To Secure the Global Great Society: Participation in Pacification

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Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

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In March 1971, a high-ranking U.S. official reflected on the past several years of novel poverty-alleviation programming. He described how the twinned mandate of “maximum participation of the people” and the “encouragement of local government institutions” formed the cornerstone of efforts to ameliorate dismal socioeconomic conditions that had for too long left many citizens bereft of hope for the future. Even worse, the desperate had been turning to violent means of social transformation. In many cities, he noted, a situation of “volatility”—unemployment among the “urban population of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor”—had resulted in the need for community participation “to channel their energies in positive rather than protest activities.” Now, according to legislation that required popular, democratic participation, recipients of economic aid could themselves play a part in determining what their own communities needed and how best to address those “felt needs.”

Community members, not just outside experts, would play a role in managing aid efforts. With “the concept of the local community” placed “at the heart of the plan,” communication lines had opened between various levels of government, leading to widespread dissemination of information about the programs and high-level attention to locally generated ideas.

This official, however, was not referring to President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, which famously enshrined “maximum feasible participation” as the watchword of domestic poverty remediation. The speaker, stationed in Saigon, was Ambassador William E. Colby, future director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). At the time, he was overseeing Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS), the centralized civilian directorate for all U.S. counterinsurgency operations in South Vietnam—what it called “pacification.” This surprising speech exemplifies the articulation of foreign and domestic spheres in the 1960s and into the 1970s. Participation was one important, and heretofore overlooked, texture of this articulation, but it was also a central ingredient, like yeast, that would enable development to occur in a context of insecurity.

Examining the stark symmetry between two discrete pieces of legislation—the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964 and the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) as amended in 1966—reveals that a commitment to democratic, community-based participation in economic aid spread far beyond the territorial borders of the United States and in fact gave shape to a single, if uneven, global field for development’s operation. Yet Colby’s speech regarding CORDS’s compliance with the participation
provision of the FAA, which governed the functioning of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and therefore rural development in South Vietnam, suggests that community development was more tightly entwined with security concerns than previous scholarship has allowed. Not only did community development concatenate foreign and domestic policy spheres; so too did an understanding of security as the necessary precursor to development. In turn, security was also the register and index of development’s success. Popular participation was the practical yoke that joined security and development.

Participation was the key modality of the productive or constructive side of pacification abroad. Here the critical theoretical work of Mark Neocleous on the prospective dream-world of pacification is useful: it is “a dream of workers available for work, present and correct, their papers in order, their minds and bodies docile... a dream of accumulation thereby secure from resistance, rebellion or revolt.” The constructive work of pacification was a self-help project with a definite spatial locus and a future-oriented temporal status, specifically designed to oblige the target population to invest in its members’ own security and controlled uplift. This locus was frequently called “the community,” but it was not necessarily an extant and cohesive formation. Instead, it had to be summoned into existence, and participation was the means. Those who would not participate were inherently excluded from membership in the community, and harsh security measures awaited them. Pacification practice treated the refractory as demonstrating their own ineligibility for membership. As Kurt Jacobsen has written, “You do not pacify criminal gangs or bands of malcontents; you pacify entire populations.” Such pacification has historically required the participation of the pacified. Pacification is, therefore, a misnomer, and participation is the reason. As Colby later reflected, “We searched around for another name than ‘pacification,’ because of its connotation that the population was to be forced into quiescence, when the idea was precisely the opposite, to activate the people in the villages.” The focus was to channel activity, or activism, in particular directions, away from dramatic forms of social change. Self-help, not self-determination, was the goal. But neither coercive security measures alone nor participatory development programming alone merits the term “pacification.” Instead, the essence of pacification is their integration.

This essay places Title IX in the context of the EOA to make three major arguments about participation’s underappreciated importance to pacification. First, popular participation had roots and branches that extended far beyond the borders of the United States. It was already a durable and extensively deployed modality of community development before, during, and in the crumbling of Johnson’s Great Society when it became codified as central to cognate U.S. development programming overseas. Title IX of the revised FAA in 1966, which paralleled the community-action clauses of the 1964 EOA, institutionalized a common sense held by security experts and elected officials that participation would be a useful way to join development and preemptive security programming, even as—and because—grassroots mobilizations pushed for a greater say in how and why to alleviate poverty. At the moment when officials in the United States began to pull back from participation, it became more fully entrenched in overseas efforts, particularly in the field of counterinsurgency. This
deployment of participation shows the community action aspects of the War on Poverty in a new light: what could not be achieved at home seemed to be within reach overseas.

Second, experts considered the achievement of security a necessary precondition to development and also a sign of development, and participation was crucial to this goal. The name for this combinatorial approach was pacification, and pacification remains a useful way to understand efforts to finely tune a balance of devolved self-help development programming with coercive security measures by channeling energies away from protest or other incipient forms of insecurity. Third, this essay looks extensively at participatory development during the U.S. war in Vietnam to make the case that it was a key method of fighting that war: participation of the community to be pacified in the effectively endless process of its own pacification. Further, development agencies continued to deploy this method outside the theater of combat operations. Popular participation has been extolled as a beacon of postwar grassroots success in harnessing power, capacities, and resources of the state. It should also be seen as a process of state-formation, which creates an interventionism with a built-in alibi as it places responsibility for the production of social subjects active in reproducing social order on those subjects themselves, with coercive forms of punishment for failure. To appreciate how pacification, through its participatory aspects, absolves the pacifiers of responsibility for failures is to get a better handle on why pacification is so resilient a practice of governance. With its coercive and participatory aspects, it appeals across political divides.

The day after the Senate passed the EOA, civil violence erupted in Rochester, New York, following the violent arrest of a black man, leading authorities to call on the National Guard. Over the next two days, 4 civilians were killed, 350 injured, and 976 arrested. These grim statistics were even worse than those tallied a week earlier in the Harlem uprising of 1964, five days of protest after the shooting death of a fifteen-year-old black boy by an off-duty white police lieutenant. The timing of the unrest in New York and congressional debate on the EOA may seem to have been inauspicious, but the House soon passed the bill too. Harlem’s events were the first and most noticed of a number of rebellions or “civil disorders” that summer. As soon as calm had begun to return to Harlem's streets, residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant, the center of black Brooklyn, clashed with police officers and white business owners on their own streets. In August, Jersey City, Paterson, and Elizabeth, New Jersey, each saw revolts. Then Dixmoor, just south of Chicago. Johnson signed the EOA soon after the unrest in Illinois. Just over a week later, civil violence broke out in the City of Brotherly Love. More intense civil violence in cities and suburbs followed in subsequent years.

The effort to remediate poverty—the War on Poverty and the construction of the Great Society—defined Johnson’s domestic agenda from the beginning of 1964. The outbreak of civil violence had solidified the perception that economic desolation led to ill-tempered and even rebellious citizens. Although the toll of the 1964 unrest was severe, among liberal Democrats the optimistic common sense insisted that the country was palpably on the cusp of finding long-term solutions to ingrained problems. Still, as the unrest showed, the situation could get worse without concerted...
action. At the moment the inaugural legislation of the Great Society was to be taken up for final congressional debate, the New York Times dubbed the EOA, "in the new perspective given by the disturbances of this long, hot summer," an "anti-riot bill." In other words, it seemed preemptively counterinsurgent. Yet it also drew on an older sense that such action might keep the peace. A similar view toward necessary precautions had underpinned precursors to the War on Poverty, such as the Ford Foundation program Gray Areas: in California, Oakland’s interagency cooperation to prevent worsening racial conflict, particularly in schools, caught the attention of the Foundation and led it to inaugurate Gray Areas in that city. At the very least, to mobilize new bureaucratic infrastructures seemed a way to tackle problems that would otherwise lead to unrest, whether in the schools or in the streets.

