their distant pasts. I remember one man in particular who went back to Kashmir with the specific purpose of gathering seedlings of his beloved chinar tree, and then upon his return, planted them in a small green space in his IDP camp.

These imported plants were not a novelty in the camps, however. Many people had tried to grow flowers or vegetables in whatever cleared area was accessible to them or in small pots kept outside their businesses. More interestingly, almost everyone, whether in camps or not, complained about the lack of familiar, fresh vegetables, and the exorbitant price of those that were available. Doctors experienced in treating IDPs from Kashmir contend that the lack of these vegetables is a primary cause of many of the health problems affecting the community—diabetes, anemia, early menopause among them.

It was from these disparate lines of thinking that an idea sprouted in my head. These IDPs, who overwhelmingly complained about idle time and inadequate nutrition, should be allowed the opportunity to overturn both. A simple food program allotting the camps more of the open space surrounding them combined with a supply of starter seeds may motivate IDPs to combat some of the problems they are facing themselves. A similar program has enjoyed success in Tanzanian refugee camps, and I hope to focus my thesis research this year on whether such a model can be appropriately applied to Indian IDP camps and achieve the purpose of bringing a little of the past into the present for the good of the future.

This chinar tree symbolizes the attachment of the Kashmiri IDPs to their original environment. It was imported from the valley to an IDP camp in the plains by one of the residents. He finds the tree important for the shade, fresh air, and psychological comfort it provides.

Photo credit: Simi Bhat
While studying ethnic policy by Japanese colonizers, I had wanted to focus equally on five groups along the border: Russian émigrés, Daur, Solon/Ewenki, Oroqen, and Goldi/Hezhe. Unfortunately, the Japanese sources concentrated on the Oroqen (and why that is will be explained in my thesis) and overlooked the other minorities. The Russian émigrés along the border—known as the Transbaikal Cossacks—also became increasingly disconnected from the direction of my research. The Japanese sources tended to observe and evaluate the Russians differently from the other ethnic groups, and as a result, I have yet to figure out how to tie the ethnic group into the overall conception of my thesis, if at all. Furthermore, after finding rather little about Russian émigrés, I suspect that the information is either still classified in the Heilongjiang Provincial Archives or was relocated from Manchukuo to Khabarovsk by the Soviet army in 1945. As a result, I have narrowed my focus on this project to the Oroqen, while bringing in other ethnic groups for comparison where the sources allow it. I also discuss to what extent Russian imperial (and later, Soviet) policy toward these groups in Siberia influenced Japanese colonial rule on the other side of the Amur River.

While I bought some Chinese secondary sources, most of the documents that I found in Harbin and Changchun were published gazetteers, with some mention of various ethnic groups in an anthropological context. One discovery at the Harbin City Library was an internal report written by the Manchukuo security office about the Oroqen in 1939. In Shenyang, I found more unpublished sources, most of which were declassified internal reports circulated among government offices. These included some anthropological observations, agricultural surveys, and more gazetteers. I also found an undated ammonia-print report detailing opium use among the Oroqen.

In Tokyo, I began work at the National Diet Library, where most of the materials were either memoirs or secondary sources. Memoirs posed a particular problem; Japanese officials and settlers often began their narrative on the day the Soviet army invaded Manchukuo rather than a decade earlier. I found some volumes that had republished archival sources—including ones inaccessible in China. One of the best finds was a series of articles published in the campus magazine of the right-wing Takushoku University (literally, “Pioneering and Colonizing” University), which included a report describing a summer internship at a Daur elementary school.

At Kyoto University, I met with Professor Takagi Hiroshi, who directed me to another strain of research by suggesting that I look into colonial policy towards the Ainu in northern Japan and the Oroq/Uilta on Sakhalin Island. Using these sources, I hope to understand what Japanese officials had set as precedents and what they had changed by the time they had reached northern Manchukuo. I then returned to Tokyo to continue reading at Waseda University, which houses one of the most extensive collections of Manchukuo-era documents in Japan. Finally, at Toyo Bunko, I discovered a collection of lectures on race and ethnicity donated by the alumni of Tekkoku University, a “multiethnic” university founded by Japanese in Changchun in the 1930s.

