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# H-Diplo Roundtable on Paul Thomas Chamberlin. *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*

Douglas Little  
*Clark University*

Jeffrey James Byrne  
*University of British Columbia, Canada*

Craig Daigle  
*City College of New York*

William B. Quandt  
*University of Virginia*

Brad Simpson  
*University of Connecticut*

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Douglas Little, Jeffrey James Byrne, Craig Daigle, William B. Quandt, Brad Simpson, and Paul Chamberlin

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# H-Diplo

## H-Diplo Roundtable Review

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Introduction by Douglas Little, Clark University

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On 19 July 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry helicoptered into Ramallah, the West Bank town just north of Jerusalem that houses the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority, where he tried to persuade President Mahmoud Abbas that the time was ripe to resurrect the stalemated Middle East peace process. Four decades earlier, Kerry had been an angry young Navy veteran who unexpectedly emerged as an eloquent critic of America's war against Vietnamese revolutionary nationalism while Abbas had been a smooth-talking lawyer who secretly served as a leading strategist for the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) war of national liberation against Israel. In his path-breaking new book, the University of Kentucky's Paul Chamberlin argues that these two liberation movements—the Palestinian and the Vietnamese—were manifestations of a much broader “global offensive” against imperialism that crested between 1967 and 1975. While heroic Cuban, Algerian, and Vietnamese guerrillas had dominated the headlines during the 1960s, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian *Fedayeen* would come to symbolize the struggle of the Global South to achieve self-determination and national independence during the 1970s. Utilizing material from the PLO archives in Beirut, Chamberlin seeks to transform the Palestinians from bit players into leading actors who launched “the world's first globalized insurgency and became a seminal influence on other rebellions in the following decades” (3). In so doing, Chamberlin has given us a book that might serve as a model for studying what he likes to call “globalization from the bottom up” (261).

All four participants in this roundtable welcome Chamberlin's retelling of a relatively familiar episode in diplomatic history from the largely neglected Palestinian end of the telescope. Bradley Simpson praises *The Global Offensive* not merely for turning the conventional narrative upside down and giving voice and agency to the Palestinians, but also for highlighting the PLO's pivotal role in pushing national self-determination for the peoples of the Third World to the top of the agenda at the United Nations and other international organizations. By positioning the PLO in the vanguard of a global offensive against colonialism and imperialism during the 1970s, Yasser Arafat sought to avoid being branded as a garden variety terrorist and to place himself instead on the right side of history as the great liberator of the world's oppressed. Arafat largely succeeded in rebranding himself in Western Europe, Africa, and Latin America, where the Palestinian struggle against Israel was interpreted as a reenactment of the ancient battle between David and Goliath, with the PLO playing the part of the brave young man with the slingshot. In Washington and Tel Aviv, however, the PLO's increasingly violent tactics, its ties to Moscow and Beijing, and its support for other guerrilla movements in the Third World led American and Israeli officials to cooperate closely on a global strategy of counterinsurgency.

William Quandt, by contrast, is less enamored with Chamberlin's new venture into transnational history, which he feels gives short shrift to national narratives. Although Quandt agrees that the many Arabic-language sources in *The Global Offensive* provide a refreshing corrective for previous ‘the world according to Washington’ accounts, he nevertheless feels that the international comparative framework at the heart of the book

fails to capture fully the complexity and intensity of Palestinian politics, which were filled with intrigue and factionalism. Quandt, who served on the National Security Council staff during the early 1970s, also disputes Chamberlin's assertion that Arafat and other top Palestinian leaders were not responsible for atrocities committed by Black September terrorists. Alluding to still-classified American intelligence reports, Quandt says that the massacre of the Israeli Olympic team at Munich in September 1972 and the cold-blooded murder of Cleo Noel, the U.S. ambassador to Sudan, at the Saudi embassy in Khartoum six months later, were in fact authorized by high-ranking PLO officials and were not merely rogue operations launched by Palestinian extremists outside Arafat's control.

Like Quandt, Craig Daigle has mixed feelings about *The Global Offensive*. On the one hand, he applauds Chamberlin for recapturing the PLO's revolutionary élan, which resonated with the ideologies of other Third World national liberation movements during the late 1960s, and he likens *The Global Offensive* to Jeremi Suri's *Power and Protest*, another innovative book which places the political upheavals that rocked the Cold War status quo into comparative context.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Daigle believes that Chamberlin has misread the policies of the Nixon administration, not only toward the PLO but also toward the entire region. In response to Chamberlin's claim that "Nixon and Kissinger did not understand the dynamics in the Middle East and had little use for anyone who did" (106), Daigle argues that the diplomatic duo in the White House understood the region very well but purposely chose to ignore the Arabs and align themselves with Israel because of strategic calculations associated with détente. I do not think Chamberlin would disagree with Daigle's assertion that the 'Cold War lens' through which President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger viewed the Middle East affected their diplomatic vision during the early 1970s, but Chamberlin would probably argue that the Arab who taught U.S. officials their most important ophthalmological lesson about regional dynamics was Yasser Arafat, not Anwar Sadat.

Jeffrey Byrne, whose own work on the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) parallels Chamberlin's account of the PLO, agrees that during the early 1970s the Palestinians emerged as a powerful symbolic link connecting the quest for self-determination in North Africa with guerrilla warfare in Southeast Asia. By aligning the PLO with the FLN's anticolonial struggle and the Vietnamese revolution, Yasser Arafat managed to strengthen his claim that Palestinians were waging a war of national liberation, not indulging in terrorism. Byrne, however, wishes that Chamberlin had done more to examine the ways in which the PLO's diplomatic strategy differed from those pursued by the Algerians and Vietnamese. Was the Palestinian failure to achieve self-determination mainly a function of unfortunate timing (by 1975, the PLO faced a more clever United States chastened by unpleasant outcomes in Algeria and Vietnam) or rather the result of flawed Palestinian tactics at the bargaining table? Byrne points out that both the Algerians and the Vietnamese warned the PLO never to agree to a ceasefire until its adversaries accepted its core demands and urged the Palestinians to proceed by fighting and talking simultaneously. Arafat could not, or would not, heed this advice.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: The Global Revolutions of 1968 and the Origins of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Whether or not they accept all of Paul Chamberlin's findings, the four participants in this roundtable regard *The Global Offensive* as a remarkable book that should be required reading, not only for John Kerry and Mahmoud Abbas, but also for anyone seeking to understand recent U.S. foreign policy in the Muslim world. Looking at the stalemated peace process early in the twenty-first century, Chamberlin suggests that the Obama administration is trapped in a 'Global War on Terror' paradigm that in some ways resembles the Cold War paradigm that prevented the Nixon administration from breaking the deadlock in the Middle East. Yet he holds PLO leaders partly responsible for their own predicament because they have been unable to unify the Palestinian resistance and unwilling to shed the revolutionary romanticism that once upon a time put them squarely in the vanguard of "the global offensive." In writing this book, he has also done something else of even greater importance. By positioning the Palestinian struggle in the gray area between the heroic wars of national liberation during the twilight of the twentieth-century and the grim wars of 'all against all' waged by non-state actors like Al-Qaeda at the dawn of the new millennium, Paul Chamberlin has reminded us that those who do not know the past may well be doomed to repeat it.

#### **Participants:**

**Paul Thomas Chamberlin** is Associate Professor of History at the University of Kentucky. His first book, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* was published with Oxford University Press in 2012. He is now working on a history of the Cold War in the Third World tentatively titled *The Cold War's Killing Fields*.

**Douglas Little** is the Robert and Virginia Scotland Professor of History and International Relations at Clark University, where he has taught since receiving his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1978. His articles on U.S. relations with the Middle East have appeared in the *Journal of American History*, *Diplomatic History*, the *Middle East Journal*, and the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. The third edition of his most recent book, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (University of North Carolina Press), appeared in 2008 and was translated into Arabic in 2010. His current research focuses on the United States and the rise of radical Islam during the 1960s and 1970s.

**Jeffrey James Byrne** is Assistant Professor of History at the University of British Columbia. His first book, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Project*, is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. He has written on the modern international history of the developing world for *Diplomatic History*, *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and numerous collected volumes.

**Craig Daigle** is an Assistant Professor of History at the City College of New York, where he teaches courses on American Foreign Relations, the Cold War, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

He is the author of *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* (Yale University Press, 2012).

**William B. Quandt** holds the Edward R. Stettinius chair in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia. He teaches courses on the Middle East and American Foreign Policy. Quandt served as a staff member on the National Security Council (1972-1974, 1977-1979). He was actively involved in the negotiations that led to the Camp David Accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. Quandt's books include: *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Brookings, 2005, third edition); *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism*, (Brookings, 1998); *The United States and Egypt: An Essay on Policy for the 1990s* (Brookings, 1990); *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Brookings, 1986); *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil* (Brookings, 1981); *Decade of Decisions: American Foreign Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976* (University of California Press, 1977); and *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria, 1954-1968* (MIT Press, 1969). He also edited *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David* (Brookings, 1988) and *Troubled Triangle: The United States, Turkey and Israel in the New Middle East* (Just World Books, 2011).