But liberal officials soon began to spurn community development, especially in its most participatory forms, particularly as unrest worsened, in 1967 and 1968. How can we make sense of the rapid collapse of the participatory aspects of Johnson’s War on Poverty and the intensification of coercive and security-focused policies in their wake? A new federally orchestrated effort to mount a war against crime had begun just months after the 1964 unrest, similarly inspired by a search for rapid solutions to desolation, violence, and popular anger. Historians have tended to consider these two wars opposed to each other, the one a reaction formation against the other. But by looking at how participation worked in South Vietnam under U.S. auspices, how pacification experts maintained a commitment to community development, and how some of the progressive dreams associated with the Great Society came tantalizingly close to realization in South Vietnam of all places, we can get a better sense of how participation complemented and even worked within security measures, rather than being antithetical to them. Moreover, the focus on security also preceded the War on Poverty as such. Experts held out hope for the successful conjunction of community-dependent economic aid and stringent security practices. In the United States, when this yoke began to break, security practices gained greater emphasis. In South Vietnam, in contrast, after the disasters of the Tet Offensive of 1968, the yoke’s cracking led to increasing emphasis on participation and community development (though massively violent methods persisted). This emphasis had existed on a smaller scale with AID’s rural programming prior to the introduction of ground troops in early 1965, but now it would fall under the auspices of the pacification apparatus CORDS, a hybrid outfit its initial leader labeled “military elephant and civilian rabbit stew.”

Domestically, the EOA famously instituted the goal of “maximum feasible participation” by the recipient community in the management of economic aid in its Title II-A. Participation entailed allowing impoverished people a direct say in what constituted poverty, how it could be managed, and what its mitigation might encompass on an everyday level. In contrast to prior modalities of poverty alleviation that prized outside expertise, the program of participation assumed that those who experienced poverty might bring expertise of their own to bear on the problem. For their part, poor people’s movements—a term coined at the time to characterize the collectivities taking the reins of poverty alleviation via the participation mandate—had already been pushing for their own empowerment, in the streets, at national political conventions,
in stores, workplaces, and elsewhere. Economic justice had been central to black freedom struggles, even in their most apparently mainstream form, like the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Expert skepticism of grassroots empowerment thus could not protect elite-led programs, as grassroots mobilizations had been demanding a say in how poverty alleviation took shape, which undermined and reconfigured the hegemony of older methods.

Prior domestically oriented scholarship has been frustrated in explaining elite assent to grassroots mobilization, calling it, for example, “ironic.” A transnational analysis, however, can help elucidate the participation mandate. By the mid-1960s, once Title IX made participatory poverty alleviation an instrument of U.S. foreign policy, bureaucrats began subtly rewriting history to claim that participation was the true heir to nineteenth-century populism and earlier American federal traditions. In this account, Progressive Era relief programs implicitly had represented a deviation from “sentiments and practices which lie deeply imbedded in the American character,” and participation represented a sensible return to course, not a policy compelled by social activism. But this rewriting still makes it seem like the adoption of participation was an ironic policy decision, particularly once we pay attention to demands from below. From the perspective of security professionals, however, elite decisions to rely on participation become less baffling. The fact that “community development aid” increased in South Vietnam after 1963 while declining in other aid-recipient countries becomes intelligible. It also becomes possible to see the internalization of participation in pacification as a process of state-formation, of devolved capacity building, for a state buffeted by multiple forms of insurgency, rather than only as a process of localized grassroots-led socioeconomic uplift and development, as social historians generally have interpreted Great Society programming. It would be a mistake to see participation as a cynical ploy by security experts to attain the support of the populace. Enthusiasm for it was genuine. Yet participation, it must be acknowledged, emerged in a moment when state legitimacy at home and abroad was imperiled. The achieved status of the state’s, in Weberian terms, “monopoly over legitimate physical violence” can be posited only in retrospect, as an effect of rule, after the difficult state-formation processes that aim to achieve and maintain that monopoly and that legitimacy. In situations of concentrated insurgency, as occurred in the 1960s in Detroit and in provincial South Vietnam, the state’s possession of a monopoly on the means of violence was tenuous. State agencies looked to participatory development to offload responsibility for constructing state legitimacy onto state subjects. It aimed to invest them with an interest in forfeiting their means of violence to the state’s monopoly.

The homology between participation in the Great Society via the EOA and in overseas development via the FAA originated legislatively, but it was already on the minds of security experts. Juvenile delinquency experts, like Sargent Shriver, new research shows, introduced the focus on “the people themselves” into programming that set precedents for the EOA. Security concerns were thus at the forefront in community action’s conceptualization and should be seen as integral to its particular vision of uplift. These experts, in turn, cast their eyes on unrest in Third World locales to understand what was at stake in controlling delinquency. In addition, the Peace...
Corps, overseen by Shriver, had already offered a blueprint for what participatory community development might look like, which led Johnson to appoint Shriver to help draft the legislation that became the EOA. Then, the 1966 FAA mandated participation in overseas development, including counterinsurgency programming, re-exporting for security purposes what had already been imported from the domain of security and internalized within domestic poverty alleviation. Participation was neither simply imported nor exported. Rather it was a creature of U.S. globalism, skipping from crisis to crisis.

It was thus not simply the border-crossing ideation, action, and personnel of civilian development agencies that globalized the Great Society in the 1960s. Rather, the transportability of the project resulted from the sense held by experts that the problem of security had no frontiers and that insecurity threatened or precluded development anywhere it arose. Insecurity required the economic project of poverty alleviation to be global. Failure to achieve security, insecurity’s global persistence, also threatened to unmake development as well, demanding different political solutions, including participation at home and abroad. In contrast, the methodologically nationalist orientation of most scholarship on domestic poverty alleviation treats domestic efforts as distinct from those undertaken overseas, buying into a revisionism of participation’s origins penned by its later critics, such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan.19

Although grassroots efforts to institutionalize forms of political power among the dispossessed inaugurated and characterized poverty alleviation, the perspective of the Global Great Society advanced here deviates from recent scholarship that understands participatory development as a beacon of liberalism’s twentieth-century success in harnessing grassroots power to politically progressive ends.20 Instead, participation equally, and more discomfortingly, canalized and downscaled the forms that struggles over and through the material matrix of the state would take, struggles over how development and security would adhere to each other. If it was not possible to extinguish insurgency, it was possible to channel it, to make its energies commensurate with broader social, political, and economic goals, to contain revolutionary appeals, demands, and actions. The foreign-domestic divide was porous, both for ideas and institutions. Further, this perspective helps us make sense of the fact that the U.S. government combined expanded aid to poor people with increasingly vigorous policing and imprisonment of them. The Wars and Crime and Poverty were intertwined.

These domestic wars, moreover, were inseparable from the context of the global war on communism, in both its hotspots like South Vietnam and its cooler locales, where the United States offered development and policing assistance that provided a testing ground for ideas and practices of the domestic wars.21 A focus herein on South Vietnam is warranted, even though it was anomalous among aid-recipient nations, precisely because it received copious aid and because policymakers consciously imagined it as a laboratory for testing new ideas.22 Moreover, Congress’s introduction of participation into foreign assistance at the very moment some of Johnson’s Democratic Party allies turned their back on it at home suggests that officials believed in the possibility for its success in achieving social harmony, as long as participation did not endanger their own or their colleagues’ political careers. Scholars have amplified the
arguments of Martin Luther King Jr. that the Great Society was “shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam.”23 The alternative reading of the period offered here holds “Saigon and Harlem” as “two fronts of the same war,” as did some black radicals at the time, but also pays close attention to the isomorphism of techniques for fighting this war—centered on the political participation of the community in its own development—and the perceived necessity of preemptive violence to secure the possibility of a Great Society.24 Typically, when poverty alleviation at home and development abroad are brought together in historiography, the most frequent refrain is one of zero-sum thinking: Johnson’s efforts at social justice ran aground on the U.S. war in Vietnam, as funding that might have been used to alleviate poverty went to the war effort against communism.25 This refrain, however, is insufficient in light of the uneven interdependencies of the two fields, which King perceived and discussed openly in his later years.26 Johnson’s efforts at social justice at home and his development efforts abroad—the war in Vietnam was the most exceptional but also, to his staff, the most innovative and urgent moment of these efforts—shared similar nation-building, antiviolence goals and drew on similar participatory, community-based methods.