Assessment

In the first few weeks in China, I operated on a trial-and-error process where I was still unsure of what to look for, and how. I am concerned that I missed some major sources—due to both my initial lack of experience and security problems. Not only did the archive bar access to sensitive materials (topics ranging from maps of migratory patterns to Japanese education of Soviet children), but a particular book in a series would be missing or critical chapters of reports torn out. Likewise, there were terrible constraints to my time in China: Changchun’s archive housed thousands of pages, but the archive’s irregular hours (i.e., closing for impromptu meetings) prevented me from spending more time reading. Anyone traveling to these archives should be forewarned about censorship issues and even price gouging of photocopies.

On the other hand, freedom of information at the Japanese institutions basically guaranteed that I would have a chance to view all the documents that I had wanted to see for my research. I found the librarians and archivists at the National Diet Library and the Toyo Bunko extremely gracious and helpful, even though the transnational nature of my project meant they probably could not find the sources that I had been seeking. One of the greatest challenges that I am still facing, however, is the outright contradiction between evidence presented in Japanese primary sources and Chinese secondary sources, which is an aspect I hope to address in my thesis.

Despite these obstacles, I had a tremendous amount of fun this summer. The security issues in China actually made me more excited about my project because the topic seemingly became more relevant, political, and dangerous to study. I enjoyed working on research I could truly call my own, and I spent enough time in the libraries so that I could engage with the texts deeply, unlike during the school year when research is rushed and haphazard. Of course, none of this could have been possible without the generous support from all three centers—the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs—and so I thank each center very much for this remarkable opportunity.

Sakura M. Christmas
History Department
Researched Japanese colonial policy toward ethnic minorities in Manchukuo.
Alicia Harley
Environmental Science and Public Policy
Samuels Family Research Fellow
Conducted a critical analysis of Egyptian policy addressing the environmental impact of urbanization in Cairo.

I am interested in unplanned “illegal” housing on agricultural land around Cairo. Only a little over 2% of Egypt is agricultural land and so loss of agricultural land to urban sprawl is an environmental and economic problem for the country. Yet most growth in housing areas around Cairo seems to be on agricultural land, even though it is illegal to build there. This issue also has many other interesting facets, including Egypt’s land-tenure laws, public health, human rights, and of course environmental issues. I am trying to understand the issue of urban sprawl from the point of view of not only the government and local NGOs but also the residents of illegal housing. I conducted interviews in illegal slums known in Arabic as ashawiyyat. I tried to understand the local perspective on land tenure, housing rights, and government infrastructure, and also interviewed government officials, professors, and various NGO officials to get as well rounded a perspective as possible. It seemed to me that the “facts” from the point of view of the government versus that of some NGOs is totally irreconcilable.

August is probably the worst month to be in Cairo. Not only is it the hottest month of the year, but people from the Gulf region (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE) flood Cairo on vacation, because for them it is comparably cooler in Cairo than their homes. There are so many extra people in the capital when the “gulfies” came that everything was more expensive, it was a challenge to find a cab, and the traffic at night was almost unbearable. However, I moved from the dorms into an apartment that I absolutely loved. The apartment was down a quiet lazy street on an island in the middle of the Nile called Zamalek, which reminded me of a tiny town in Texas called Marfa where my grandparents lived when I was little. Everyone on the street knows each other, and there are lots of trees and birds and small shops, and life on the street seems to move a little slower than in the rest of Cairo.
David Hausman
Social Studies
Rogers Family Research Fellow
Traveled to Kenya to study the interaction of civil society and the state in Nairobi’s slums.

When I arrived in Nairobi last summer to study the effects of voluntary associations in the slums that border Nairobi, I had planned to concentrate on the way that such associations filled the state vacuum in the slums. I had read that the state rarely even recognized the existence of the slums. One Nairobi slum resident told Andrew Harding, a BBC journalist, “The state does nothing here. It provides no water, no schools, no sanitation, no roads, no hospitals.” I speculated, before arriving there, that the state also failed to provide protection in the slums. I wondered whether voluntary associations helped to fill that gap.

On arrival, I found that slums, while dangerous, have a large police presence. Over and over, I asked people what they would do if they had something stolen, or if they were attacked. They said, without exception, that they would go to the police. I had to let go of my first idea.