**Brad Simpson** is Associate Professor of History and Asian studies at the University of Connecticut. He is the author of *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and US-Indonesian Relations* (2008), and is currently working on two books: an international history of Indonesian authoritarianism from 1966-1998, and a global history of the idea of self-determination.



Paul Chamberlin provides a refreshing perspective on the history of Palestinian nationalism with *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*. Chamberlin explains that his extremely thought-provoking endeavour takes neither a Palestinian-centric nor a U.S.-Middle East relations-oriented approach. Instead, he seeks to situate the history of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the 1960s and 1970s within the context of that era's global 'Third Worldist' revolutionary trend, a trend that the PLO was very much part of spiritually and politically (9). Indeed the book essentially uses the Palestinian question, from 1967-1975, as a window into that larger phenomenon. Chamberlin argues that the PLO was more than simply representative of the Third World revolutionary trend—it was one of its most important manifestations and the key to a watershed moment in that phenomenon's evolution. In his view, the Palestinian nationalist struggle was one of the Third World's "first great stalemates" after the mostly triumphant years of the 1950s and 1960s, auguring the Third World's gradual "Balkanization" and tactical shift to the practice of "international terrorism" (6).

In that respect, *The Global Offensive* makes a laudable contribution to the growing body of scholarship that places the developing world and transnational actors at the forefront of international politics, rather than treating them as peripheral, secondary actors or curiosities. Its author points to the recent work of historians such as Odd Arne Westad and Erez Manela, whose *Global Cold War* and *Wilsonian Moment*, respectively, serve as inspirations for key aspects of his own conceptual and methodological approach. This reviewer is very sympathetic to Chamberlin's insistence on the importance of using the appropriate non-Western sources in the pursuit of this kind of history instead of relying on the records of British, French, American and other such countries' diplomatic bureaucracies to tell African, Middle Eastern, or Asian stories. Of course, exotic new sources are not magic bullets with the intrinsic power to knock down existing paradigms, but Chamberlin's use of frequently overlooked Arabic language and PLO literature unquestionably adds a great deal to this study. Without them, he probably could not have achieved his goal of returning the Palestinian liberation struggle to its "appropriate place in the history of the twentieth century world" (9).

The book's chronological structure works well, with its narrative hanging on several convincing turning points from the 1967 Arab-Israel War to the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. That said, the first chapter is probably the least satisfying. In it, Chamberlin sets the scene, beginning in the wake of Egypt's and the other Arab nation's catastrophic defeat in the Six Days' War against Israel. Appropriately, the chapter takes a broad survey of the global terrain, noting the divergent interests of Yasir Arafat's Fatah and the Arab states that supported it, Fatah's identification with Third Worldism and the Algerian and Vietnamese revolutionary examples, as well as the perspectives of the two superpowers and the Israeli government. "Arafat embraced this new global political geography", Chamberlin explains, situating Palestinian nationalism within a global anti-colonial movement and Israel as firmly integrated into the Western imperial system (21).



The chapter therefore evokes the complex nature of Palestinian-Arab relations particularly well—a major strength of the book overall—and in general the author’s framing is right on target for this ambitious type of international history. However, perhaps the sheer complexity of the scene that Chamberlin wishes to establish is somewhat overwhelming, as I did find that this first chapter had too much of a descriptive, impressionistic feel at the expense of setting a clear analytical foundation for the rest of the book.

The second chapter shows how the 1967 war and the PLO’s public relations victory at the Battle of Al-Karama, when Israeli units pursued Palestinian fighters into Jordan, enabled Fatah and other guerrilla-oriented groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to take control of the broader nationalist movement while at the same time fully integrating themselves in the Third World scene. Chamberlin takes advantage of some particularly compelling primary source material to show how Palestinian nationalists took inspiration from the Algerian and South Vietnamese National Liberation Fronts and established valuable new relations with the Chinese, North Vietnamese, and Cuban governments. The latter were important sources of diplomatic and material assistance. The connection of Fatah, especially to the Third World scene, was therefore a conceptual, philosophical, and ideological one as well as being very practical and substantive.

However, a vital issue that Chamberlin establishes early on was Fatah’s failure to heed its new allies’ advice to create a united national front (71). Instead, Arafat assumed leadership of the PLO in 1969 without unifying it in front-like fashion, a goal that frequently necessitated much bloodshed in other instances such as the Algerian precedent. Groups like the PFLP would continue to pursue their own agendas under the umbrella of the PLO, with George Habash’s outfit taking the lead in new international terrorist tactics such as airplane hijackings. In this sense, the Palestinian nationalist movement did start to acquire a subtly different, more “diffuse” character in comparison to some of the foreign organisations that it sought to imitate but which had a clearer territorial area of operations. The Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), for example, struggled greatly with the organizational challenges that its undeniably effective transnational strategy entailed: diffusion encouraged schism, while the various host governments of the FLN’s different branches sought to cultivate their own clients inside the movement. Throughout its chapters, *The Global Offensive* very effectively conveys some of the downsides of transnationalism; while some studies have a tendency to conflate the ‘Arab’ perspective, Chamberlin’s narrative clearly delineates the interests of groups like Fatah from those of the states that assisted them.

In that respect, some of the most compelling passages of the book concern the ability of the transnational Palestinian groups to destabilize sovereign states, most notably Jordan and Lebanon. Of course, the destabilizing potential of transnational entities was particularly acute for the new states created from the detritus of the Ottoman Empire: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel, and Palestine. In 1970, the PFLP effectively vied with King Hussein for control of Jordan, a country invented by Britain that abounded with Palestinian refugees. “We are calling the shots in Jordan”, Habash’s PFLP declared, although in the end Hussein demonstrated the wherewithal to eject the PLO from Jordanian territory (116-7). Arafat

criticizes the PFLP for having instigated the confrontation in the first place, although it would be interesting to know if Chamberlin agrees with that criticism. After all, surely the strongest card the Palestinians had to play was their ability to destabilize regional politics. When the Black September splinter group assassinated the Jordanian prime minister the following year, a senior Fatah-PLO figure admitted that, "I have to say they were wrong ... but I have also to understand them ... [T]he world was saying to us Palestinians 'we don't give a damn about you, and we won't care at least until you are a threat to our interests'" (149-50).

Interestingly, *The Global Offensive* reframes Richard Nixon's "regional policeman" approach to the Third World as a defense of a conservative, state-centric conception of the international system—a framing that is of course fully consistent with Nixon and Henry Kissinger's enthusiasm for the realist school of diplomacy (78-80). With the sovereign capital-oriented nature of shuttle diplomacy, their pursuit of a Middle Eastern peace process took on the quality of not just supporting certain favoured states, but also supporting the existing regional state system itself against the subversive peril posed by the Palestinians. Israel fit the "policeman" policy well in terms of its state-centric approach to international relations, since Prime Minister Golda Meir refuted the validity of Palestinian nationalism and Tel Aviv insisted on dealing exclusively with Arab capitals on the grounds that the Palestinian question was simply a terrorist-refugee problem.

On the same theme, Chamberlin's examination of the UN's 'terrorism' debate is one of the strongest sections of the book. The Afro-Asian governments pushed back against the U.S.-led efforts to enshrine anti-terrorist principles in the world organization, in the end managing to subvert the entire process by including criticism of 'state terrorism' by colonial and racist regimes in the final approved resolutions (171-182). In so doing, the Third World countries prevented the Western powers from establishing an inherently superior moral legitimacy of states with respect to transnational movements. This episode perhaps constitutes the book's clearest demonstration of the Palestinian question's effect on the structures of global society, as opposed to its more regional consequences (significant as they were).

I find some of Chamberlin's explanations for the PLO's failure to achieve an independent Palestine to be interesting because his logic runs counter to the Third Worldist, revolutionary doctrine that supposedly motivated Arafat and his comrades in arms at the time. For example, he criticizes the PLO leadership for missing opportunities to engage in peace negotiations in 1973 on account of their refusal to make necessary fundamental concessions, saying that they "clung to the rhetoric of total victory through popular revolution" and were "unable to commit to a political solution" (264). However, the Algerian FLN and the Vietnamese communist-nationalists each clung determinedly to the policy of "talk while fighting" even after agreeing to engage in negotiations with their

French or American foes.<sup>1</sup> The key, as the Algerians, Chinese, and Vietnamese all stressed to the Palestinians, was to never agree to a ceasefire before the other side consented to your core goals. Rather depressingly from the perspective of a Palestinian nationalist, as early as 1958 one of the Algerian FLN's leaders observed to his colleagues that they could never abandon the guerrilla campaign—despite its rapidly deteriorating fortunes in a strictly military sense—because only violence and disorder provoked greater political forces to care about their cause. “There would hardly be any need for a wider policy and to waste time in chancelleries and international events”, he warned. “All will be lost, irredeemably lost. Algeria will become a new Palestine.”<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, by the dictates of the revolutionary model to which the Palestinian nationalists claimed to aspire, the PLO's eventual error was actually agreeing to the peace process before first securing its key goals (whether that be a ‘ministate’ or single-state solution).