Furthermore, counterinsurgency practitioners like Colby and Charles T. R. Bohannan had prized participation all along. Their commitment to participation suggests that it is necessary to rethink the apparent benevolence and radical sociopolitical ambitions of community development that scholars of the War on Poverty increasingly celebrate.27 To be sure, strident demands for redress of injustice could be issued through the community action program the EOA enabled. Yet, through its own participatory development efforts, counterinsurgency was not allergic to a democratic process but rather attempted to internalize it and direct it. Counterinsurgents believed pacification could not be achieved without the participation of the people who were to be its objects. In effect, the objects had to become the active subjects, through its most important criterion. But these active subjects then found themselves with a drastically attenuated horizon of political possibility to which their newly institutionalized avenues of democratic demand could be addressed. To consider how pacification in Vietnam was intertwined with the Great Society troubles nostalgia for the admittedly modest U.S. Keynesian welfare state, not least by finding within its most apparently democratic furrows the seeds of neoliberal nostrums of devolved responsibility and a thoroughgoing discourse of self-help. At the same time, viewing Colby’s CORDS as consonant with a 1960s social welfare creed can make the thinking behind U.S. action, if not the doleful action itself, in Vietnam less easily dismissed as barbaric and bankrupt.28 As a result, it becomes less easy to imagine that a cessation of expensive military action overseas might enable the promotion of a robust social welfare program at home then or in our future.

Although the present analysis mobilizes a transnational method adequate to the way participation was conceptualized and enacted, the echoes between the wars on crime and poverty and the U.S. war on Vietnam suggest that participation was a distinctly American interjection into a field of counterinsurgency expertise crowded by models drawn from what Moritz Feichtinger and Stephan Malinowski label “European late-colonial war experiences” characterized by the “functional integration
of destruction and development.” That functional integration hails the label pacification, but what glued them together in the U.S. case was participation. The objects of destruction would also be the workers responsible for reconstruction afterward—or, as some pacification experts argued, construction beforehand, as a prelude to clearing the social field of the recalcitrant and the revolutionary. It was the ethos underpinning Kennedy- and Johnson-era anticrime and anti-juvenile delinquency efforts at home and police assistance and counterinsurgency overseas. It was what Kennedy’s friend and adviser John K. Galbraith had in mind when he wrote, in 1961 in Foreign Affairs, that “economic development can occur only in a context of law and order, where persons and property are reasonably secure.” Galbraith’s view was a prophecy of the decade to come.

Intersecting Historiographies of Pacification and Modernization

Recent scholarship has highlighted how Galbraith’s view was consonant with the broader intellectual landscape within the United States, unified under the broad term “modernization.” At the same time that historians of U.S. foreign relations and intellectual production have engaged in a thorough inquiry into the origins and pathways of modernization (and how this unifying term can flatten diverse responses to the paradigm), scholars have also begun to inquire into pacification as a set of practices underpinned in some ways by similar intellectual and political-economic trends as the modernization paradigm, securing persons and property, as Galbraith put it. This section takes a detour into this literature to account for the development of pacification conceptually.

At the revisionist junction of critical legal studies, critical security studies, critical political economy, and the history of police, an emergent body of literature has offered a useful conceptual apparatus for understanding these connections of foreign and domestic, military and police, development and security: pacification. Colby’s speech on CORDS’s compliance with Title IX of the FAA invites a closer look at how scholars have organized analyses under the rubric of what can be called the critical theory of pacification. The extant revisionist approaches have tended to revise traditional forms of scholarship based on a particular political standpoint for the betterment of the scholarship. But they nonetheless remain within its terms. In contrast, the critical theory of pacification, following Karl Marx’s critique of political economy, aims not to change the standpoint of critique but to undermine the existing conceptual architecture. In this way, the critical theory of pacification emerged within an approach labeled “anti-security,” in opposition to the ways the field of critical security studies has tacitly reaffirmed the necessity of security. In its positive but critical formulation, the term “pacification,” however, attempts to name the objective of security itself, enabling nuanced analysis of how this process may be achieved. According to Neocleous, one of the chief innovators of the critical theory of pacification, “It is impossible to understand the history of bourgeois society without grasping it as a process of pacification in the name of security and accumulation.” Pacification therefore holds the possibility of naming conditions shared across spatial and temporal distance, as well as the very mechanisms of their connection.

It is no accident that pacification is the term scholars are now using to draw out
the linkages and blurriness between military and police, security and development, and, indeed, foreign and domestic. The critical theory of pacification explicitly draws conceptual grist from the efforts during the 1960s by figures like Colby to devise combinatorial approaches to governance that yoked together different tools, coercive and otherwise. The critical theory of pacification grew along with and in the wake of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and their accompanying revival and repurposing of counterinsurgency scholarship from the 1960s and earlier and their invocation of the lessons of Vietnam. Arguably, without the rebirth of pacification as a term of art thanks to this renewed military and civilian emphasis on countering insurgency, the critical theory would not have attracted adherents in multiple fields. Methodologically, this critical literature succeeds in joining two dominant epistemological strands in critical legal/criminological research, the Foucauldian or genealogical and the Marxist. At the same time, it bleeds into the recent historiography of modernization within the fields of international history and U.S. foreign relations history. Though less explicit in its advancement of Foucauldian and Marxist methods and themes than the critical theory of pacification, the historiography of modernization nonetheless makes some similar theoretical, methodological, and empirical moves in focusing in different ways, for example, on discourse, ideology, and neo-imperialism. Within this literature sit discussions of pacification, particularly as modernization was a central trope for understanding and organizing U.S. action in Vietnam and other areas where insurgency was thought to threaten. Recent additions to the literature that also interweave implicitly and explicitly with the critical theory of pacification have been assiduously interested in assessing smaller-scale forms of development; how a concern with the small scale and the construction of community as an object of intervention transcended foreign-domestic divides in U.S. policymaking (including pacification programs); and how pacification can be fruitfully applied to the historical analysis of the nexus of security and development projects within and beyond the United States.

The critical theory of pacification engenders connections at a theoretical level that historians have increasingly been making at an empirical level through transnational approaches to the United States in the world and the imperial more broadly. These approaches emphasize the interosculation of foreign and domestic spheres in policymaking, social life-worlds, and cultural meaning making. Such analytic connections emphasize uneven and mutable geographies: they highlight how the social formations of Euro-American modernity—previously imagined as bounded, nationally centered, and autochthonous—have actually been the unstable and contingent results of socio-political processes that exceed and destabilize national boundaries, cross multiple fields of social power, recursively reshape the conditions of possibility for political rule, and, at their heart, have, what Ann Stoler has termed “colonial etiologies.”

But the pacification approach also refuses to assume a priori that war and peace or military and civilian, for example, are stable categories that accurately and sufficiently map geographic forms or encapsulate types of social life and state activity. Instead, this approach aims to supply a conceptual lexicon adequate to the historical blurriness and uncertainty that is the stuff of historians’ analytic enterprise, the inherent messiness found in archives and which state power so frequently seeks (and as frequently fails) to rationalize, hide, or overcome. In this way, the arduous labor powerful actors
have historically undertaken to match reality to concept becomes the object of analysis. Participation itself was a vehicle for matching reality to concept, as it placed the burden of development on those to be uplifted by development programming, in recognition of AID’s own limitations. As such, it represents a particularly apposite topic to approach within this framework. Overall, for critical theorists of pacification, this term “serves as a linchpin for investigating the coercive economic and social formation of populations; it is a tool for grasping the state-sponsored destruction and reconstruction of social order. ‘Pacification’ places at the forefront of our analysis a consideration of the confluence of military conquest and the fabrication of social order.”

**Legislative Origins**

With these conceptual coordinates in mind, I now turn to the linked histories of the EOA and the revised FAA, to show how crucial participation was to their operating frameworks and to their implicit visions of social order. More significant than the sheer amount of money invested in the War on Poverty, Title II-A of the 1964 EOA elaborated the new method of poverty alleviation—participation—intended to supersede older modes of paternalistic aid. The poor themselves would work to fight poverty, rather than simply being the objects of charity. Still, a lot of money was invested. In total, annual aid to the “nation’s poor” doubled between 1963 and 1969, from just under $13 billion to over $25.5 billion, as four more long, hot summers of unrest followed that of 1964, each seeming to outdo the prior in duration and temperature. Yet the Johnson administration envisioned the Great Society as consisting of catalysts to individual improvement, within a framework of community relationships. The goal was to enable aid recipients to help themselves. According to this line of thought, job training, rather than a jobs program, was the most expeditious form of aid. Rather than undertaking an assessment of employment opportunities available to black people in black neighborhoods, the Great Society assumed that jobs would be available for those who underwent skills upgrades via its programming. Direct economic assistance was never the focus, given that it was a politically touchy topic. Johnson himself nixed a recommendation from Sargent Shriver for a federal jobs program.