As I spoke to the leaders of more and more small Kenyan-operated organizations in the slums, a separate phenomenon grabbed my attention. Several young leaders told me that they had started small NGOs—officially classified as so-called self-help groups and community-based organizations—because they had not had the capital to start a business. By registering with the local government, they hoped to attract “capital” in the form of foreign aid. I don’t mean to imply here that this is a bad way to spend foreign aid; most of these groups appear to accomplish a huge amount with very little money. Their explicit aim, though, is to keep their young members busy. Members frequently mention the dangers of idleness; given the level of youth unemployment, that’s not surprising. These self-help groups do two very important things for the local youths: they provide jobs (making artistic paper bags, doing artwork, collecting garbage, guarding a marketplace, raising pigs) and moral support. Many, if not most, of the self-help groups I visited are essentially cooperative businesses. They are also among the only formally established organizations in the slums, because virtually no for-profit businesses are registered there. For me, this raises many questions. How much does easy registration and foreign money encourage the founding of small NGOs? How does that registration process channel their activities? Do the groups have the social effects that political scientists associate with civil society (trust-building, interest aggregation) or the effects of private business? Or both? Is this the best way to think about the groups?

I spoke to several government officials and got some information on the formal process of registration, which is spread out over several departments, and I spent my last weeks in Nairobi interviewing the leaders of twenty to thirty self-help groups. I hope to make these interviews into one chapter in my thesis, exploring the role of such groups in building trust, and using them as a way of considering the usefulness of the category of “civil society.” For the rest of my thesis, I’m still considering several options, all related to the category of “civil society” and its use for political scientists.

Thinking about my experience more widely, the best part of being in Nairobi was experiencing the slums in depth, and getting to know lots of the people who live in them. Western visitors to the slums often notice their vitality. The pure concentration of population—55% of Nairobi’s population live in slums that cover less than 6% of its land area—means that the dirt paths of slums always buzz with crowds. The sense of vitality also reflects the jolting incongruities of the slum. Sheep and goats wander past an internet café housed in a corrugated iron shack; a truck towing a billboard for the latest Harry Potter film overtakes a pushcart along one of the slum’s few paved roads. Watching all of this, I sometimes wondered whether I understood what was going on, but I was never bored.
Bowie Will Head New International Center
Asst. Secretary of State Resigns to Become Director of Research, Training Organization

By BERNARD M. GOWTHERMAN

Baker B. Bowie, who resigned yesterday as Assistant Secretary of State for Policy Planning, will direct the University’s first Center for International Affairs, as it is established on this fall, it was learned yesterday. Bowie will be given the dual role of President of the Center and Dean of the School of International Affairs and Director of the Center.

The Center will provide the means for research and teaching of the basic structures in international relations.

In giving his resignation to President Eliot, Bowie said he felt “obliged to return to private life this fall.” He had also been the State Department’s representative on the National Security Council planning board.

Bowie was a Law School professor here from 1948 to 1951, before he went to Washington.

The Center Fund, in addition to conducting research in the basic problems of world politics, will also advance training in the area of international affairs. It will also seek to explore in such fields as politics, economics, sociology, and history.

Senior Not Linked With Klemm Trials

A problem has been found by officials to link the Klemm case with the trial involving last night’s killing of prominent lawyer and public figure yesterday. The actions of the lawyer were thought to have been used by the defense.

The identity of the killer has not yet been disclosed but it is known that he is not a resident of the town. He was arraigned on Wednesday after a box of the sitting judge’s home was opened at the police station and supposed to be found in the box was a letter from a high school friend.

Squad Defeats Ninth Win of Year

The Harvard Crimson article about the founding of the CFIA.

1958–2008

From left to right—Bunroku Yoshino of Japan, Counselor for General Affairs in the Economic Affairs Bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Soemarman of Indonesia, Secretary General of the Ministry of Home Affairs; Il-Kwon Chung of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador to the United States, General in the Korean Army; and A.D. Pandit of India, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Works, Housing and Supply in the Government of India—were Fellows of the Center in 1960–61.

May 17, 1957 Harvard Crimson article about the founding of the CFIA.