I must note at this point that contemplation of these issues does not depend on any convictions about the innate legitimacy of either the Israeli or Palestinian positions; nor would I personally advocate that any movement employ the Third Worldist revolutionary strategy given the extent of human suffering that it necessitates. Still, one of the most fascinating traits of the era of decolonization is the striking malleability of international structures and the contingency of certain outcomes that acquired a much great aura of legitimacy or inevitability after the fact. I would disagree with the author's suggestion that the Palestinian nationalist cause differed from its Vietnamese or Algerian inspirations because it was “not an immediate consequence of imperial collapse” and thus “retained a certain moral ambiguity” (260). On moral ambiguity, I certainly concur, but I question the notion that Algerian, Vietnamese, Kenyan, or for that matter Zionist nationalism boasted any more innate justness or validity (to cite some scenarios that also featured a significant degree of popular participation and violent methods). One of the wonderful qualities of decolonization is that the legitimacy of a national project is certified by its success, yet we then often account for that success on the basis of the project's legitimacy. The new international order was premised on a circular logic, and winners took all. Was Fatah's failure due to its inability to definitively choose one path and instead awkwardly straddle the dictates of both revolutionary subversion and international respectability?

In any case, it is a testament to *The Global Offensive's* value that it provokes such contemplations. Its author has succeeded in his goal of making an important contribution to the international history of the developing world. By situating the Palestinian nationalist movement within the larger Third Worldist trend, Chamberlin simultaneously yields new insights into both. His study peels back the rhetoric of Arab unity and Afro-Asianism to reveal the complexities and tensions that bedeviled Third-World politics, especially concerning the divergent agendas of various Arab governments and the transnational PLO.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see *Report Presented to the 15 Plenum of the Vietnamese Workers' Party Central Committee*, 29 August 1968, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) digital archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113979>.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed Harbi, *Le FLN: Mirage Et Réalité* (Paris: Éditions Jeune Afrique, 1980), pp.218-23.

Meanwhile, for an issue that has acquired the impression of stasis and intractability, Chamberlin also reminds us that the Israel-Palestine question only very recently issued from an era of extreme dynamism and instability. With the integrity of countries such as Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq once again coming under threat, *The Global Offensive* is also a timely reminder of the challenge that transnational movements from below can pose to the postcolonial state system.

On November 13, 1974, Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), proclaimed from the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly that the killing in the Middle East would end once a “just peace,” based on Palestinian rights, hopes, and aspirations, was finally established. “I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter’s glove,” said Arafat. “Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.”<sup>1</sup> For many observers, Arafat’s speech has been remembered as the moment when the moderates in the PLO took “center stage” as the “heartbeat” of the Palestinian movement and Palestinian rights.<sup>2</sup> But for others his mere presence in the United Nations represented a diplomatic ‘triumph’ of the Palestinians’ revolutionary struggle. Never before at the UN, even during Algeria’s long war for independence, had a person been permitted to address the full General Assembly who did not represent a government. Arafat received a minute long standing ovation from most delegates in the hall, and was accorded treatment at the UN normally reserved for heads of state.

How and why the PLO accomplished this remarkable feat, shedding its image as a pawn of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s pan-Arab movement to be recognized by many around the world as a de facto government and its leader as the official spokesman of the stateless Palestinian people, is the subject of Paul Thomas Chamberlin’s impressive new book, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*. Chamberlin’s study is a demonstration of international history at its best. Drawing on documents and archives in Arab states, the United States and Great Britain, as well as other Arabic language sources, Chamberlin reframes the traditional narrative of the Palestinian liberation struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, which is often viewed within the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict and inter-Arab politics, and instead demonstrates that the PLO emerged as a “spiritual successor” (258) to revolutionary groups from around the Third World that developed in the 1950s and 1960s.

Just as Jeremi Suri’s *Power and Protest* found a common “language of dissent” in the social and cultural movements of the 1960s that stretched from the streets of Paris and Berlin to the Berkeley campus,<sup>3</sup> Chamberlin’s *The Global Offensive* similarly concludes that the PLO was part of the “global wave” of national liberation movements, which sought to “project their armed struggle into an increasingly interconnected world order.” (5, 258) In the wake of Israel’s conquest, during the 1967 Six-Day War, of the West Bank and Gaza, which contained more than 1.3 million Arabs, Palestinian fighters “seized on the promise of liberation through revolution in the Algerian, Cuban, and Vietnamese models” (22). Palestinians received training and instruction on guerilla warfare from North Vietnam and

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<sup>1</sup> The text of Arafat’s speech to the United Nations is printed in the *New York Times*, 14 November 1974.

<sup>2</sup> David W. Lesch, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 256.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: The Global Revolutions of 1968 and the Origins of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Algeria, drew military and financial support from the People's Republic of China, and accepted material assistance and moral support from Cuba. (61-65) Intellectuals, academics, and writers, also came to their aid, spreading the message that Israel was nothing more than an extension of European colonialism, much like the white regime in South Africa or French-ruled Algeria. By using this transnational network, and by echoing the language of revolutionary politics drawn from a "shared culture of Third World national liberation," (5) argues Chamberlin, the PLO established itself as the "first globalized insurgency" (3) and became a "seminal influence" on other rebellions in the following decades.

In describing the PLO's emergence on the international stage, Chamberlin focuses heavily on its "diplomatic struggle," (218) particularly at the United Nations. The "paradigm shift" (178) in global politics, which began with the Bandung Conference in 1955, and continued throughout the 1960s as countries in Africa and Asia achieved their independence from European powers, provided Third World countries with the 'clout' to push their agendas at the United Nations and other international forums. The UN General Assembly, for example, supported resolutions reaffirming "the inalienable right of self-determination and independence of all peoples under colonial and racist regimes and other forms of alien domination," protected the rights of "oppressed peoples" fighting for national liberation, refused to condemn several acts of international 'terrorism,' and prevented U.S. and Israeli efforts to criminalize the PLO. (178-179) Beyond the UN, Chamberlin cites the establishment of PLO offices in East Berlin and the People's Republic of China as evidence of the PLO's growing international influence and acceptance.

This is clearly an ambitious project for which Chamberlin deserves significant praise. By establishing connections between the PLO and other revolutionary nationalist groups that most historians have either previously ignored or failed to recognize, Chamberlin has written a true work of transnational history that includes discussion of the United States, Palestinians, Israel, Vietnam, China, Algeria, and South Africa. *The Global Offensive*, then, reshapes our understanding of the Palestinian liberation movement in its infancy, drawing important links between the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), the Vietcong, and Cuban nationalists. "Viewed from a distance," Chamberlin writes, "they appear as an international force in their own right, a global offensive against the bastions of state power in the Cold War system" (5).

Despite the significant insights Chamberlin adds to the global dimensions of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and they are many, he often overestimates the PLO's ability to influence regional politics, and has a somewhat flawed interpretation of the Nixon administration's policy in the Middle East. With regards to the Palestinians, Chamberlin leaves the impression that because the PLO received increasing international support after the Six-Day War, particularly among Third World nations, and drew attention to its cause by highly dramatic events, including the hijacking of civilian airlines and the assassination of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic games, that this somehow translated into the PLO's ability to achieve its stated goal of the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. It did not. In fact, at no time between 1967 and 1975, the period covered in this book, was the PLO remotely close to establishing a Palestinian state either through



political or military efforts. Arafat may have been applauded inside the halls of the United Nations General Assembly, but he was treated largely as an afterthought when it came to Arab-Israeli negotiations.

The PLO's inability to leverage its increased international clout for concessions toward a Palestinian state was clearly seen in aftermath of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war. More than five years after the Battle of Karameh put Arafat and the PLO on the map, and at a time when the 'international community' clamored for a peace settlement between Arabs and Israelis, the PLO was shut out of the post-war negotiations. At the Geneva peace conference, which was organized by the United States but held under UN auspices, the Palestinians were relegated to bystanders. Neither the Egyptians nor the Jordanians refused to attend the conference because the Palestinians were not invited, and the Soviet Union, which had recognized the PLO, did not aggressively push for Palestinian involvement at Geneva. Although Secretary of State Henry Kissinger maintained an open dialogue with the PLO through CIA channels,<sup>4</sup> he never took the discussions seriously. So long as he was in charge of shaping American foreign policy he would not pressure Israel to accept the PLO as a negotiating partner. "An Arafat Palestine is impossible for you," Kissinger told Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir a week before the Geneva conference. "Therefore I'll never recommend it."<sup>5</sup>

Chamberlin acknowledges that the PLO failed to achieve its ultimate objective—the establishment of a Palestinian state—but he blames this in large part on US support for Israel and Jordan as "regional policemen" (259) and Washington's failure to bring "Palestinian moderates" (128) into discussions for a political solution. And herein lays the central weakness of his argument: Chamberlin looks at America's support for Israel almost exclusively from the perspective of the Palestinian issue. In reality, however, U.S. support for Israel during the Nixon administration had far more to do with countering Soviet aid to Arab states, particularly Egypt and Syria. By looking at U.S. support for Israel in regional instead of global terms, Chamberlin erroneously concludes that President Richard Nixon and Kissinger pursued a strategy of "active disengagement" (85) in the Middle East, blindly supported Israel with economic and military aid, ignored the plight of the Palestinians, and chose to "marginalize" Middle East experts in the administration who advocated a more balanced policy in the region vis-à-vis Israel and the Arabs. "Put simply," says Chamberlin, "*Nixon and Kissinger did not understand the dynamics in the Middle East and had little use for anyone who did.*" (106; my emphasis)

Nixon and Kissinger certainly viewed the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli conflict in global strategic terms. But the notion that they did not understand the Middle East because they sought a strategic partnership with Israel and Jordan at the expense of the Palestinians completely misses the point. What mattered to Nixon and Kissinger was bringing stability

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<sup>4</sup> See *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1969-1976, Vol. XXV, Doc. 318*; Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1982), 629.

