

Recent publications, news, events, announcements, and more from the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland

CISSMUpdate



Spring/Summer 2025 NEWSLETTER

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## Iranian Public Opinion in the Early Days of the Pezeshkian Administration



A new report by **Nancy Gallagher**, **Ebrahim Mohseni**, and **Clay Ramsay** analyzes Iranian public attitudes toward the unexpected presidential election in 2024 and challenges facing President Masoud Pezeshkian during his initial months in office. Iranians had a more meaningful choice of candidates than they did in 2022; the analysis sheds light on reasons for voting or abstaining, and expectations about what the new reform-oriented leader can or cannot improve. The study also covers numerous foreign policy topics. Public support for acquiring a nuclear deterrent has increased during Israel's shadow war with Iran and its hot war in Gaza; in October, 2024, we found a statistical tie between those favoring and opposing nuclear weapons. The report also shows that support for diplomatic responses to nuclear insecurity is

stronger for more comprehensive proposals.

[Read the full report here »](#)

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## Worsnop Explores Why Some Rebels Fight Better Than Others



In a set of recent publications, CISSM Research Scholar **Alec Worsnop** explains how some insurgent groups like the Taliban and the Islamic State have prevailed over more powerful counterinsurgents.

**Rebels in the Field: Cadres and the Development of Insurgent Military Power** offers a new theory of rebel military development based on in-depth research on different insurgent groups in Afghanistan after 2001, Iraq (2003 on), and Vietnam (1945-1975). It argues that more effective rebel organizations utilize a particular form of cadre leadership to gain the trust and support of their fellow fighters. One new article "**Rebels Fire and Maneuver Too**" highlights how capable small-unit leaders are critical to effective use of guerrilla tactics. Another, "**Veterans, Novices, and Patterns of Rebel Recruitment**" (with Evan Perkoski), finds that insurgent organizations went to great lengths to recruit veterans, often with specific skills, when they were needed to navigate critical operational junctures (building the organization, transitioning to new modes of warfare, and competing with rivals for dominance). When organizational needs were less urgent, they opted for novices who needed more training but were less risky and expensive.

Worsnop has already started a new project exploring how differences in insurgent organizations' ability to achieve their objectives is affected by variation in civilian control over the military and by

professionalization among the fighting forces. His foundational article, "**The Rebel and the Politician: Developing a Typology of Insurgent Civil–Military Relations**," won the 2024 Charles Moskos Prize this spring.

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## Woldemariam on Why Democratic Transitions Collapsed in the Horn of Africa



In a new Current History article, **Michael Woldemariam** analyzes the collapse of the initially promising 2018–19 democratic transitions in Ethiopia and Sudan. Four years later, both countries have succumbed to some of the world’s most debilitating violence and resurgent authoritarianism. The article contends that three main drivers contributed to these setbacks. Both transitions were top-down processes managed by segments of the old regime, while alternative forces were too divided to compel more inclusive outcomes. Regional and international actors, including the Gulf states, Turkey, and the United States, either exacerbated conflict through their interventions or failed to take steps that could have bolstered peace. Finally, the transitions were deeply interdependent, with turmoil and collapse in each case reinforcing crises in the other.

[Read the full article here »](#)

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## Schwab on Navigating U.S.-China

# Trade in a New Era



CISSM Senior Fellow and former U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador **Susan Schwab** joins Elizabeth Economy on **China Considered**, a Hoover Institution podcast, for a wide-ranging discussion on the current state of U.S.-China trade relations. Reflecting on the aftermath of negotiations in Geneva and the impact of the Trump-era “Liberation Day” tariffs, Schwab shares insights from inside trade negotiations, unpacks the challenges of working within a presidential administration, and outlines what a smart, strategic U.S. approach to China should look like in this new era of global competition. The episode offers a candid and compelling conversation on how the U.S. can strengthen its position by engaging allies, upholding rules-based trade, and deploying a whole-of-government response.

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## Sue Gordon Shares Lessons on Leading Through Disruption at Kelleher Forum



Each March as part of Women’s History Month, we bring an outstanding female security policy scholar or

practitioner to campus for the **Kelleher Forum**. On March 8th, the **Honorable Sue Gordon**, who capped off a widely respected career in the intelligence community by serving as Deputy Director of National Intelligence during the first Trump administration, **shared lessons** she has learned about transformational leadership in the face of strategic, technological, political, and personal disruption. Generous donations received during spring 2025 brought the **Kelleher Fellowship endowment fund** almost up to \$200,000 while keeping enough in the **current use fund** for us to select the seventh Kelleher fellow. Samantha Custer will join our Ph.D. program in the fall. Stay tuned for more about her **here**.

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## How Many Nuclear Weapons Does it Take to Cause Unacceptable Damage?