Lee Kuan Yew, then prime minister of Singapore, visited Harvard in the spring of 1975. He spoke with Raymond Vernon, who was Center Director from 1973 to 1978.

CFIA advisor to the Fellows, Benjamin Brown, nurses a bloody ear following a September 25, 1969 attack on the Center by the Weathermen faction of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).
United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke on “The Politics of Globalization” at Harvard’s Sanders Theatre in September, 1997, addressing the promise and frustrations engendered by the world’s faltering journey towards global prosperity and social justice. An audience of more than 1200 people, mostly students, filled the theatre to capacity and gave the Secretary-General three standing ovations. Hundreds more had lined up outside. The event was sponsored by the Weatherhead Center’s Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies.

From left to right, President Neil Rudenstine and Celia and Al Weatherhead admire the plaque and accompanying certificate that were unveiled at the dedication of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs in 1998.

Photo credit: Martha Stewart.
Successful Societies
by Michèle Lamont

The following text is a summary of Professor Lamont’s talk at the Fellows Program welcome dinner on September 11, 2007.

Introduction
In 2003 the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) asked me to start a project that studies successful societies using a new approach that involved the study of health gradients, which concerns the ways in which inequalities of all types generate inequalities in health outcomes. By pursuing a better understanding of the determinants of societal success, this project aims to provide information that could make public policy more just, efficient, and effective. The Successful Societies project at CIFAR groups epidemiologists with social scientists to try to understand the mechanisms that produced these health gradients. What is a successful society, and how can it be achieved? Many of the scholars who were approached to join the CIFAR research project were initially reluctant to rank societies along a single matrix. What was the principle around which all societies could be ranked? Money? Morality? Religiosity? Certainly societies are too complex to be analyzed in these terms.

In this case it is helpful to recall the Indian legend of the blind men and the elephant—each man touches a different part of the pachyderm and makes a prediction about what the animal looks like. Similarly, the thirteen political scientists, historians, sociologists, social psychologists, philosophers, and legal scholars involved in the Successful Societies project each focus on one aspect of what might make a successful society. Dimensions include income redistribution, effective institutions, decreased intergroup violence, better health outcomes, and more equal distribution of various resources. Together we are aspiring to define a reasonable view of what determines a successful society.

Social Inclusion
The multidimensional research of the Successful Societies project draws on the work of Weatherhead Center Faculty Associate Amartya Sen, the renowned economist and Thomas W. Lamont University Professor, which emphasizes capabilities as opposed to purely economic indexes of development. In contrast to economists, however, we are concerned with how culture, identity, and institutions mediate success. We are particularly concerned with the institutional and cultural conditions that foster a greater sense of social inclusion and recognition. Complementing studies concerned with the role of the law and public policies, we consider how “ordinary” people who are members of stigmatized groups challenge and redefine group boundaries to assert their membership. As a result, one of my interests is in how more porous boundaries are created.

The extent to which societies are inclusive is an important dimension by which we can compare societies from a normative point of view. The criteria by which we should assess these societies should include not only life expectancy and infant mortality but also the extent to which group boundaries are permeable and policed.

For decades social scientists have been very concerned with the impact of culture on inequality. For instance, the cultural explanation of poverty since the 1965 so-called Moynihan Report (“The Negro Family: The Case For National Action”) has been strongly associated with “blaming the victim.” The report by Daniel Patrick Moynihan pointed out that the single-mother family structure of unskilled, poorly educated, urban working class African Americans had all but disintegrated the fabric of conventional social relationships. So long as this situation persists, the report concluded, the cycle of poverty and disadvantage among African Americans would continue to repeat itself. This view is in contrast to the various structural approaches to the study of poverty that have been favored since. Together with others, I am attempting to refocus debates around meaning-making among low-income populations instead of approaching culture as the property of a group, whether in the form of “the culture of the ghetto” or “the culture of the French.”

In the early 1980s, the power of the symbolic reappeared in social analysis at large. What were the cultural repertoires that people would draw on to make sense of the realities that surrounded them? Social scientists became concerned with the cultural “supply side,” or those cultural repertoires and materials that people would use to create symbolic boundaries to define “us” and “them,” and to explain cross-national variations in this context. This is the background against which my own work emerges.