<sup>5</sup> Kissinger-Meir Memcon, 16 December 1973, *FRUS, 1969-1963, Vol. XXV, Doc. 398*.



to the Middle East so they could pursue their larger foreign policy objectives, namely détente with the Soviet Union. They feared that if another war erupted between the Arabs and the Israelis, the superpowers would be drawn into the conflict and the prospects for détente would go out the window. In the first three years of his administration, Nixon sought this stability not through “standstill diplomacy,” as Chamberlin suggests,<sup>6</sup> but by *actively* working for a peace agreement in the Middle East with the Soviets, Arabs, and Israelis. Only after these efforts failed in August 1971, and détente became more of a reality, did Nixon turn to a policy of “active disengagement,” by supporting Israel and Jordan and refusing to seriously help the Arabs get their land back. But this was not for any *lack of understanding* of the region.

Moreover, Nixon was not as blindly supportive of Israel as Chamberlin suggests. Although he would not abandon Israel as an ally, he felt that it was clearly in America’s interest to ‘halt’ the Soviet domination of the Arab Middle East by broadening U.S. relations with the Arab countries. “Where on the analysis the question becomes primarily one of the interests of Israel and the interests of Israel’s neighbors, Egypt, Jordan, et al, then we should have a totally even-handed policy,” Nixon told Secretary of State William Rogers.<sup>7</sup> As part of his even-handed policy, Nixon called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, fought aggressively to improve relations with Egypt and, at times, refused to provide Israel additional arms shipments until its leaders were more cooperative in negotiations with the Arabs. In February 1973, after Israel mistakenly shot down a civilian Libyan passenger jet that had strayed over the Sinai Peninsula, killing seventy passengers aboard and wounding another thirteen, Nixon demanded that Israel compensate the victims of the attack, and made it clear to Kissinger that “the time has come to quit pandering to Israel’s intransigent position. Our actions over the past have led them to think we will stand with them *regardless* of how unreasonable they are.”<sup>8</sup>

Part of the reason that Chamberlin draws these conclusions is that he mistakenly sees the Jordan Crisis of 1970 as the “turning point” (108) for U.S. policy in the region. “By backing King Hussein’s crackdown on the Palestinians,” Chamberlin concludes, “Washington effectively underwrote what came to be seen as one of the most brutal expressions of state reaction in the Arab world.” (124) True, the White House clearly supported Hussein’s

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<sup>6</sup> This argument was first put forth by William B. Quandt in 1977. See Quandt, *Decades of Decision: American Policy Towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967–1976* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). In the revised edition of this study, updated to include discussion of the Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations, Quandt changed the name of this chapter from “Standstill Diplomacy” to “Kissinger’s Diplomacy: Stalemate and War, 1972–73.” See William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001), 98–129. For a more recent interpretation of the stalemate during this period, see Salim Yaqub, “The Politics of Stalemate: The Nixon Administration and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969–1973,” in Nigel J. Ashton, ed., *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and the Superpowers, 1967–1973* (London: Routledge, 2007), 35–58.

<sup>7</sup> Nixon to Rogers, 26 May 1971, National Archives, RG 59, Office Files of William P. Rogers, Box 25.

<sup>8</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 212.

efforts to remove the Palestinian fighters from his land. But what options did the U.S. have? To support the Palestinians, who had only weeks before attempted to assassinate King Hussein, hijacked four civilian airliners, and held Americans hostage? Just as Chamberlin rightly concludes that the Palestinians drew lessons from the North Vietnamese, U.S. officials understood that the South Vietnamese government would closely monitor Washington's response to the Jordan crisis. Abandoning an American ally (Jordan) to guerilla fighters who drew inspiration and military support from Hanoi, was simply not the message the White House wanted to send to the leadership in Saigon—or any of its allies around the world.

Moreover, the Jordan crisis was not a “turning point” in America's support for Israel, as Chamberlin suggests. In fact, in the months immediately following the Jordan Crisis, the Nixon administration aggressively pursued improved relations with the Arabs by reaching out to Egypt's new President, Anwar Sadat. Nixon sent Secretary of State William Rogers to Cairo in May 1971 and cut off arms shipments to Israel in June. The turning point in the Nixon administration's policy in the region (if there was one) was not the Jordan Crisis, but rather the agreements on the Middle East reached between the United States and the Soviet Union at the May 1972 Moscow Summit. Once the superpowers agreed to the “no war, no peace” situation in the Middle East, and accepted the status quo in the region, it was imperative that the Arabs not be in a position to start a war that would adversely impact détente. To do so meant strengthening Israel at the expense of the Arabs, and increasing its support for King Hussein who, the White House hoped, would refuse to join the Arabs in any future war.

Outside of my differences with Chamberlin's treatment of the Nixon administration's Middle East policy, however, *The Global Offensive* is an impressive work of international history and should be considered a must-read for anyone who is interested in the Arab-Israeli conflict, U.S. foreign policy, Middle East area studies, and the tangled personal and policy dynamics of the Nixon White House. The book provides needed agency to the Palestinian liberation struggle that is often overlooked by scholarship (including my own) covering the interwar years (1967-1973). It offers students of the Arab-Israeli conflict a more nuanced view of the Palestinian movement. And it sheds much-needed light on the unique parallels among the PLO and other revolutionary national groups, including the FLN, the Vietcong, and Cuban nationalists

In sum, *The Global Offensive* will change the way historians and political scientists view the Palestinian movement and should spawn a wave of new studies that show how these international influences shaped the PLO from the mid-1970s to the present.

*The PLO in its International Setting*

Paul Thomas Chamberlain's *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* makes a determined effort to look at the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) through a lens that privileges its similarities to other national liberation movements, in particular those in Cuba, Vietnam and Algeria, and does not simply dwell on its hostility to Israel and its resort to terror. This perspective is a welcome departure, but the book sometimes seems to get caught up in a degree of romantic revolutionary zeal, before coming to a rather sobering conclusion that the PLO has largely failed in its goals.

Yasir Arafat and the PLO are introduced as having seized the "transnational space" that crisscrossed the globe in the 1960s "using a revolutionary set of tactics and strategies never before seen in history" (3). The United States, especially during the Presidency of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's stint as National Security Adviser, predictably responded to the PLO with hostility: "Ultimately, as the two sides fought over the physical and conceptual space that was Palestine, they helped to remake the art of revolution and the structure of global power in the late Cold War world and beyond" (3). In short, the author stakes out some very big claims at the outset.

Chapter two makes the case for the centrality of the 1968 battle of al-Karama in propelling Arafat and his Fatah movement to the forefront of the Palestinian struggle. This is pretty close to the conventional view, although it became difficult for Fatah to replicate the 'success' of that battle. The PLO as an umbrella movement of numerous Palestinian factions, could not settle on a military-diplomatic strategy that related achievable goals to the constrained means available to the Palestinians.

Chapters three and four concentrate on the Nixon-Kissinger view of the Palestinians and the Jordan civil war of 1970-71, making good use of the recently declassified materials from this period in the U.S. archives. Chapter five focuses on the turn of some Palestinian groups toward international acts of terrorism – the Munich summer games in 1972 and the killing of the American Ambassador Cleo Noel and two others in Khartoum in March 1973, both acts attributed to the shadowy Black September Organization (BSO). Chamberlain believes that Arafat was not responsible for the actions of the BSO, a point to which we will return later.

Chapters six and seven deal with the turn by the mainstream of the PLO to diplomacy in the mid-1970s, including the onset of tentative direct contacts between Fatah and the United States. The author concludes with a brief, rather critical account of the weaknesses that led the PLO to what he earlier described as a "great stalemate" (6), but now calls a "great defeat" (259). In two brief concluding pages (266-267), the author blames the PLO for not making a clear statement about its willingness to accept Israel within pre-1967 borders; notes Arafat's failure to unify the guerrilla movement and develop a clear strategy for

armed struggle; and criticizes both Israel and the PLO for seeking military solutions to problems that were primarily diplomatic and political. These are all important observations, but deserved deeper treatment earlier in the text.

Chamberlain has tried to write an international history of the PLO that takes note of the context in which the movement emerged and the widespread contacts that it cultivated as it became an actor on the international scene. This worthy ambition comes at a price. By trying to paint on such a wide canvas, as international historians are bound to do, the author sometimes shortchanges important aspects of the story. Chapter six is intent on developing the idea of that ‘the torch’ of revolution against the U.S.-led world order was being passed from Vietnam to the PLO, but the argument does not really hold up very well. In part this was due to the divided nature of the PLO itself.