The core of the EOA was its mandate of participation in the management of economic aid by its recipients. Title II-A defined a “community action program” as entailing the mobilization and utilization of resources of any urban or rural, or combined urban and rural, geographical area (referred to in this part as a “community”) . . . which provides services, assistance, and other activities of sufficient scope and size to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty or a cause or causes of poverty . . . which is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas and members of the groups served.

In practice, beyond the mobilization of volunteers, participation was most clearly manifest in the requirement that a third of a community action agency’s board consist
of low-income residents of the area in which it operated. They could define “felt needs.”

In 1966, two years after the EOA’s passage, Congress passed a revised version of the FAA, originally signed in 1961. The FAA of 1961 created AID out of the predecessor International Cooperation Administration (ICA). The legislation expanded the foreign assistance budget, in the process consolidating extant and disparate programs, while also drawing a firmer distinction between military and nonmilitary aid. Yet AID would also soon come to house the newly centralized overseas police assistance program, which had for some years been based in regional bureaus of the ICA. With AID’s key role in South Vietnam at the time, it would be a mistake to assume that nonmilitary aid was far from security concerns; on the other hand, under the rubric of “civic action,” a term invented by the counterinsurgency impresario Edward G. Lansdale, the Pentagon was increasingly becoming embroiled in economic development, the precursor to today’s “humanitarian assistance.”

The 1966 FAA included Title IX. This Title IX—not to be confused with the far more well-known 1972 Title IX amendment to the Higher Education Act, which outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex—exquisitely paralleled Title II-A of the EOA. It read in part:

In carrying out programs authorized in this chapter, emphasis shall be placed on assuring maximum participation in the task of economic development on the part of the people of the developing countries, through the encouragement of democratic private and local governmental institutions.44

This striking correlation organized around “maximum participation” was paramount in the thinking of those charged with alleviating poverty, and hence, in the liberal cosmology of the times that blamed susceptibility to civil violence on poverty, preventing subversion overseas.

Recent historical scholarship, however, on overseas development and modernization has been remiss in appreciating the centrality of participation. Daniel Immerwahr’s study _Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development_ corrects the record to a large degree, by focusing on community development at home and abroad beginning with the New Deal. Yet his analysis concludes the year before Title IX of the FAA was introduced. As such, its findings might be considered the long and tortuous prelude to the congressionally imposed mandate of community development, “maximum participation in the task of economic development on the part of the people.” Indeed, Immerwahr discusses a fascinating episode of debate and “mutual incomprehension” between leading modernization theorists and community development advocates that occurred at a three-day ICA-sponsored meeting in 1957, featuring scholars from the Center for International Studies (CENIS) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), ground zero for the modernization paradigm. Immerwahr claims that the social scientist Max F. Millikan’s hopes for a second conference that might ameliorate the confusion that issued in the first one never came to be realized.45 In fact, such a conference did occur under the auspices of CENIS, in continuous session for over a month in the summer of 1968, led by Millikan and his colleague Lucian W. Pye. Forty social scientists and AID and
Department of State employees attended. Title IX was the centerpiece of the discussion at this “study session.” It seemed AID had been slow to implement the participation mandate fully, and the wider “foreign affairs community” was to find ways to realize, rather than impede, the mandate.46 The two-hundred-plus-page report of the conference was then circulated to AID “field missions for use as a basic program guidance document in the Title IX area.”47 What made the Great Society global was a wellspring of expert knowledge and the practical infrastructure of its transnational circulation, including conferences like this one, professional publications, and policy evaluations.

The legislative history of Title IX reveals that it had bipartisan backing, despite affinities with the EOA, which emerged from within the Democratic Party.48 Title IX’s intent and objectives were vague, polysemous, and open to interpretation, one reason it found a home in Colby’s CORDS as much as in the portfolios of AID’s most idealistic young staffers and public supporters. A Democrat initially introduced the language, but he quickly gained the support of a Republican colleague, though the two avoided detailing the implications of the legislation as much as possible.49 Congressman Donald M. Fraser of Minnesota crafted the case for Title IX, and Congressman Bradford Morse of Massachusetts amplified some of his arguments. Many of these made the legislation seem innocuous and placed it within a framework of widely agreed-upon nostrums about American democracy and institutions, “such as courts, as well as legislatures, administrative agencies, schools of all kinds, and a wide variety of business organizations.”50 Prior to the legislation’s introduction, a twenty-five-member study group of Republican congressmen issued a report that emphasized popular participation as one of the needed revisions to the foreign aid program.51 Partisan politics thus does not explain Title IX’s origins. Its echo of the EOA, rather, suggests that it took advantage of an emergent orthodoxy. As Millikan, Pye, and one of their staffers put it, “It is no coincidence that Title IX was written into the Foreign Assistance Act at a time when Americans were trying to increase popular participation within the United States itself.”52

At the same time, Title IX’s devolutionary thrust recognized the inherent limitations of really existing modernization practice overseas. It would codify a method of development that was incremental and had a built-in alibi for failures of development: they resulted from inadequacies of the indigenous institutions themselves that were charged with, and often fabricated for, assuring economic uplift. Fraser and Morse were both actually ambivalent about AID’s ability to promote development from above. Fraser thought the United States tended to overestimate its ability to achieve positive outcomes overseas.53 The encouragement of local institutions that would be responsible for assuring development was, moreover, one way to moderate the appearance of external imposition of alien expectations on communities overseas. Title IX explicitly required that AID programs under its auspices “recognize the differing needs, desires, and capacities of the respective developing countries and areas.” From the recipient nations’ perspective, the local-scale criterion helped assure national elites that the United States was not intending to meddle in national politics. In Congress, this way of thinking appealed to those who wanted a more modest role for the United States overseas, particularly in the increasingly desultory perspective of the ongoing
U.S. war in Vietnam, and it also appealed to those who did not trust foreign aid as an instrument because of skepticism of other peoples' capacities for self-government. Title IX meant that recipient communities' proof of capacity for self-government would be both the mechanism and the outcome of US foreign assistance. Thirteen years after the adoption of Title IX, in an analysis of the many ways participation had become institutionalized in development practice, social scientists reflected that, in contrast to their peers, elected officials were more clear-sighted in evaluating the stakes of participation: "The politicians were even more sensitive to events in China, Cuba, Vietnam, and other countries where popularly supported guerrilla movements in the countryside had been critical to major political shifts in world politics. A plausible argument is that the new emphasis on rural development, green revolution, popular participation, and basic needs grew out of concern with counter-insurgency."54

The participation experts envisioned to emerge from Title IX consisted of three elements: decision making, implementation, and reception. Because of the relatively thin record produced in congressional discussions of the legislation, it was up to experts to identify and interpret these elements at the MIT conference in 1968. Fraser and Morse addressed the conference for a day during its first week to help elucidate their thinking. The decision-making component included national and local democratic processes, but it also aimed for “participation in decisions that might be considered to be outside the sphere of official public governments,” such as, for example, trade union activity in the management of labor or the formation of agricultural cooperatives.55 To achieve decision-making participation, Title IX was interpreted as including “encouragement of democratic institutions and processes; forms of decentralization; and, increased number and effectiveness of voluntary organizations.” Second, participatory implementation meant using voluntary (not forced) labor and affording citizens the chance to be “involved in carrying out the decisions they participate in making, with a reasonable hope of obtaining a just share of the benefit.” Finally, the benefit, therefore, was the third pillar. The rewards of development, “material, cultural, civic, and psychic,” were to be shared among the people who participated democratically. Here the subjective outcomes among those who were to participate gained prominence, even as these were likely to be difficult to measure, in contrast to the more “material” aspects. Yet, it was warned, “Participation of this kind does not necessarily mean an immediate redistribution of returns among the entire populace.” It was not necessary to await the creation of fully equitable social institutions before implementing participatory decision making.56 In time, experts would add a fourth element to this list: popular participation in evaluation of the outcomes of the participatory processes that had occurred.57

The three original pillars evinced liberal optimism while also acknowledging the realities of inherited political and economic structures in Third World nations. "Participation," the conference proceedings argued, “is both a means and an end. It is a means to greater control over one’s environment and to improvements in one’s living conditions.” Yet it warned, “We must be careful to distinguish between the form and the substance of participation. Where the most critical issues are national, not local—e.g., land reform, allocation of national resources—small amounts of local participation may not provide meaningful participation as a means or an end.”58
Hopefulness had to be tempered. But it was equally a mistake to think participation was going to overturn social structures and forms of political and economic domination. That is why it was crucial to pacification.