A new study led by Senior Fellow **Steve Fetter** and supported by a \$650,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York challenges claims that the United States needs more nuclear weapons than the 5,000 plus it currently has to deter Russia and China at the same time. While most previous research on the consequences of nuclear war has analyzed large-scale Cold War scenarios, this project uses modern economic modelling to explore how even 10 to 100 detonations could cause devastating disruptions to infrastructure, supply chains, and public institutions. Sign up for the CISSM events e-mail list and join us in November when Fetter and CISSM Senior Research Associate **Jaganath Sankaran** present their preliminary findings.

**[Read the full announcement »](#)**

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# SPP Relaunches Graduate Certificate in Intelligence



The School of Public Policy's Office of Executive Programs is **excited to announce** that it is now accepting applications for its **Graduate Certificate in Intelligence**, which will offer its first course in Fall 2025. The relaunch of UMD's intelligence certificate is an exciting new chapter for the School of Public Policy that builds on its longstanding commitment to training the next generation of national security leaders, as well as SPP's deep bench of faculty-practitioners. **Lena Andrews** currently serves as the Faculty Advisor to the program, and is joined by several seasoned former intelligence officials and instructors, including the Hon. Ron Moultrie, **Bill Nolte**, **Charlie Harry**, **Ann White**, among others.

The certificate provides students with the skills and tools necessary to succeed in an intelligence environment marked by rapid, complex, and difficult challenges; and encourages them to take an integrated approach to identifying solutions that advance strategic and technical objectives. The four-course certificate has been constructed with professionals in mind: it is rigorous, flexible, and efficient, and can be completed in 15 months. All of the certificate's courses are offered virtually, but students also have several opportunities for in-person networking and community building; and all credits earned in the certificate can be directly transferred to SPP's Executive Master of Public Management.

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## In Memoriam: Mac Destler's

## Enduring Legacy



Professor **Mac Destler**, a leading expert on trade policy and the foreign policymaking process and a former CISSM Director (1991-1999), passed away on March 27, 2025. CISSM Senior Research Associate Jonas Siegel, who taught with and took classes from Mac, **remembers** the many ways in which he shaped SPP. You can read more tributes to Mac and add your own **here**.

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### OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY CISSM AFFILIATES

#### **Can the Iron Dome Be Transmuted into a Golden Dome?**

The Washington Quarterly  
CISSM Author: Steve Fetter  
July 7, 2025

#### **On Iran, Trump's No Change Agent**

The American Conservative  
CISSM Author: Joshua Shiffrinson  
June 30, 2025

#### **Improving Opioid Use Estimates Through Multiple Data Sources**

JAMA Health Forum  
CISSM Author: Peter Reuter  
May 9, 2025

#### **The motivations and unintended consequences of the US pursuit of missile defense**

The Nonproliferation Review  
CISSM Author: Jaganath Sankaran  
May 6, 2025

#### **The Tragedy of Transition in Ethiopia and Sudan**

Current History

CISSM Author: Michael Woldemariam  
May 1, 2025

**Accidental/Inadvertent Indian Missile Launch and  
Procedural Arms Control in South Asia**

Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament  
CISSM Author: Nasir Mehmood  
April 27, 2025

**Rebels fire and maneuver too: How small-unit combat  
leaders sustain guerrilla warfare**

Journal of Strategic Studies  
CISSM Author: Alec Worsnop  
April 19, 2025

**Veterans, Novices, and Patterns of Rebel Recruitment**

Security Studies  
CISSM Author: Alec Worsnop  
April 8, 2025

**Can the EU negotiate away Trump's reciprocal tariff?**

bruegel  
CISSM Author: Uri Dadush  
April 3, 2025

**Letter: Analysis of auto tariffs mixes apples with oranges**

Financial Times  
CISSM Author: Uri Dadush  
March 30, 2025

**Strategic Ballistic Missile Defense Challenges to  
Defending the U.S.**

The American Physical Society  
CISSM Author: Steve Fetter  
March 3, 2025

**Trump's push to exit the WHO could impact global  
disease control**

Good Authority  
CISSM Author: Catherine Worsnop  
February 4, 2025

**President Trump Issues "America First" Trade Policy**

Mayer Brown  
CISSM Author: Susan C. Schwab  
January 27, 2025

**Eritrea's intervention in the Tigray war: third-party  
authoritarian counterinsurgency reconsidered**

Small Wars & Insurgencies  
CISSM Author: Michael Woldemariam  
January 21, 2025



**Reuter Calls for Better Data, Smarter Policy in Opioid and Money Laundering Response**

May 28, 2025

**Andrews Joins Congressional Tribute to Six Triple Eight, Trailblazing WWII Battalion**

May 16, 2025

**Harry Launches Two New MOOC Cybersecurity Course, Adds to Growing Coursera Cyber Specialization**

May 15, 2025

**Worsnop's Research on Insurgent Strategy Wins Charles Moskos Prize in Civil-Military Studies**

April 22, 2025

**MPP Student Examines the Intersection of Security Policy and Social Justice through Bridging Romani Heritage and Human Rights**