I think that the author should have spent more time on internal developments within the PLO and Arafat’s inability to forge a degree of real unity. The other national movements that Chamberlain compares the PLO to – in Cuba, Vietnam, and Algeria, home of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) – were all much more centralized and, as a result, had more coherent policies. An important reason for the fragmentation of the PLO was the dispersal of the Palestinian population and the PLO’s heavy dependence on various Arab states for diplomatic support, arms, and financing, each of which had its own objectives. Arafat struggled not to become a captive of any single state, but he was constantly making tactical compromises to win support from one or another of them. Arafat and his inner circle would have been the first to insist on the importance of this issue. The author should have given much more attention to this structural dilemma faced by the Palestinian leadership since it helps to explain the lack of coherent strategy on the part of the PLO at crucial moments.

I am reluctant to support Chamberlain’s willingness to believe that Arafat did not have much, if anything, to do with the Black September Organization (192). Arafat was a master of manipulation and sometimes of illusion. Ali Hassan Salameh, the head of Arafat’s intelligence organization, was one of those who set up Black September and planned the Munich attacks. I find it is inconceivable that Arafat knew nothing about what his aide was doing. Chamberlain quotes a few second-hand sources to the effect that Arafat had nothing to do with the killing of Ambassador Noel and his two colleagues in Khartoum, but he makes no mention of contradictory information. Specifically, he does not refer to the book by David Korn on the subject, or the near-contemporary article by David Ottaway in the *Washington Post*, April 5, 1975, which indicates that U.S. sources were privy to information that Arafat personally gave the order for the assassination.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, there is a largely untold story of contacts between the United States and the PLO. Chamberlain alludes to the existence of an intelligence link, but views it as unrelated to diplomacy. He briefly notes a meeting between the Deputy Head of the Central Intelligence

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<sup>1</sup> David A. Korn, *Assassination in Khartoum* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1993); David B. Ottaway, “Arafat Implicated in Envoy’s Death”, *Washington Post*, April 5, 1973.

Agency (CIA), Vernon Walters, and the Fatah leader Khalid al-Hassan, in Morocco in November 1974, but that is about as far as he goes. He makes no use of the declassified actual record of Walters's meeting with al-Hassan.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this channel, the CIA had a very important liaison relationship with Arafat's intelligence man, Ali Hassan Salameh, in Beirut during much of the mid- to late-1970s. A very significant flow of intelligence came through that channel, and it was also used to send sensitive diplomatic messages on occasion. Robert Ames, the CIA officer who oversaw this relationship for many years, played a larger than heretofore reported role in U.S. policy. I understand that a book is in the works about him and that may help to fill this gap in the story of the U.S.-PLO relationship. Suffice it to say that it was considerably more complex than is portrayed in Chamberlain's account.

To his credit, Chamberlain does make good use of some Arabic sources. But the PLO has not opened its archives, so much of the publicly available information comes from public statements or news reports. There are still a few – very few – of Arafat's inner circle alive today and they could be interviewed to see if additional information on key episodes could be provided. Unfortunately, Chamberlain did not include any references to interviews for this work. As a result, the quite rich documentation on the American side of the U.S.-PLO relationship is not matched by anything comparable on the Palestinian side. We end up with a somewhat one dimensional view of heroic Palestinians struggling against overwhelming odds to carry forward the 'global offensive' against a world order that was stacked overwhelmingly against them.

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<sup>2</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973*, (Washington D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 2011), 882-886.

*The PLO and the Global Circuits of Revolution*

On July 23, 1968 commandos from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked an Israeli passenger jet bound for Tel Aviv, diverting it to Algiers. This simple but revolutionary act was packed with meaning: for the Algerian government, which was forced to take a position on the legitimacy of the PFLP's actions by deciding whether or not to accept the plane; for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), PFLP's main rival in the Palestinian national struggle, whose tactics were radicalized in turn; and for the Israeli and U.S. governments, forced to respond to a stateless movement operating across borders and seeking control of no territory. Perhaps most significantly, as Paul Chamberlin suggests in this revealing and important book, the PFLP blazed a trail "quite literally in the space between nations" (72), helping to force global debates on the meaning of terrorism and the legitimacy of armed struggle which are still with us.

Chamberlin's most innovative move is simply to insist that we view the PLO as part of a larger landscape of third-world revolutionaries and the global radical left, of which it viewed itself a part, and not merely as a subset of the Arab-Israeli struggle or the history of Arab nationalism and decolonization (18-28). Palestinian activists, he shows, were self-consciously cosmopolitan. They identified with revolutionary movements of varying ideological stripes around the world, studied and adopted the tactics of guerrillas from China, Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, and elsewhere, and mobilized state and non-state supporters in international forums and the global media. They were, in short, rebelling "against the imagined geography of the Cold War order," and, one might add, the imagination of many historians who write about it (21).

This was a strategy born of necessity as well as vision. Both Yasir Arafat and George Hasbah were children of the golden age of Arab Nationalism. Born in the 1920s, they participated in the war of 1948 and were attracted to Nasser's vision of Pan-Arabism in the 1950s. But by the time Arab states founded the PLO in 1964, hoping to keep the Palestinian nationalist movement under control, both Arafat and Hasbah had embraced more radical visions, a move seemingly vindicated by the Arab states' crushing defeat in the 1967 War (and which led Hasbah shortly after to found PFLP).

For Palestinian radicals of the late 1960s, alternative sources of both aid and inspiration abounded, both near (Algiers) and far (Havana, Hanoi and Beijing). The Fedayeen's emergence in 1968 as a potent symbol of armed resistance to Israel, operating from Jordan and aided by China (50), suggests that they had already begun to globalize their conception of national liberation. U.S. officials, Chamberlin makes clear, had trouble even conceptualizing what the PLO sought to do, and initially insisted on analyzing Fatah and the PFLP solely through the lens of terrorism (47-49). The emergence of the PLO and PFLP as globally significant actors coincided both with a proliferation of transnational circuits for building and spreading ties of solidarity, and with a series of perceived crises in



international politics which suggested the limited ability of either superpower to control the direction of revolutionary movements in the decolonizing world.

'Fellow' Arab governments were ambivalent about the PLO. They were indispensable to the success of the Palestinian national struggle and offered the PLO material and ideological support, viewing it, as one Egyptian official put it, as the "irresponsible arm" of established Arab states. But these same states, particularly Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, also viewed the PLO and PFLP as a burden and threat. Fedayeen operations called forth disproportionate Israeli retaliation against their perceived hosts and highlighted their conservatism and military impotence in the face of Palestinian boldness (196-198).

Like Nasser, U.S. officials such as Secretary of State William Rogers thought they could effectively negotiate over the heads of Palestinian activists, or simply ignore them entirely and deal directly with the states presumed to be the true arbiters of Palestinian futures (107-110). Yet growing international recognition of the PLO as the legitimate embodiment of Palestinian nationalism made it and the PFLP forces to be reckoned with. Their rejection of the Roger's Plan in 1970 and resort to ever more daring symbolic actions led directly to civil war in Jordan in September. Though the Jordanian government's brutal response "represented a humanitarian and military disaster for the PLO, it functioned as something of a political victory in the international community," much as the *Front de Libération Nationale's* (FLN) military defeats in Algeria and the National Liberation Front's (NLF) failures in the 1968 Tet offensive (129).

Nowhere was this disruptive potential more evident than in the PLO's 'external operations.' Plane hijackings, attacks on Israel civilian and military targets in other countries, and the participation in these of foreign fighters from a wide range of countries, each posed novel questions about how to assess responsibility for acts of transnational terrorism, who, if anyone to punish, and how international law could effectively respond to them (100-107). Chamberlin provides the best discussion yet in print of how the emergence of 'transnational terrorism' as a geopolitical problem posed challenges not easily reducible to Cold War concerns. As he notes, attacks on civil aviation by Fedayeen fighters demanded a global response, yet the U.S. decision to frame the issue almost wholly on Israeli terms, while endorsing Tel Aviv's policy of punitive attacks on states supporting the PLO (and assassinations of PLO activists in third countries) rendered the task of achieving international consensus on the matter almost impossible.

A succession of disputes at the United Nations provoked in part by these operations reveals a terrain of debate over the meaning of terrorism that is almost wholly alien to Western sensibilities. The practical question was whether the United Nations could or would acknowledge that peoples living under colonial domination had the right to use any means at their disposal - including armed struggle or acts designated as terrorism - to achieve it. The UN Decolonization Committee (Committee of 24), increasingly dominated, in Western eyes, by newly-independent Asian and African states and the Soviet Union, suggested that the answer was yes. The Committee passed similar resolutions urging UN member states to extend recognition to Amilcar Cabral's African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), the Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the



Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, and other armed liberation movements.

Disputes over the right of liberation movements to employ armed struggle to achieve self-determination surfaced repeatedly within the Human Rights Commission and even the UN Committee on Terrorism. Discussion of a 1973 resolution which would have marked one of the first definitive UN statements on terrorism stalled over an inability to bridge the gap “on the relationship between action on international terrorism and [the] struggle for self-determination.” Most Afro-Asian and socialist members insisted that “violations by states of human rights and fundamental freedoms” lay at the root of terrorism (178-183).