**Participation in Pacification**

Though Title IX enshrined participation as the self-help mechanism of construction in development, security experts were well acquainted with the necessity of participation. There was widespread certainty that pacification’s only chance for success resided in an active population, a certainty that predated the massive and direct U.S. involvement in South Vietnam. The flipside of the active population was the presence of a cadre of U.S. advisers who were not supposed to engage in the practical work of development but instead to act as “teachers, not doers.” In fall 1964, prior to the arrival of U.S. ground troops in South Vietnam, but after the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, counterinsurgency experts debated what pacification actually entailed. The term had been unpopular in the years after the French defeat because it was so closely associated with French practices. U.S. experts in Lansdale’s circle tried to find ways to Americanize it, and they drew heavily on prior U.S. experience in the Philippines. Later, when CORDS came into existence, Colby contemplated the work AID and the CIA, with which he was intimately involved, had done to achieve pacification in rural reaches of South Vietnam in the early years of the 1960s. At that moment, Lansdale’s circle and AID officials on the ground first elaborated and tested activities Title IX would later codify.

Pacification, it turned out, required a future orientation, a strong sense of the spatial locus of security, and the commitment of the people. Charles Bohannan, who had worked closely with Lansdale in the Philippines, was an independent consultant to AID’s offices in South Vietnam, probably through a CIA arrangement. For him, pacification consisted of the “processes, actions, and activities necessary, useful, or desirable in rendering an area (which need not be sharply delineated geographically) pacified.” For an area to be “pacified” depended on three criteria: “effective government representation,” “no significant use of force against the representatives of government,” and “no present capability for the organized use of force against the representatives of government.” Political control, therefore, was paramount in his view. It was the essence of counterinsurgency. But control required the investment of the people in the pacified zone in their own security. He warned that control as a one-sided concept was “counter-productive, for it is at best ludicrous, at worst self-deceiving, to conceive of a government of, by, and for, the people ‘controlling’ the people.” Such a concept of unidirectional state power exercised from above was inimical to the American ethos and played into enemy propaganda. Instead, political control could be useful and effective “only when the affected elements help to enforce the controls.” Control required the participation of its beneficiaries. To shape governing processes, Bohannan recognized, smacked of undue U.S. control over South Vietnam.

Ogden Williams, another Lansdale associate, who worked for AID, put forth an even more explicit view of the relationship of participation to security in his 1964 commentary on a preliminary attempt to define pacification. Williams emphasized
conditions prior to political control. He felt that, as a rough heuristic, to redefine pacification as “build—secure—clear” was appropriate, which reversed French colonial methods (“clear—secure—build”) that inevitably faltered after the violent area-clearing phase due to insufficient amounts of personnel for the building phase. Instead, the builders had to be the community members, not outsiders. U.S. personnel could not act directly to orchestrate “civil administration, personnel procedures, administration routines” because of their lack of language facility, cultural competency, and more general experience. Instead, they could advise the people who would directly undertake this work.

In South Vietnam, however, a persistent lack of well-trained and experienced personnel working for the national government placed a great burden on AID officials stationed in rural areas. One AID official responsible for training those who would be stationed across the provinces of South Vietnam noted, for instance, that within AID alone there were forty-three types of jobs a provincial representative might have to undertake in the field, and requirements varied across provinces. A few years earlier, an AID report listed the following responsibilities for its provincial representatives: “Outright counterinsurgency of a direct combat support nature, disaster relief, refugee relocation, medical care, simple construction, improvement of agricultural practices, the introduction of improved crops, establishment of hamlet schools, rehabilitation of Viet Cong defectors, emergency shipments of commodities, planning and demonstration of self-help projects, advising Province Chiefs on provincial pacification planning and operations, drafting of surrender appeals and other psychological warfare documents, and advising on improving hamlet elections.” In each provincial outpost, there were to be one or two AID supervisory staff. When more staff members were available, these tended to include an agricultural adviser, an educational adviser, a public administration adviser, and a public safety adviser (from the police assistance program). In the early years of the AID effort, advisers’ wives also played a substantial, if less formalized, role, before security concerns banished them from the field. They taught English and engaged in gendered sanitary lessons. Altogether, with staff stretched thin and responsible for many tasks, U.S. officials alone could not be certain their efforts at pacification would succeed. Participation would fill the gap. The “primary responsibility for pacification or counterinsurgency . . . remained with the Vietnamese.”

Like France, overseas the United States was resource deficient, but South Vietnam’s government alone could not pick up the slack. The posture of investing the people in the development of their own secure communities would be the prescription. In this vein, Colby later reflected on the period, “We had to enlist the active participation of the community in a program to improve its security and welfare on the local level, building cohesion from the bottom up rather than imposing it from top down.” Even before Title IX had been issued, self-help was the order of the day. “Ideally,” wrote the social scientist George Tanham, self-help projects “should be requested by the villagers and approved at the provincial level; in practice, they are often thrust on the people by the province officials. In these self-help agreements the villagers agree to supply the labor, and the province provides money and materials.” New roads and bridges, irrigation works, and animal pens were to result, all of which
would transform indigenous economies away from subsistence, linking these communities with more distant markets and enabling greater levels of exchange. To this end, Title IX itself would be explicit on AID’s need to support labor cooperation, not take advantage of coerced labor, as had widely occurred in South Vietnam under the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. Yet it was difficult to escape the paradox that participation was compulsory. An adviser in Vinh Binh Province described how a self-help project using—ideally—voluntary labor typically came about and what its goals were:

The procedure was this: The cadre called a meeting to discuss an improvement project. The most popular projects were a school, a first-aid station, a market, a bridge, a cement-lined well, a community pigsty, and an irrigation canal. The province government provided materials, such as cement and aluminum roofing, and funds to purchase sand, stone, and wood and to pay for skilled labor. The people, in turn, agreed to construct the project. Community development served to unify the hamlet and to enhance the government’s prestige. There was less opportunity for corruption in self-help because the community was involved in the supervising, the purchasing, and the use of materials. Also, the Viet Cong were not so likely to destroy a self-help project as a contract project. The community that had built a self-help project valued it and whoever might destroy it would win their hatred.67

The “psychic” dimensions of participation thus also had strategic purposes of decreasing or warding off violence, and of ensuring that violence that did occur was directed toward the correct enemy. Security was never excluded from the calculus. Participation could, it seemed, reconfigure the politics of the war. Self-help projects could redefine the stakes of battle. Now, ownership mattered. The sides would be defined as the one that built and thus owned versus the one that destroyed what the other had built and owned. The major problem, of course, was that if this line of thinking were correct, U.S. firepower was the most destructive force in South Vietnam, meaning that anger directed as “whoever might destroy” what the people had built fell on the United States.

Bohannan recognized that the condition of being “pacified” was rarely a steady state but rather was always in formation and always subject to disintegration. It was a process. Key, therefore, was his definition’s implicit use of time and space. Pacification was oriented toward a future status, which was the condition of being pacified, with the recognition that the achievement of that status was likely temporary and constant reapplication of pacification methods would be necessary. Pacification meant prevention. But the process also had an endlessly deferred endpoint.