Symbolic Boundaries
One contextual tool that plays a crucial role in my work is this concept of symbolic boundaries. Going back to the work of Max Weber, we understand that social closure is the process by which groups appeal to distinctive cultural traits or credentials in order to monopolize access to certain resources—for instance, in the way that unions or professional organizations formally protect access to
jobs for their members by appealing to their work experience, special culture, or special credential. It is the same, too, for social exclusion, whereby culture plays a crucial role in establishing group boundaries. Cultural traits are often invoked to justify exclusion, and boundaries are drawn around these traits.

Broadly speaking, my own work concerns both classification systems and cultural schemas that members of various groups utilize to understand their own social position, their status, and their worth in relation to that of other groups. I studied this by drawing on in-depth interviews to analyze how group boundaries are drawn. For instance, I asked members of various class and racial groups how they define similarities and differences between themselves and others with regard to concepts of inferiority and superiority. During the interviews, I tried to document systematically the classification system within which the interviewees located themselves and what criteria grounded their view of what defined a worthy person. As a result of this research I wrote two books. One was on professionals and managers in the United States and France, Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class (1999), which drew on 160 in-depth interviews with randomly sampled professionals and managers and how they defined who was inferior and superior to them. This book was really a dialogue with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), who was an extremely seminal French sociologist. He argued that familiarity with high culture was crucial to the French upper middle class. When I came to the United States after working with Bourdieu and arrived here in 1983, one of his most important books was translated into English in 1984: Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. American sociologists became very preoccupied with assessing whether the same principle of social exclusion based on high culture was applicable to the United States. My book was an answer to this question: I showed that morality was the primary currency among professionals and managers living in Indianapolis, New York, Paris, and Clermont-Ferrand.

The other book I wrote, The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration (2002), was a comparison of white and black workers living in New York and white and North African immigrant workers in Paris. The premise was to look at how workers define who is a worthy person, and the role and importance of money and morality in understanding what defines worth. The interviews I conducted revealed that morality defined a person’s value, and is at the center of a person’s self-worth. Whereas the ability to live according to one’s principles was absolutely crucial for the French upper middle class, the American workers were concerned with “interpersonal morality,” or being a responsible and caring spouse and parent.

Dignity of Working Men ended up being about how conceptions of morality and class and racial boundaries in these two contexts (New York and Paris) are interrelated. The overarching argument of the book, then, was an analysis of the segmentation between “us” and “them” as respondents drew moral, racial, and class boundaries at once. On the one hand, in the United States there are very strong boundaries drawn against blacks and the poor. Immigrants were considered part of “us”; that is, those immigrants “in pursuit of the American dream” were accepted. French society, in contrast, exhibited the exact opposite pattern. The poor were accepted as part of society because Catholicism and socialism continue to feed dominant models of social membership. Furthermore, the French also understood that unfair mechanisms excluded hardworking people from the labor force. Blacks, too, were accepted owing to French Republicanism; French political ideology in general equates Republican universalism as anti-racist and “quintessentially French.” On the other hand, North African immigrants in Paris are defined as “them”: according to French white workers, North Africans lacked a work ethic, had access to a larger share of the collective wealth than they deserved, and they were uncivilized. Finally, North African immigrants refused to assimilate into French culture, which violates the Republican ideal. This refusal to assimilate is particularly resented, since being French is one of the most high-status aspects of these workers’ identity.

One of my favorite aspects of the book was revealed when I interviewed American blacks and French North Africans about what made people equal. These groups knew they were discriminated against and were aware of the kind of racist rhetoric that surrounded them, but they built elaborate narratives about why this racism was unjustified. When I interviewed white American workers about their beliefs concerning what makes various groups of people equal, they had two main responses. First, people are equal because human nature is universal. There are good and bad people in all races. And second, money makes people equal. However, in interviewing African Americans, their responses were much more complex and numerous: beyond money and human nature, they pointed out that humans have a common physiology, and that “we are all children of God,” “we all need to work for a living,” and “we are all U.S. citizens” and therefore equal.