The PLO’s expulsion from Jordan in 1970 and its subsequent establishment of sanctuaries in Lebanon, Chamberlin argues, marked a turning point in the “globalization of the Palestinian armed struggle” (149). For the next few years, radical factions of the Fedayeen such as the Black September movement turned increasingly to ‘external operations’ including airline hijackings, attacks on civilians in airports in Israel and Europe, the assassination of Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tal in Cairo in November 1971, and the infamous murder of Israeli athletes at the summer Olympics in Munich the following year. The participation of Maoist Japanese Red Army faction members, among others, in some of these attacks illustrated both the global appeal of PLO and PFLP terrorist operations and the ties binding Palestinian militants to tactical and ideological brethren around the world (154).

The increasing reliance on external operations widened a split within the PLO itself, with moderates (led by Arafat) seeking to distance themselves from groups like Black September, whose actions hurt the organization’s efforts to gain diplomatic recognition as the sole legitimate representative of Palestinian nationalism. Because it controlled no territory, the PLO relied on the force of global public opinion much more than previous armed struggle movements, which, according to Chamberlin, often pulled it in opposite directions. Moderate Palestinian leaders sought to signal to the U.S. and other powerful Western governments that the PLO could engage in responsible diplomacy. At the United Nations, however, many socialist and Nonaligned Movement members viewed Fedayeen tactics as a legitimate response to Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. This hostile climate prompted both U.S. and Israeli officials to abandon the world body as a constructive venue for building a political consensus against terrorism, and to turn to ‘counter-terrorism’ as a more effective strategy, a shift with important long-term implications for both Israeli and U.S. foreign policy (206-217).

The political and military fallout from the Black September operations and the 1973 Yom Kippur war, prompted Arafat, with uneven success, to seek greater control over Palestinian radicals. The PLO leadership also began to display a growing moderation, abandoning calls for Israel’s destruction, shifting its focus to a diplomatic track and demanding statehood as a framework for realization of Palestinian goals of self-determination. Chamberlin argues, however, that just as Palestinian leaders sought to shift their global offensive into a diplomatic phase, U.S. and Israeli leaders “moved to lock the Palestinians out of the formal

peace process,” insisting on negotiations through Jordan and Egypt alone, and “insuring that violence would continue” (228-230, 246).

Chamberlin’s discussion of President Richard Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger’s Middle East diplomacy treads over well-traveled terrain. But he deftly reveals the limitations of their geopolitical worldview for grappling with the non-state diplomacy of the PLO, and with the range of transnational forces re-shaping international politics more generally. Like their Israeli counterparts, Nixon and Kissinger regarded the Fedayeen “as a military and intelligence problem, rather than as foreign policy issue (93).” Like Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, they largely failed to recognize that their very statelessness rendered the increasingly diasporic Palestinian community a genuinely transnational phenomenon (91-93, 218-250), one which required addressing the political conditions which fed its global support.

“The Palestinians and PLO simply did not fit into Kissinger’s framework,” he concludes, “and its victories, symbolic though they might be, served only to complicate the process whereby disillusionment would bring the Arab states into alignment with Washington” (227, 240-244). The resulting stalemate, brought about – at least in 1975 – largely by U.S. and Israeli intransigence, may have doomed the prospects for a Palestinian state at the very moment when a variety of forces were driving it to genuine compromise. Ironically, the PLO’s transnational character, which enabled it to survive Israeli military reprisals, build diverse international support, and operate almost anywhere in the world, posed real barriers to Palestinian unity and conceptual challenges to the U.S. and other governments that were accustomed to dealing with established states and wary of the PLO’s potential for disrupting regional stability.

I’ll leave it to others to weigh in on Chamberlin’s contribution to the historiography of Palestinian nationalism and the Arab-Israeli struggle, debates in which I am neither participant nor partisan. Rather, I would like to offer a few thoughts on what *The Global Offensive* has to say for international historians. These days, everybody’s struggle seems to portend the post-Cold War world – Algerian revolutionaries, ANC fighters, human rights activists and Palestinian radicals.<sup>1</sup> Chamberlin is not making a radically new argument here, merely illustrating the obvious point that many phenomena of contemporary international politics emerged during, but were not wholly of the Cold War, and long outlasted it. Like Matthew Connelly and Ryan Irwin, he vividly illustrates the inadequacy of a Cold-War, and even a strictly regional, framework for apprehending key dynamics of decolonization, given the global circuits along which solidarity, economic and military assistance to the Palestinians traveled. He also demonstrates that integrative ‘globalizing’ processes and technologies, such as international air travel, banking, and satellite communications, simultaneously produced cracks and fissures ripe for exploitation by non-

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford, 2003); Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (New York: Oxford, 2012); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

state actors. Transnational violence of the sort symbolized by the PLO and PFLP highlighted the inadequacy of a state-centered framework of international law for adjudicating 'terrorist' acts carried out by a stateless movement, assisted by other radical movements, and (at least initially) seeking control of no territory. The U.S. and Israeli response – refusal to acknowledge the PLO, insistence on working through Arab States, and resort to a strategy of retaliatory counter-terrorism, similarly exploited this liminal space in the fabric of international law and the framework of interstate relations.

Doing this sort of history presents methodological challenges. Guerrilla movements, with few exceptions, leave no archives, and force the historian to recover their voice and agency from more traditional sources.<sup>2</sup> Chamberlin expertly plumbs the holdings of the Library of the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut, published collections of Palestinian documents, and a wide range of PLO and Fatah newspapers, but much of the book relies heavily on U.S. and British archives. We hear comparatively little from other Arab governments, especially Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, though judicious use of other French and Arabic-language newspapers could have given a much better sense of the ways in which the Palestinian national struggle inflected public and official discourse in Arab countries. We also see relatively little of the debate at the United Nations, though some of the relevant UN archives in New York are open and easily accessed.

These are minor quibbles, however, for one of the most important books on decolonization and international relations in recent years. Paul Chamberlin has given us a new way of seeing a seemingly familiar story, and a salutary model of international history.

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<sup>2</sup> For an important exception, see the forthcoming PhD dissertation by Andrea Onate-Madrado, *Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Revolution and the End of the Cold War, 1976-1992* (Princeton), which relies on thousands of pages of documents of the hitherto unknown archives of one of the main FMLN factions.

Author's Response by Paul Chamberlin, University of Kentucky

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I would like begin by thanking the tireless editors of H-Diplo for devoting this roundtable to my book. I consider it quite an honor to be put through the ringer by four such fine scholars as Jeffrey Byrne, Craig Daigle, William Quandt, and Brad Simpson. Although I am not so naïve as to think that a book about the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) would please all readers – indeed it seems, not surprisingly, to have ruffled some feathers outside of academia – I am deeply flattered by these four reviews.

*The Global Offensive* represents an effort to explain the history of the clash between the PLO and the United States in its international setting. It is an attempt to map the transnational dimensions of the Palestinian revolution by locating the PLO's story on the global landscape of Third World national liberation struggles and highlighting its strikingly cosmopolitan dimensions. At the same time, it seeks to trace out the largely untold story of the U.S. government's attempts to crush this militant new strain of Palestinian nationalism by working with its allies in the region – Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon – to mount a counterinsurgency against the PLO. Lastly, it demonstrates the enduring impact of this conflict on the international order. In this way, it was my hope that the book would contribute to a number of overlapping fields: international history, U.S. foreign policy, and Middle East studies. The four reviews, while not universally laudatory, encourage me to believe that I have done so.

I am gratified to see from this roundtable that my book has found its most sympathetic audience among my fellow international historians. My primary goals, as Jeffrey Byrne notes, were to use the PLO's story “as a window into” the larger phenomenon of Third World national liberation movements in the post-1945 era and to place the Palestinian story alongside that of the Chinese, Algerians, Vietnamese, and Cubans. I have for some time been dismayed at the tendency of those both inside and outside of academia to treat the history of the Middle East and its peoples as somehow separate from the rest of the world. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in discussions of the Arab-Israeli dispute – particularly those that treat it as an ‘age-old’ clash between religions, etc. Most readers will know that the conflict is in fact a contemporary one rooted in the challenges of nationalism and decolonization.

In this vein, it was my hope with *The Global Offensive* to cast the rise of the PLO not simply as a subchapter in the Arab-Israeli conflict but rather as part of a global wave of national liberation movements that swept through the postcolonial world in the decades following 1945. The Palestinian guerrillas were part of a revolutionary lineage that ran from Mao Zedong, through Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, and the Algerian FLN. As contemporary observers put it, Yasir Arafat was the ‘Arab Ché Guevara.’ More than this, as Byrne observes, I argue that the PLO appeared at a critical juncture in which this Third Worldist movement began to split apart. The PLO and the tactics it introduced thus represented a sort of bridge between the secular national liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s and contemporary resistance movements like Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. My goal is not to lump secular groups like the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) or the

PLO together with Islamist groups like Hamas – they are drastically different –, but they are part of a larger revolutionary line. Byrne also picks up on a second major theme of my work, which makes the case for understanding the Nixon Doctrine’s regional-policeman approach as a new strategy for fighting revolutionary nationalism in the developing world. The disaster in Vietnam may have discouraged Washington from staging full-scale military interventions in the Cold War periphery, but the Third World remained an important battleground. President Richard Nixon’s approach allowed the United States to continue its war against groups such as the PLO, holding the line on battlefields around the Global South, without sacrificing large numbers of American lives.