April 21, 2025

**Ranked Among Nation's Top Public Affairs Graduate Programs by U.S. News & World Report**

April 8, 2025

**New CISSM Research Explores How Emerging Technologies Are Reshaping Nuclear Stability**

March 28, 2025

**Policy Professor Reflects on China's Growing Influence and the Future of Latin America**

March 28, 2025

**Former Ambassador to Russia Reflects on Leadership, Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Policy at Brody Forum**

February 20, 2025

**UMD Researchers Calculate Cyberattack Risk for All 50 States**

February 4, 2025

**Former Dean Establishes Fund to Expand International Internship Opportunities**

January 24, 2025

**SPP Students Compare Views of the 2024 Presidential Election with Future Russian Experts**

January 6, 2025

**Mexico's handouts do a bit for the poor and lots for Morena**

The Economist  
Susan W. Parker  
July 17, 2025

**Systemic Rot, the Launderers at 'Buckingham Palace' & Zombie Trusts**

Coda  
Peter Reuter  
July 16, 2025

**Former U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab: It takes time to negotiate good trade agreements**

CNBC  
Susan C. Schwab  
July 14, 2025

**State Department to lay off 1,300 civil servants, foreign service officers**

msn.com  
Joshua Shiffrinson  
July 12, 2025

**Tras declararse culpable, todos los ojos se posan en Ovidio Guzmán: ¿A quién delatará? (Spanish)**

elDiario  
Peter Reuter  
July 11, 2025

**How difficult is building a nuclear weapon? Experts weigh in after Iran strikes**

Miami Herald  
Nancy Gallagher  
July 8, 2025

**Is Trump's America a Reliable Ally?**

Open to Debate  
Joshua Shiffrinson  
June 24, 2025

**Will Trump's Missile Defense Plan Work?**

The Trumpet  
Steve Fetter  
May 21, 2025

**Cyber Monday: The potential threat of space debris**

1A WAMU American University Radio  
Nancy Gallagher  
May 19, 2025

**MD goods exports to China increased in 2024, but tariffs pose threats to future trade**

Maryland: The Daily Record  
Joshua Shiffrinson  
May 7, 2025

### **IDB Report: AML policies have high cost and little impact**

The Nassau Guardian

Peter Reuter

April 29, 2025

### **Africa and Middle East experts urge continued U.S. interest in Red Sea geopolitics**

The Dartmouth

Michael Woldemariam

April 28, 2025

### **How willing is the US to still support Ukraine?**

DW News

Joshua Shiffrinson

April 11, 2025

### **Trump's tariffs and the EU: How should the EU respond to the US tariffs?**

bruegel

Uri Dadush

April 3, 2025

### **US 'optimistic' as Ukraine ceasefire talks begin: expert**

DW News

Joshua Shiffrinson

March 23, 2025

### **What's Putin's negotiation strategy with the Trump administration?**

DW News

Joshua Shiffrinson

March 18, 2025

### **Ethiopia and Eritrea, On a Collision Course**

The Horn

Michael Woldemariam

March 14, 2025

### **Podcast: The Winds of War, With Susan C. Schwab and Rob Atkinson**

Information Technology & Innovation Foundation

Susan C. Schwab

February 24, 2025

### **Just in Time for Valentine's Day, Hegseth Takes the Romance Out of NATO**

Cato Institute

Joshua Shiffrinson

February 12, 2025

### **Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti: Shifts in the Horn of Africa**

Atlantic Council

Michael Woldemariam

February 10, 2025

### **Forever Wars**

SouthAsia  
Alec Worsnop  
February 4, 2025

**What does a 'fentanyl czar' do? How Canada's newest official can take on an 'absurdly cheap' drug — and Trump's blame**

Toronto Star  
Peter Reuter  
February 4, 2025

**Jimmy Carter, a former nuclear engineer, created Department of Energy and opposed reactor**

Knox News  
Steve Fetter  
January 8, 2025

**Donald Trump maintains fentanyl at Canada-U.S. border is a big issue. Is it?**

CBC/Radio-Canada  
Peter Reuter  
December 18, 2024

**ABOUT CISSM**

CISSM conducts research, outreach and education focused on multiple, overlapping types of international security challenges. The challenges include those posed by dual-use technologies (e.g., information, nuclear and space), political dynamics that threaten human security, and those that require national governments (including the United States, China, Russia, and Iran) to develop innovative forms of international cooperation and governance.

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**Support CISSM**

CISSM's **Target of Opportunity Fund** supports exploratory research, education, and outreach efforts on security policy problems for which CISSM does not currently have dedicated grant funding.

The **Steinbruner Student Support Fund** provides financial support for research and professional development activities by School of Public Policy students working on any policy problem related to cooperative security.

The **Kelleher Fellowship for International Security Studies** supports School of Public Policy students focused on international security policy.

 **Sign Up for CISSM Event Announcements**



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