A Comparative Study of Responses to Discrimination by Members of Stigmatized Groups

My next step was to analyze this question in a much broader context. The Weatherhead Initiative with which I am involved compares de-stigmatization strategies, or everyday anti-racism, across a number of contexts. We chose countries where the boundaries between the dominant and subordinate groups varied in terms of their porosity. The project started as a conference spon-
In Theory and in Practice: Harvard’s Center for International Affairs, 1958–1983
by David C. Atkinson

Written to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Center for International Affairs, Atkinson’s history of the Center’s first twenty-five years traces the institutional and intellectual development of a research center that, decades later, continues to facilitate innovative scholarship. He explores the connection between knowledge and politics, beginning with the Center’s confident first decade—distinguished by groundbreaking research and access to influential policy makers in Washington—and concludes with the second decade, which found the CFIA embroiled in the turbulence of Vietnam-era student protests.

Digging deep into unpublished material in the Harvard, MIT, and Kennedy Library archives, the book is punctuated with personal interviews with influential CFIA affiliates. Atkinson describes the relationship between foreign policy and scholarship during the cold war and documents the maturation of a remarkable academic institution. Notwithstanding Harvard’s initial reticence, the CFIA has endured for half a century and ultimately has grown into the largest international affairs research center in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy
by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson

This book develops a framework for analyzing the creation and consolidation of democracy. Different social groups prefer different political institutions because of the way they allocate political power and resources. Thus democracy is preferred by the majority of citizens, but opposed by elites. Dictatorship nevertheless is not stable when citizens can threaten social disorder and revolution. In response, when the costs of repression are sufficiently high and promises of concessions are not credible, elites may be forced to create democracy. By democratizing, elites credibly transfer political power to the citizens, ensuring social stability. Democracy consolidates when elites do not have strong incentives to overthrow it. These processes depend on the strength of civil society, the structure of political institutions, the nature of political and economic crises, the level of economic inequality, the structure of the economy, and the form and extent of globalization.

The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought
by Cemil Aydin

In this rich intellectual history, Cemil Aydin challenges the notion that anti-Westernism in the Muslim world is a political and religious reaction to the liberal and democratic values of the West. Nor is anti-Westernism a natural response to Western imperialism. Instead, by focusing on the agency and achievements of non-Western intellectuals, Aydin demonstrates that modern anti-Western discourse grew out of the legitimacy crisis of a single, Eurocentric global polity in the age of high imperialism. Aydin compares Ottoman Pan-Islamic and Japanese Pan-Asian visions of world order from the middle of the nineteenth century to the end of World War II. He looks at when the idea of a universal “West” first took root in the minds of Asian intellectuals and reformers and how it became essential in criticizing the West for violating its own “standards of civilization.” Aydin also illustrates why these anti-Western visions contributed to the decolonization process.

Cemil Aydin was an Academy Scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies (2002–2004) and is currently an assistant professor of history at University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
Site fights. Divisive facilities and civil society in Japan and the West.

by Daniel P. Aldrich

States face vexing problems as they try to construct facilities that serve the needs of citizens as a whole but potentially bring unfavorable consequences into their host communities. Plans to site incinerators, waste treatment facilities, nuclear power plants, and airports regularly create backlash in communities around the world. Residents have hurled Molotov cocktails, blown up guard posts, and gone on hunger strikes to prevent the placement of unwanted projects in their backyards. A half century ago, the problem was less acute. A world with abundant land, cheap energy, and uncongested airports had far less need for such projects. Furthermore—and even more importantly—the citizens who were adversely affected were far more likely to accept such projects in the name of advancing the public good.

Times have changed. As energy consumption, garbage output, and airport use have increased, the demand for such facilities has soared, and the land available for large-scale projects has shrunk. Meanwhile, rising educational levels, increased environmental consciousness, declining confidence in governments across the industrial countries, and increased access to information all mean that citizen opposition to such projects is rising, and host communities are harder to find. State authorities thus face fundamental challenges: how to locate controversial facilities and how to respond to local citizen opposition to such projects when it arises.

Social scientists and policy makers have demonstrated a growing interest in siting issues. Meanwhile, the acronym NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) has become commonplace in referring to siting dilemmas. Simultaneously, the many prominent works on civil society and social capital by scholars at Harvard University like Robert Putnam, Theda Skocpol, and Susan Pharr reflect the growing recognition that studies of governance and political economy must take civil society seriously.