Byrne – whose work focuses on the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) – makes three excellent points on postcolonial revolution that I would like to address. The first concerns the failure of the Palestinian leadership to create a united front. This is an issue that I address at length in the book as one of the central flaws of the post-1967 Palestinian armed struggle. Indeed, I think it is possible to attribute many, if not most, of the PLO’s greatest failures to Arafat’s decision not to consolidate his control over the movement. Byrne’s second point focuses on the PLO’s decision to agree to the peace process before it had achieved its major goals. On this point I would refer to the PLO’s second cardinal failure – its inability either to devise the means to achieve its goals or to adjust its goals to fit its means. As I explain in my book, “The PLO’s guerilla tactics—both conventional and external—were never sufficient to match the strategic goals of the movement” (266). There was never any way that the PLO could achieve its objective of creating a state in all of Palestine using the resources at its disposal. Its best bet, I argue, was to press for the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the negotiating table. However, for a number of reasons – including its failure to create a united front – the PLO did not issue an explicit statement of this position and Palestinian leaders did not make such a state the focus of PLO strategy. This would have amounted to adjusting its goals to fit its means.

The other option, which Byrne alludes to, was for the PLO to adjust its means. In practice, this would have meant escalating its armed struggle from a campaign of sporadic guerrilla attacks and dramatic international operations to a full-scale war of liberation on the Algerian or Vietnamese model. The effect would have been exceptionally bloody, sending the death toll from the hundreds into the hundreds of thousands. Most of those killed would of course have been Palestinians. Whether such a horrific conflict would have convinced the leaders of Israel to liquidate their control of the area is, I think, doubtful. This leads to Byrne’s third point, where he disagrees with my statement that the PLO’s conflict was not “not an immediate consequence of imperial collapse” and thus “retained a certain moral ambiguity.” Unlike the FLN or the Viet Minh, the PLO was not fighting against a European empire. Israel saw itself as a postcolonial state and the product of a national liberation struggle. This made the prospect of a PLO victory all the more implausible and the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians all the more ambiguous – to which postcolonial nation did the world owe its sympathies? This is not to cast doubt on the innate validity of Palestinian nationalism, but rather to shine a light on the virtually unmatched determination of Israeli citizens to hold onto their state.

Like Byrne, Brad Simpson appreciates my book for what I intended it to be: a contribution to the international history of the post-1945 period that situates the PLO in an international context. Simpson is most interested in my discussion of transnational dimensions of the Palestinian struggle. Prevented from operating as a guerrilla force inside the Occupied Territories, Palestinian cadres infiltrated the transnational spaces provided by expanding networks of transportation and communication in the 1960s and 1970s. Palestinian fighters gained notoriety for their attacks on commercial airlines, transportation infrastructure, diplomatic missions, and, perhaps most infamously, the 1972 killing of Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich. While status quo powers such as the United States and Israel denounced such attacks as acts of terrorism, the PLO's supporters around the postcolonial world saw such operations as the desperate acts of a people struggling for national liberation.

This terrorism-versus-national liberation debate showcased the increasing divide between the U.S. government and many postcolonial states, particularly when the Palestinian question came up at the United Nations. As Simpson notes,

the emergence of 'transnational terrorism' as a geopolitical problem posed challenges not easily reducible to Cold War concerns ... attacks on civil aviation by Fedayeen fighters demanded a global response, yet the U.S. decision to frame the issue almost wholly on Israeli terms, while endorsing Tel Aviv's policy of punitive attacks on states supporting the PLO (and assassinations of PLO activists in third countries) rendered the task of achieving international consensus on the matter almost impossible.

U.S. and Israeli efforts to treat the PLO and the Palestinian nationalism that it represented as a security threat, rather than a political and diplomatic challenge that must ultimately be accommodated, only served to exacerbate the violence.

Thus, by the end of 1974, the PLO had succeeded in staking its claims to be the legitimate voice of the Palestinian people in world affairs and ensuring that it would remain a fixture on the regional and international stages. As Simpson observes, however, the PLO's success remained incomplete. Arafat and his comrades would not succeed in establishing a state and would, in subsequent years, be drawn into the carnage of the Lebanese Civil War and, later still, an ongoing conflict with Hamas. Lastly, in answer to his suggestions that I might have devoted more space to UN documents and Arab state newspapers, I would first point to the sizeable number of UN materials that do appear in my endnotes and second, explain that these Arab newspapers articles – and I have looked at a great many of them in the course of my research – are not nearly so enlightening, in regard to the PLO, as one might hope.

I am quite flattered by Craig Daigle's praise for my book as "a true work of transnational history" and "a demonstration of international history at its best." If he is correct in this assessment, then I have achieved much of what I set out to do by rendering the PLO's story in its wider, global context. In light of his enthusiasm for my central arguments, I was surprised by his decision to devote the majority of his review to arguing with some of the



less central points of my book. But in the spirit of collegial scholarly debate, I will offer a defense of my positions.

I believe that many of Daigle's disagreements with my interpretation can be traced back to the relative importance that we place on the influence of the United States in the Middle East. Daigle's review suggests that his principal metric for assessing the regional impact of a group such as the PLO is Washington's reaction to that group's policies. In other words, if the PLO failed to effect change in U.S. policy, the PLO must not have been terribly influential. This essentially Americentric approach makes a great deal of sense if our main priority is to understand U.S. foreign policy; it makes less sense, however, if our focus is on understanding the regional and international context. It seems clear to me that the Cold-War era was riddled with significant events to which neither superpower devoted much attention. As an international historian, I believe that I would be remiss in using superpower interest as my principal metric for determining whether or not a historical movement was significant.

Certainly the rise of the PLO falls into this category. Moscow wanted little to do with the organization prior to 1972 and Washington did its best to pretend that Arafat and his comrades would disappear if they were just ignored for long enough. In spite of this ambivalence from the superpowers, the PLO rose from a position of near anonymity to international prominence while, at the same time, taking center stage in the Arab-Israeli dispute where it still remains. Indeed, the fact that it managed to accomplish these feats in the face of staunch U.S. opposition, not to mention crushing defeats on the battlefield, is a testament to its ability to influence regional and international politics. Thus, contrary to Daigle's contention, the PLO's global offensive did indeed move the Palestinians closer to their goal of establishing a state. If and when a sovereign Palestinian state finally comes into being, Arafat and his comrades will be remembered for their central role in starting the process that led to its creation. Take as another example Daigle's contention that September 1970 was not a turning point because U.S. policymakers did not recognize it as such. In the space of three weeks, Jamal abd al-Nasir died and Anwar al-Sadat took control in Egypt, Hafiz al-Assad came to power in Syria, King Hussein's troops slaughtered thousands of people driving a permanent wedge between Amman and the Palestinian leadership, and the PLO was pushed into Lebanon, setting the stage for the disastrous fifteen-year civil war in that country. Furthermore, each of these events had a significant impact on the U.S. position in the Middle East and its relations with Israel – as did Israel's willingness to support U.S. interests in the war between King Hussein and the Palestinians. Whether or not U.S. policymakers realized it at the time, this was indeed a critical turning point in the region and for their role in it.

This question of perspective also appears in Daigle's quibbles with my argument that Nixon and Kissinger failed to understand the regional dynamics in the Middle East. Here is the record, as I see it:

The two men believed that Israel could function as a strategic asset in the region – correct up to a point, I believe, but debated by many.



The two believed that by stonewalling the progressive Arab states they could lure them away from the USSR – correct on Egypt, wrong on Syria.

The two feared that the PLO was a Soviet proxy – wrong.

The administration feared that the PLO might topple the regime in Jordan – wrong.

The administration doubted that Sadat would hold onto power in Cairo – wrong.

The two men believed that the PLO was not representative of wider Palestinian sentiment – wrong.

The administration hoped that Jordan could act as the international representative of the PLO – wrong.

The administration believed that the regime in Beirut could crush the PLO just as the regime in Amman had done – wrong.

The administration hoped that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict might be found that did not include the PLO – wrong.

Indeed, even if we accept Daigle's debatable contention that the administration's primary concern was to create stability in the Middle East so that Washington could pursue détente with the Soviet Union, we see deep deficiencies as evidenced by the outbreak of the October 1973 war. Nixon and Kissinger did not believe that the Arab states would start a war with Israel in 1973 – they were, again, disastrously wrong. Thus, even if this was their policy, they did not do a fantastic job of carrying it out. Ultimately, I do not think it is too much to say that this pattern represents a failure to grasp much of what was taking place in the region.

Likewise, I have doubts about Daigle's characterization of Nixon's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict as "even-handed." Egypt, Syria, and the Palestinians all recognized that Washington was essentially an adversary in the international arena – albeit one that held tantalizing carrots at the negotiating table. Even the U.S. allies in the region, Lebanon and Jordan, complained constantly that they were treated as second fiddles to Israel. The best that can be said is that Nixon's even-handedness is faintly discernible only when we restrict our field of vision to other U.S. presidents in the post-1967 period. Moreover, Daigle's statement that I suggest that Nixon was "blindly supportive of Israel" is straw man: my book deals numerous times with tensions in the U.S. relationship with Israel. These tensions, however, never approached the level of animosity that existed in the U.S. relationship with the PLO, Syrians, or Egyptians.