In addition to the temporal orientation, the locus of pacification, even if not sharply delineated, was a geographical zone, in which the residents exercised some amount of democratic and participatory control over the key processes of pacification. This geographical zone was the community, the emergent subject and object of development. Pacification’s premise was the conviction that “expunging the Communist fish from the popular sea,” referring to Mao Zedong’s most famous aphorism on guerrilla warfare, “must come as a result of a motivated population, not merely an administered one.”68 The final clearing phase identified by Williams, though, was
troublesome: if hidden enemy forces had been part of the community and participated in the building, how could they be cleared from the scene—and how could the scene be declared secure? Bohannan, therefore, himself pointed out that his definition was specific to South Vietnam, as compared to the domestic United States. He defined the status of “pacified” areas of South Vietnam as lacking a “present” and “organized” capacity for civil violence. This criterion, however, was far stricter than what he would have expected at home. He noted, “Wherever there are people”—meaning everywhere—“there is a capability for the use of force, as recent riots in the U.S. have demonstrated. Almost anywhere and any time, capable agitators can precipitate mob violence.” For the U.S. effort to succeed in South Vietnam, however, even dormant threats had to be eliminated. This commitment underpinned the Phoenix program, which enabled targeted “neutralizations” (capture, induced defection, or assassination) of communists in South Vietnam. Phoenix also had a participatory thrust: through its encouragement of denunciations and the use of informants Phoenix was to enlist the population in its own protection. Pacification, as Bohannan and Williams delineated it, in response to the ongoing insurgency in South Vietnam, was future oriented and community based, as across the rest of the globe where insurgency threatened, including at home.

The difference, therefore, between pacification as it came to be used in Vietnam after 1965 and pacification as a critical concept to evaluate a more broadly applied set of civil policing and participatory economic development programs is that the latter were not intended to stamp out the threat of insurrection entirely, however much appeal that possibility may have had to some elected officials or security professionals. Pacification instead was based on cognizance that loyalties and allegiances were “up for grabs.” Rather than strict central government control, a relationship of economic transaction oriented toward self-help as well as consensus-based mutual investment was the goal. Title IX codified this relationship. Pacification comprised future-oriented, community-based civilian methods of the prevention of civil violence and held that ongoing prevention as its goal. The most mobile aspects of pacification thus were not the most abjectly coercive but rather those that worked to further participation and police-enforced rule of law.

Yet the global reliance on policing also shows that there were recognized limitations, or contradictions, to the project of pacification from the outset. Most importantly, pacification assumed, as Bohannan made explicit, resistance. Were there no resistance to liberal property relations and extant political-economic conditions, pacification would be unnecessary. The modernization paradigm acknowledged that social transformation often led to disaffection as inherited political, economic, and spatial orderings of life eroded. Unlike the military’s, the police’s mission, which AID was tasked with assisting, was “to restore order, not destroy the enemy.” Participation would ease restoration of order, but it was unpredictable. One veteran AID staffer who had been in South Vietnam in the 1960s and Central America in the 1970s later reflected: development organized through popular participation “has caused problems, is causing problems and is going to cause problems.” AID could intervene to shape outcomes, but “many of our own attempts to ‘maintain stability’ have touched off explosions.” Participation could allow citizens to air grievances and even
mobilize and protest around them. But this protest was not to entail obstreperous
demands for self-determination. Instead, at most, it was to be like the familiar airing
of grievance U.S. citizens would find in small towns or urban neighborhoods. With
CORDS, the United States encouraged organizations there that would have been at
home domestically, such as Parent Teacher Associations, which in 1971 Colby called,
in light of Title IX, “useful vehicles for ‘maximum participation’ on the part of the
population.”73 In Vietnam, while B-52 Stratofortresses dropped innumerable fire-
bombs, hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes, and defoliants befouled
water sources and rendered earth barren, one of the highest-ranking U.S. officials
there lauded the local PTAs.

Conclusion

Why has the participation mandate received little attention from historians, even as
social scientists in the decade after Title IX’s adoption observed numerous examples
around the world, including beyond AID’s auspices, of participatory development?74
Title IX covered AID, but participation came to be adopted in bilateral aid among
many countries, United Nations programs, the World Bank programs under Robert
McNamara’s leadership, and in other emergent forms of development less beholden
to U.S. congressional political vicissitudes.75 Ultimately, it seems difficult to assess
the effects of Title IX’s mandate of participation in the achievement of development. This
difficulty owes not to a lack of data per se but rather to the design of the legislation.
As an AID report on the early effects of Title IX observed, “Title IX focuses on the
less quantifiable institution-building characteristics of the modernization process.”
The fact that figures like Colby reckoned with it, and, further, did not dismiss it
outright, suggests that Title IX’s significance resided in the way it encapsulated a
shared political zeitgeist, one that has been little appreciated by historians of counter-
surgency, development, and the welfare state. Historians of participation in the U.S.
context have not appreciated how it dovetailed with security practices while historians
of security practices and counterinsurgency have overemphasized violence. In fact,
what is more troubling is the recognition that each depended on the other in this
period.

Title IX’s ambiguity can help us make sense of the rise of an individualistic entre-
preneurial ethos in development programming within the shell of the very welfarist
institutions this ethos was to repudiate. Scale matters here. Participation was meant
“To involve an increasing number of people in the development process.” But was it
the correct tool for the discovery of “new and imaginative ways of eroding the essen-
tially ‘enclave’ nature of these societies, not only in the economic, but also in the
social and political spheres”?76 Because of the disjuncture intentionally built into the
participation mandate between localized democratic institution building based on felt
needs and national-scale democratization, this purported enclave character may never
have been a target for disruption by participation. Instead, participation was
consonant with such downscaling, and backers of participation approvingly made
distinctions between “participation for development” and “participation in politics.”77

One person who evaluated Title IX two decades after it was initially issued called
the mandate “a congressional whim rather than a serious basis for action.”78 This
interpretation begs revision in two ways, as this essay has demonstrated. First, Title IX was congruent with two intersecting U.S. political paradigms emergent at the moment of its creation: an increasing demand for democratization from below and a decreasing willingness to believe that top-down impositions of poverty alleviation could achieve their desired effects, at home and abroad. Second, not only did community development have a long history in U.S. foreign and domestic practice, as Immerwahr has powerfully demonstrated, in the lead-up to the modification of the FAA via Title IX’s adoption but experts on the ground in South Vietnam (rapidly becoming one of the most strategically important and widely observed testing grounds for development practice) were consistently attempting to use participation to fine-tune the balance between development and security. In their eyes, the latter was the measure of, but also the precondition for, the former. In addition, this quotation’s assessment belies the increasing popularity of downscaled, devolved economic development practices within and beyond AID that were already being adopted by the time this dismissive line was written. Title IX was modified in subsequent versions of the FAA, but participation has become pervasive in the legislation as AID operates now and in the world it tries to create. The difference today, though, is participation’s relationship to the so-called market. Whereas Title IX did encourage the enrollment of “US private business enterprises abroad,” creating market dependence among aid recipients was a tacit goal. Today, it is the fundamental, or fundamentalist, goal of development programming, and aid agencies mobilize myriad devices for its achievement, from microlending to genetically modified crops that preclude seed banking to Internet connectivity in remote areas.

Participation, this essay establishes, was critical to U.S. counterinsurgency. In turn, counterinsurgency, as historians have shown, was deeply tied to modernization. But was participation key to modernization? Certainly community development could be stymied by, for example, flooding, a typical problem modernization schemes hoped to alleviate. Yet Immerwahr reframes the history of modernization with his focus on community development. He argues that the latter was not inherently modernizing. Too much focus on modernization has obscured community development, which was more extensively deployed. As historians continue to analyze modernization, the target seems to shift, which explains why Immerwahr dissents from trying to keep community development, which seeps beyond modernization, within the same analytic frame. Still, it is worth evaluating how democratically organized community participation in economic development itself reconfigured what modernization theorists talked about when they talked about modernization. Bradley Simpson has argued through an analysis of the case of Indonesia in the 1960s that U.S. modernization theorists became less sanguine about the certainty of democratic routes to modernization and therefore allied themselves with authoritarian prescriptions. For Michael Adas, CORDS represents another example of this alliance, which revisionist historians of U.S. action in Vietnam believe held the tantalizing possibility of defeating North Vietnam.