My forthcoming book, Site Fights: Handling Controversial Facilities in Japan and the West, contributes to both of these literatures. Drawing upon two years of fieldwork in Japan and France, it shows how democratic states meet the challenges of constructing controversial projects. Focusing on Japan with selective comparisons to France and the United States, I frame siting as an interaction between state and civil society. Previous research has suggested that, for governments countering potential resistance, the main story is about developing elaborate strategies to appease targeted communities. This is far from the whole picture, however. Citizen consciousness worldwide has increased, but there are in all countries wide variations in potential for organized opposition. The basic first-order bureaucratic approach to siting these “public bads” is to identify potential sites in communities that have less sturdy civil society and thus less potential for protest.

This book demonstrates that bureaucrats seek to avoid costly resistance and choose weak civil societies for sites. Literature on environmental racism argues that state agencies target local communities for such projects on the basis of race and ethnicity. Political economists contend that local support for or opposition to ruling parties best determines the outcome of siting decisions. Not surprisingly, bureaucrats themselves tend to claim that they site solely on the basis of technocratic, politically neutral criteria. Others believe that economic conditions determine siting locations. These explanations, while illuminating facets of the process, do not capture the full variation in site selection. As my book shows, the choice of sites turns on bureaucratic estimates of the potential for civic conflict. In all three national settings, the typical site is apt to be relatively unpopulated and rural with low or diminishing community solidarity and diffuse civil society, compared to the situation in alternative potential sites.

In a global context in which civic opposition to public-bads siting is rising, coercion is clearly not an optimal strategy, and formulas that include soft social control and incentives are preferable for dealing with future siting dilemmas. And indeed, nuclear power siting in Japan displays the skills of the country’s bureaucrats in generating precisely these kinds of non-coercive solutions. But civil servants in all three nations adopt these “soft” solutions solely when forced to do so. Only when they encounter stiff civic resistance do state decision makers set aside coercive strategies.

This research has profound implications for research on both states and civil society. My work complements earlier work by Robert Putnam to show how the nature of civil society conditions a state’s strategies for addressing policy problems. The location of facilities and the toolkit that states develop to handle anti-facility resistance are deeply related to the strength of civil society. Strong civil society pushes states to develop less force-based—and hence more sustainable—strategies for handling divisive problems. Weak civil society allows state authorities to continue using standard operating procedures that rely heavily upon expropriation, police suppression and surveillance, and hard social control techniques.

Increasing pressure from civil society has produced at least partially successful, softer solutions to siting conflicts. More than changing policy tools to offer incentives, educational curricula, and similar “soft strategies,” state agencies could work to actually involve local residents in plans for controversial facilities. Research has consistently demonstrated that government agencies involving citizens directly in the decision-making process creates better policies than top-down, state-directed ones. Governments must recognize the degree to which national plans rest on the reactions of local communities and work to involve them in decision making. (Forthcoming, Cornell University Press, 2008)
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sored by the Weatherhead Center in 2005, “Ethno-Racism and the Transformation of Collective Identity,” which brought together participants who interviewed minorities living in the following mixed cities: Afro-Brazilians in Rio de Janiero, Francophone Québécois in Montreal, Catholics in Belfast, and Palestinians in Tel Aviv. In the case of Quebec, the meaning of the particular collective identity of the Francophone Québecois had changed significantly since the 1960s, when its nationalist movement was ascending and a strong positive collective identity was developing. With regard to Brazil, there is a great deal of interracial marriage, and movement between the racial groups is extremely frequent. Nonetheless, if one compares racial boundaries between blacks and whites—despite the different racial classification systems in Brazil and the United States—in each case there is a different system of racial discrimination, which is mixed with varying combinations of class structures. We now want to understand how ordinary people from the working and middle classes challenge racial boundaries, given differences in the location and intensity of racism across national contexts.

My hope is that an in-depth understanding of everyday anti-racism, although often overlooked in favor of considering institutional or legal processes, will arise from this project.

I believe that anti-racism certainly contributes to creating social change in a significant manner. This agenda, together with the study of other conditions that lead to more successful societies, should keep us busy for quite a few years. ●