Similarly, Daigle's argument that Nixon "actively pursued peace in the Middle East" clashes with the administration's actual record. Rather than pursuing peace, Nixon and Kissinger chose to increase arms shipments to Israel, play the role of obstructionist at the United Nations, torpedoed the efforts of Secretary of State William Rogers to implement the Rogers Plan, and give the United States almost sole control over the post-1973 peace process. Moreover, Kissinger and Nixon both boasted about the wisdom of this approach in their memoirs. Did the principals express some doubt about these policies in classified memos? Yes. Did they nevertheless choose to pursue these policies? Yes. What Nixon and Kissinger called peace was in fact Israeli regional military supremacy – within certain bounds – and a perpetual state of war with the Syria and the Palestinians. In the end, what

Nixon and Kissinger wanted in the Middle East was not peace but hegemony for the United States.

Again, I believe that the central issue is context. If we privilege the perspective of the superpowers, in this case the United States, the PLO was not so terribly important, Nixon was arguably wise and even-handed, 1970 was not a critical juncture, and peace equaled security for Israel and American hegemony in the region. However, if we view these same events in an international context, the PLO's case was a cause célèbre that sat at the very heart of the regional conflict, Nixon was a resolute defender of Israel (among many other less savory things), 1970 was a watershed year in the Middle East, Washington's definition of stability meant *Pax Americana*, and peace equaled a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict that did not materialize. Rather than belabor the point any further, I will leave it to the reader to decide which version of events they find more persuasive.

Turning last to William Quandt's review, I am not entirely surprised that my book has drawn both criticism and praise from those in the always-contentious field of Middle East Studies.<sup>1</sup> As many of my fellow international historians have found, our area studies colleagues can be a tough audience, although I believe it is critical to pursue a dialogue with them. Quandt praises my book for its intended purpose of situating the PLO in a global context but laments the fact that I did not write a more comprehensive study of the organization's internal politics and that I did not more fully explore the intelligence connections between the CIA and the PLO. In my defense, that is not the book that I set out to write.

Quandt suggests that I have written a "heroic" account of the PLO's rise to international prominence. On this, I must disagree: rather than *heroic*, I argue that the PLO's story was *remarkable*. Few groups in the twentieth century experienced such a meteoric rise. A mere eight years separated United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) – the blueprint for a Middle East peace that made absolutely no mention of the Palestinians – from the explosive "Zionism equals Racism" resolution, UNGA 3379 (1975). In that time, using meager resources, Yasir Arafat and his comrades managed to transform the Palestinian question from an afterthought to a cause célèbre in the international arena. I suspect that what Quandt – and to some degree Craig Daigle, in his review – are picking up on is one of my book's shortcomings to which I freely admit: I am still torn over the best way to explain the paradoxical success of the PLO. How does one write about a group that managed to achieve so much with so few resources but nevertheless failed to achieve its paramount goal of creating a state? I do my best to answer this in my conclusion: "The case of the PLO highlighted both the possibilities and the dangers of an increasingly interconnected world order; it revealed the potential for globalized revolution and the limited ability of these cosmopolitan visions to reshape local realities" (267).

Quandt is also skeptical of my take on Arafat's involvement in the Black September Organization's Munich and Khartoum Attacks. On this point, I fear that he has slightly

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Dina Mattar's quite positive forthcoming review in *Diplomatic History*.

misread my argument. I do not argue that Arafat “knew nothing” of Black September’s actions. Rather, I make the case that Arafat and other PLO moderates viewed Black September as an internal rival: they understood the organization as a representing a challenge to their leadership and sought ways to dismantle it. I admit that the evidence in this regard is not conclusive and I would in fact not be shocked if materials were produced that showed that Arafat was indeed, as many of his critics have charged, the mastermind behind Black September. As it stands, however, the weight of the evidence suggests otherwise. Indeed, I have seen only *one* document – a summary produced by the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and research and published in *FRUS* – and a footnote based on that same document that argues that Arafat ordered the killings at Khartoum and neither presents substantive evidence.<sup>2</sup>

David Korn’s *Assassination in Khartoum*, which Quandt mentions, is a fine book, but it too does not present documents demonstrating Arafat’s ultimate control over Black September. Indeed, Korn’s book discusses the well-known U.S. effort in 1985 to prosecute Arafat for the Khartoum killings. Spearheaded by Attorney General Edwin Meese, Assistant Attorney General John Bolton, and backed by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)– no fans of Palestinian nationalism, to be sure – the investigation failed to uncover anything besides unnamed “intelligence sources” and newspaper stories. As Korn explains, this “was not the stuff of evidence in an American court.”<sup>3</sup> Any other potential evidence remains classified. And ultimately, when it comes to assessments of Arafat, I am not inclined to give the benefit of the doubt to Meese, Bolton, and AIPAC.

I am reluctant, as a historian, to incriminate my subjects unless I have documentation. Likewise, with all due respect to U.S. government officials – and I hope that my regard for much of their work is evident in my book -- I try to do more than take the assessments of government officials as undisputed fact. This is of particular concern when partisan government officials are speculating about a supposed enemy. Certainly there are a large number of individuals and organizations that would be elated to present evidence of Arafat’s guilt to the public. But the fact remains that, after forty years, they have failed to do so. If such documents exist they should by all means be made public. But continued classification of documents does not provide a good reason for a scholar to assume guilt. Ultimately, the evidence that does exist, much of which is presented in my book, suggests that Arafat generally opposed Black September and was working to rein the organization in. This includes reports from U.S. State Department officers, statements from PLO leaders, as well as secondary work by historians and journalists. Thus, until more definitive evidence of Arafat’s involvement surfaces, I stand by my interpretation.

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Craig Daigle for reminding me of the location of the former: “Intelligence Memorandum,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76*, E-6: 217; “Backchannel Message From the Egyptian Presidential Adviser for National Security Affairs (Ismail) to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76*, XXV: 41.

<sup>3</sup> David Korn, *Assassination in Khartoum* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 246.

Finally, I feel compelled to respond to Quandt's more general critique of the field of international history. "By trying to paint on such a wide canvas," he explains, "as international historians are bound to do, the author sometimes shortchanges important aspects of the story." In this same vein, he charges that I present a "somewhat one dimensional" picture of the PLO.<sup>4</sup> Both of these criticisms are valid, up to a point, and both will sound familiar to international historians. Certainly, all international histories can be accused of sacrificing depth for breadth. Such works rarely provide the fine-grained detail of a local study but that is not, ultimately, why they are written. This also brings us back to Quandt's wish that I had devoted more space to explaining the internal politics of the PLO. This is in fact something that I considered. But would such a discussion have made *The Global Offensive* a better book? I am not convinced. Rather, I suspect that the majority of my readers – most of whom are more likely to subscribe to H-Diplo than H-Mideast-Politics – are not eager to wade through an in depth examination of the doctrinal differences between the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-External Operations, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, a subject that I find to be interesting and important.. Furthermore, such a discussion would not ultimately be new. Indeed, any readers interested in finding works that devote the entirety of their attention to the internal politics of the PLO will find a number of fine examples in my bibliography.<sup>5</sup>

Rather, I suspect that most of those who pick up my book are looking for a study that takes a wider perspective. *The Global Offensive* is not the definitive history of the PLO as an organization, but that is not what I intended it to be. If area study specialists find value in my book, I am gratified, since I remain deeply indebted to their excellent work on the local dimensions of the PLO's story. I also believe that international, diplomatic, and military historians have much to gain by engaging with their colleagues in area studies. However, I remain convinced of the need for international histories that seek to build upon local and regional perspectives, place historical movements in their global setting, and draw connections between peoples in different parts of the world.

My purpose in writing the book was to locate the Palestinian armed struggle on a global map, to contextualize that struggle in the twin processes of the Cold War and

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<sup>4</sup> Quandt does suggest that it was possible to have conducted interviews with the few surviving PLO officials from the period, which is a fair point. However, given that I was operating with the meager resources of a young scholar, I made the decision that I would devote my shoestring research budget to time at the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut, reading the words that Palestinian officials wrote at the time rather than chasing the few remaining survivors of the period in hopes that they might remember some critical piece of information. I ultimately place more value in documents than in the recollections of interested parties.

<sup>5</sup> These include the outstanding work of scholars such as Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* (Oxford University Press, 1997), Helena Cobban, *Palestinian Liberation Organisation* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), and Alain Gresh, *PLO* (Zed, 1985) – not to mention Quandt's own seminal early work on the subject, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (University of California Press, 1973).

decolonization, to discuss the PLO's impact on the international history of the post-1945 era, and to trace the linkages between Palestinian fighters and other revolutionary groups around the postcolonial world. It was also my hope that the book might find a place on the shelf alongside the excellent works by international historians such as Odd Arne Westad, Erez Manela, Jeremi Suri, Matthew Connelly, Bradley Simpson, to name just a few – all of whose names appear in the reviews in this roundtable – that have appeared in recent years.<sup>6</sup>

Thanks very much to Douglas Little and the four reviewers for their thoughts on my book and to the editors of H-Diplo for all their work in putting this roundtable together.

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<sup>6</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment* (Oxford University Press, 2007), Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest* (Harvard University Press, 2003), Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2002), and Bradley Simpson, *Economists With Guns* (Stanford University Press, 2008).