Yet beyond Colby’s approbation for participatory development, three of the leading modernizers Simpson considers emblematic of the shift were all deeply involved in discussions of participation over the period as well: Millikan, Pye, and
Guy Pauker, a RAND Corporation Indonesia expert. Pauker attended the 1968 MIT conference that Millikan and Pye led. Pye coordinated a book series, “Studies in Political Development,” that published many important works on modernization, including a 1971 volume called *Crisis and Sequences in Political Development*, which included a contribution from Myron Weiner, another attendee of the 1968 conference, titled “Political Participation: Crisis of the Political Process.” For Weiner, modernization historically summoned participation, but the record of the previous decade suggested that participation did not always lead to demands compatible with modernization schemes and U.S. geopolitical goals. In this light, Title IX aimed to channel these demands in directions AID could sanction. If modernization thinking held that participation would result from economic development, the communitarian ethos behind Title IX and CORDS’s pacification practices alike was less certain of this direct relationship. In any event, Weiner’s term “crisis” alerts us to what was at stake intellectually and politically at this point in time, which the volume intended to accomplish: making sense of empirical deviations from theoretical models.

Authoritarian modernization and participatory development should not be considered opposites. Instead, not only could they potentially work hand in hand—with South Vietnam in the 1960s as the proof—they represented two responses to the more general crisis of modernization as a paradigm that unfolded throughout the 1960s, brought into being in part by the disasters of U.S. action in South Vietnam under the sign of modernization, anointed by its foremost popularizer, Walt Rostow. While the aerial bombardment Rostow consistently advocated forced Vietnamese peasants from their land, another social scientist, Samuel P. Huntington, warned that the results could lead to a familiar situation, the very one the EOA had been enacted to rectify: “It is not inconceivable that war plus slum urbanization could produce a Vietnamese family situation not altogether dissimilar from that which the Moynihan report found to exist among Negro families in American urban slums. This decay of the family, if it continues, bodes ill for the future stability and economic development of South Vietnam.” Domestic experience provided the lens to evaluate how best to act overseas. Huntington was one of the intellectuals who hammered nails into the coffin in which the modernization paradigm now fitfully slumbers. Here he adopted the emergent critique of the War on Poverty that issued from figures like Moynihan, whom he and his friend Edward C. Banfield had influenced, to help explain how the United States might be heading down the wrong path in Vietnam. In this critique, participation was no solution to ingrained cultural deficiencies, which it would only reproduce. Statements like Huntington’s demand what this essay has practiced: a transnational approach that keeps so-called core and periphery in a single frame.

While an individualistic expectation of market participation defines development practice today, institutionalized community-level democratization of the sort the EOA and Title IX envisioned seem artifacts of history. Even on the left it is common to hear critiques of irruptive movements like Occupy that lament their focus on democratic process to the supposed detriment of concrete demands. In this very vein, Huntington issued a redolent phrase to describe the social problems of the 1960s. The problem was that “maximum feasible participation,” in the EOA’s most famous term, went too far. There was, Huntington had insisted, in fact “an excess of democracy.” This 1975
critique has a genealogy that nearly ties it to Title IX. At a 1969 conference on foreign assistance held in Guatemala, he field-tested the position: the “two key elements of Title IX, maximum participation and the growth of institutions, are not necessarily compatible.” Institutions should not become vehicles of grassroots political control of the state but rather should be vehicles for control of the grassroots. Huntington’s critique, in essence, was that insurgency could take forms other than guerrilla warfare. For that reason, the use of participation as insurance against it, as many understood Title IX to be, would necessarily fail because participation in the absence of the creation of strong institutions would engender chaos. Huntington was wrong. Pacification largely achieved its goal overseas, of managing demands for socioeconomic change without overturning fundamental relations of liberal capitalism and U.S. geopolitical hegemony. Participation-based pacification conferred legitimacy on political-technical solutions offered by development agencies to socioeconomic failings of liberal capitalist social relations even as its goal was to expand and deepen these relations.

This history shows that the objects of pacification are also its active subjects, responsible for their own pacification, constructing themselves as a cohesive community through this action. A distinct lack of state capacity and political will on the part of the pacifiers inspired experts to rely on this modality of achieving social order. But popular participation as a route to social order thus also obscures its reasons for failure by shifting blame to the pacified, leading to the repetition of its advocates’ dreams of success, as in Iraq and Afghanistan in the past decade. Pacification actually makes the pacified active and constructs subjects to be arbiters of their own needs while not allowing for much change to the dramatically foreshortened political horizons attendant to the imperatives of the control of crime and subversion. Because of its multiple connotations, participation found friends in many quarters and dissenters in as many. Title IX did not survive intact, but the mandate of popular participation, reconfigured into a less explicit but more pervasive mandate of market dependency, dominates development thinking today. At the same time, without a thorough accounting of how participation historically functioned within pacification, democracy advocates are likely to fall under its spell, believing it to be a panacea without reckoning with how it channels and contains rather than realizes democracy; security experts, on the other hand, are likely to believe that it can be used to moderate violence and win legitimacy for counterinsurgent projects. Participation is an instrument of political chastity, with a built-in failsafe that makes it seem like its backers are doing almost nothing at all. It distances pacifiers from very interventions into social life they are making, as if pacification is simply a process of innocently rousing subjects from torpor to activity rather than ensuring that their activities do not imperil the pacifiers’ social order. Participatory development might mean teaching a man to fish. Pacification means locking him up or killing him if he and his friends socialize their catch.

NOTES


5. By “civil violence,” I mean symbolic and other violence against people and property that is organized, collective, and addressed to the state. I develop this definition of civil violence based on one offered in Michael B. Katz, “Why Don’t American Cities Burn Very Often?,” Journal of Urban History 34, no. 2 (January 2008): 185–208.


8. “Riots and Poverty,” New York Times, August 4, 1964; Alyosha Goldstein, Poverty in Common: The Politics of Community Action during the American Century (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012). Sargent Shriver, head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, defended his agency to Congressman (and future President) George H. W. Bush after the 1965 unrest in Watts by saying that it was not an “anti-riot agency.” He had multiple goals in making this argument: first, he wanted to distance poverty alleviation from urban violence because he knew that continued violence could endanger the programming by implying that it did not work; second, he did not want to give the perception that economic aid was intended to bribe urban black populations, which would suggest that political complaints could be answered only with baksheesh. On Shriver’s correspondence with Bush, see William S. Clayson, Freedom Is Not Enough: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 131. More broadly, Shriver’s defenses of the embattled agency varied widely, and he often struggled to match his own shifting lines of argument to his perceived audiences. It was certainly true that the federal government at the same time was beginning to mobilize wholly different forms of antiriot responses, which took shape with Johnson’s declaration of the War on Crime as new federally initiated police training programs and the introduction of new “riot control” technologies.


10. At the federal level, with 1966 an election year (that would see the weakening of the Democratic majority in the both houses of Congress), several powerful Democratic members of Congress began to repudiate the participation mandate. The Office of Economic Opportunity, in response to municipal-level criticism, reconfigured the formula for membership on antipoverty
planning boards to lessen poor people’s participation, from one-third to one-quarter. Yet some Republicans in Congress recognized how participation of poor people in local governance could imperil elected Democrats and their allies, and they thus pressed for greater participation of the poor on the planning boards and returned the percentage to one-third. The required percentage of members of the boards who were poor thus fluctuated in the years after the EOA became law based on partisan political battles. At the same time, poor people increasingly supported participation. Even as municipal officials tried to blame unrest between 1964 and 1968 on community action programs, it became difficult to dismantle the burgeoning participation infrastructure because it entailed the self-activating and -organizing of poor people. As Cazenave puts it, participation created its own "momentum." Despite legislative changes, the ethos and practices of community participation did live on in many aid-oriented volunteer and nonprofit organizations that emerged from the Great Society. Noel A. Cazenave, Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 141–46, 150–58, 166–69.


12. A useful analysis of the prehistory of the EOA and Great Society programming, with a focus on participation, is Cazenave, Impossible Democracy. Cazenave favors irony as an explanatory trope. See, for example, 13.


15. Immerwahr makes this important observation about funding levels but does not evaluate its implications on how community development mattered to security practices. Thinking Small, 165. It is misleading, however, to think that this decline in funding led to a decrease in community development. With Title IX, in contrast, all foreign aid programs were to aspire to the participatory character of earlier community development efforts.


17. Immerwahr, Thinking Small, 139.


19. For instance, an otherwise fascinating recent collection of social history of the War on Poverty pays almost no attention to poverty alleviation overseas; Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle
Hazirjian, eds., The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964–1980 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011). This collection reproduces a characteristic feature of initial revisionist scholarship on the period, such as Michael B. Katz, The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990). Goldstein’s Poverty in Common is an exception insofar as it refuses to separate the foreign and the domestic, but it nonetheless is silent on Title IX. Immerwahr astutely notes how Moynihan mischaracterized the work he had done on participation, and the inspirations drawn from overseas experience, when he later came to denounce it. Thinking Small, 135–37.

Recent revisionist scholarship that lauds the radical vision of community development and participation in the War on Poverty can be found in Orleck and Hazirjian, The War on Poverty.


Maxwell D. Taylor, for example, assured President John F. Kennedy, “The greatest possible use is being made of South Viet-Nam as a laboratory for techniques and equipment related to the counterinsurgency program.” Maxwell D. Taylor, Memo for the President, June 2, 1962, Special Group (CI) 1/1/62–7/31/62; Records of the Special Group (Counter Insurgency), 1962–1966, entry 5206; box 1; Records of the Department of State, RG 59; National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md. Hereafter cited as NARA.


See, for example, Phillips, War! What Is It Good For?


For an argument that the participation mandate of the EOA was more politically radical than subsequent scholarship has allowed, see, Annelise Orleck, “The War on Poverty and the Battle for Community Control,” Reviews in American History 41, no. 3 (September 2013): 513–18.

Further, an appreciation of this consonance helps us to understand the multiple simultaneous wars that were ongoing during the period commonly referred to as “the Vietnam War”: even as the horrors of the U.S.-led war effort are well known, the demands of the ongoing revolution and U.S. attempts to address them, however deeply they failed, remain outside the view of most historiography of the war. For the best synthetic argument about the multiplicity of the wars in Vietnam, see Marilyn Young, The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990 (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991). Michael Adas specifically addresses how development aid and military efforts combined in Vietnam in response to the challenges to Saigon’s authority. Michael Adas, Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America’s Civilizing Mission (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 281–335.


This reading of Marx is controversial but has gained popularity in recent years. A prominent explanation of it is Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Among the authors of the critical theory of pacification, there is occasional oscillation between a critical approach from the standpoint of the objects of security, which would be analogous to what Postone calls “traditional Marxism,” and a critique of security as a hegemonic concept, or, as George Rigakos, puts it, of security as hegemony. Rigakos, “‘To Extend the Scope of Productive Labor’: Pacification as a Police Project,” in Neocleous and Rigakos, *Anti-Security*, 58.


Even if not Marxist, by taking modernization as an object of critical inquiry rather than an approach to historical transformation unto itself, the historiography participates in the denaturalization of the paradigm as a taken-for-granted, dominant social scientific approach that Marxist analyses enabled. Marxist critiques of the modernization paradigm emergent during the Cold War have a well-established pedigree (see, for example, Immanuel Wallerstein, “Modernization: Requiescat in Pace,” in *The Uses of Controversy in Sociology*, ed. Lewis Coser and Otto Larsen [New York: Free Press, 1976], 131–35), though they have fallen out of fashion among some historians working in a postcolonial vein, who accuse Marxist approaches of themselves being the obverse side of the modernization coin. Still, both Marxist and some postcolonial critiques share the sense that external forces shape the intellectual field, in contrast to recent approaches growing out of science studies that privilege dynamics internal to intellectual production. For a sympathetic recent critique of these Foucauldian and discourse- and performativity-centered internalist analyses of social science during the Cold War, see Philip Mirowski, “A History Best Served Cold,” in *Uncertain Empire: American History and the Idea of the Cold War*, ed. Joel Isaac and Duncan Bell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61–88. For a useful recent mapping of how the Cold War might be seen as an intellectual field but also how historians have interpreted the relationship of social science to the Cold War, see Nils Gilman, “The Cold War as Intellectual Force Field,” *Modern Intellectual History* 13, no. 3 (November 2016).

An important recent study of how Pentagon-funded social scientific research unfolded...


44. Public Law 89–583, September 19, 1966, PL 89–583, Reports on Enrolled Legislation, 9/12/66–9/20/66, Box 40, LBJL.

45. Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 61–64. The reemergence of community development within counterinsurgency during the era of the Washington Consensus is the subject of a useful essay by Ben Oppenheim, “Community and Counterinsurgency,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 249–65. The present analysis thus can be seen as connecting the periods of focus of Immerwahr and Oppenheim. Notably, both discuss the Philippines, which provided the model and experience for the counterinsurgency experts discussed herein.


47. Civic Participation Division, Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, “Popular Participation in Development: Title IX,” AID Bibliography Series, Civic Participation, No.1
(Washington D.C.: AID, 1970), 4; http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAAS945.pdf. This and many other AID publications from the period are available through the agency’s online repository; I include direct links because the documents can be difficult to locate through the interface otherwise.


50. Fraser quoted in Butler, “Title IX,” 121.


52. Millikan et al., The Role of Popular Participation in Development, 19.


55. The massive termination report issued in 1975 that assessed AID activity in South Vietnam over the prior two decades emphasized activity in the field of trade unions and cooperatives as particularly compatible with Title IX. That these unions were “openly and staunchly anti-communist” gives one obvious indication of how participation had to occur within a constrained field of political possibility. “United States Economic Assistance to South Vietnam—1954–75,” vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: AID, 1975), 343 (hand-numbered); http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAAX018.pdf.

56. Millikan et al., The Role of Popular Participation, 23–27.

57. This additional criterion was considered state of the art in 1979; Uphoff et al., Feasibility and Application of Rural Development Participation.

58. Millikan et al., The Role of Popular Participation, 105.


61. Comments by Ogden Williams on ToAid A-822 “Definition of Pacification,” dated October 8, 1964, October 28, 1964, ArBoso, box 2, Charles T. R. Bohannan Papers, HIA.


65. Colby and Forbath, Honorable Men, 176.


70. In contrast, some critics of Phoenix have argued that subsequently outlawed domestic military intelligence efforts in the late 1960s and early 1970s replicated its modes of targeting particular individuals. See Douglas Valentine, The Phoenix Program (New York: Morrow, 1990), 311.


73. William E. Colby, “Title IX and Vietnam.”


One piece in the puzzle of the dearth of attention to Title IX is that AID itself funded a four-year research program into Title IX led by Huntington (resulting in No Easy Choice), an intellectual predisposed to find participation to be a bad idea and a worse practice.

75. Uphoff et al., Feasibility and Application of Rural Development Participation.


79. Millikan et al., The Role of Popular Participation, 161.

80. A key analysis of modernization’s connection to counterinsurgency is found in the monograph that ushered in the fifteen-year profusion of historical analysis of modernization: Michael E. Latham, Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

81. For example, AID rural development programs in Quang Nam Province in South Vietnam ran into major difficulties due to flooding in late 1964: William A. Nighswonger, “Quang Nam Province,” in War without Guns, 119.


83. Adas, Dominance by Design.

85. This analysis was part of Huntington’s work on behalf of the Department of State as a consultant investigating the situation in Vietnam. It was the basis for his well-known essay in *Foreign Affairs*, “The Bases of Accommodation.” Samuel P. Huntington, “Political Stability and Security in South Vietnam” (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, December 1, 1967), Declassified Document Reference System, Document No. CK310031390, 40.


87. Michel Crozier et al., *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 113. Notably, one consultant to the Trilateral Commission during the meetings that led to this widely circulated report was Representative Donald Fraser, who had originally introduced Title IX into the FAA.