SIG hosts Nuclear Quartet: “Cold Warriors” call for World Without Nuclear Weapons

By Mohit Thukral ’13

On November 12, 2010, Stanford in Government hosted a panel discussion in front of an audience of about 300 to provide the Stanford community with a unique opportunity to hear about the threat posed by nuclear weapons from the very people who were, in part, responsible for building the nuclear arsenal of the United States: Secretary Henry Kissinger, Secretary William Perry, Secretary George Shultz, and Senator Sam Nunn. Together, they laid out their vision for a world without nuclear weapons.

Recounting a turning point in the Cold War era talks on nuclear weapons, Secretary Shultz told the story of the Reykjavik summit where he and President Reagan declared their goal to abolish nuclear weapons. The international response to this announcement was one of fear – Shultz recounted his getting a verbal beating or “handbagging” from Margaret Thatcher, who called the idea “dangerous.” The idea of denuclearization is much more accepted now, in no small part due to the endorsement of figures like the “Nuclear Quartet,” who first declared their collective support in a Washington Post op-ed in 2008.

The panel discussion was accompanied by a screening of “Nuclear Tipping Point,” a documentary in which these four powerful men highlight the risk of nuclear weapons – especially if they were to fall into the hands of terrorists. 

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What a Visit from a Young Venezuelan Activist Taught Me

By Zev Karlin-Neumann ‘11

In October, Stanford was privileged to host Roberto Patiño, a Venezuelan student activist and leading democracy advocate, for a week of discussion on the peaceful student struggle for democracy. A 21-year-old engineering student and a leader of the Caracas’s Student Federation at Simon Bolivar University, which actively works for democracy in Venezuela, Patiño interacted with professors, students, and community members in a variety of campus events, impressing many of us with his passionate and articulate advocacy for democratic change in one of Latin America’s most corrupt regimes.

For me, it was a rare opportunity to interact with someone my age who already has become an actor on the world stage. In April, Patiño received the International Democracy Award on behalf of student movement leaders in Venezuela at The World Movement for Democracy in Jakarta. I and other SIG members were excited to co-host Patiño with the Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law for this very reason. Witnessing Patiño’s passion – and its tangible results, such as images of a sea of 500,000 Venezuelan demonstrators – inspired me. I was reminded of a favorite quotation of mine, by Robert F. Kennedy: “This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease.” Kennedy’s words – and Patiño’s actions – remind us that young people have an important role to play in shaping the kind of world in which we want to live.

Talking politics over pizza during a midweek SIG policy lunch, Patiño shifted easily from personal stories of the student democratic movement, to an informative Presentation, to showing pictures and clever videos encouraging Venezuelans to vote. Several students lingered afterward to keep asking questions. These questions continued during other dinners, lectures, and seminars in which Patiño continually and cheerfully discussed and debated issues of democratic governance and student activism. Not a night went by that I didn’t log onto Facebook and see someone mentioning how blown away they were by Patiño’s passion and commitment. Since it was Patiño’s first time in the Bay Area, some SIG members and I took the opportunity to show him around, including sightseeing in San Francisco and, of course, ...

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Lunch with Chuck Ludlam

Alumnus Chuck Ludlam (Photo: US Senate)

By Alexander Berger ’11

Chuck Ludlam ’67, a long-time Stanford in Government supporter, visited campus on October 18th to speak to students about employment opportunities in Washington, D.C., a topic close to many of our hearts. After more than twenty years as a legal counsel to House and Senate Committees and Senator Joseph Lieberman, and seven years as the chief lobbyist for the biotechnology industry, Ludlam is well-placed to give advice on the job-search process. After a packed lunchtime presentation at the Haas Center, Ludlam met with the SIG Board to discuss SIG’s history and our current activities.

During the Haas Center building campaign in the early 1990s, Ludlam contributed funding toward SIG’s office at the Haas Center, which is named in his honor.

SIG-Haas Alumni Brunch Features Founders and Fund Announcements

By Valentin Bolotnyy ’11

Over 70 SIG and Haas alumni filled the Haas Center’s lobby and Donald Kennedy Room on Sunday, October 24, 2010 for a very special reunion brunch. This year, the Haas Center for Public Service turned 25 and SIG celebrated its 47th birthday. SIG chairs and members from both recent years and the pre-Haas years were in attendance, as were former Stanford President Donald Kennedy, Haas Center founding director Catherine Milton, Peter E. Haas Faculty Co-Directors Larry Diamond and Julie Kennedy, and Executive Director Tom Schnaubelt.

In recognition of Catherine Milton’s early leadership, which placed the public service center at the core of the university’s mission to encourage students to innovate and collaborate on addressing critical community needs, Donald Kennedy announced the launching of the Catherine Milton Fund for Innovation. Intended to continue Milton’s signature legacy, the Milton Fund will support, advise, and facilitate selected student-proposed public service initiatives consistent with the Haas Center’s Principles of Ethical and Effective Service. The initial fundraising results will be announced in the spring, with the first annual grant anticipated for the 2011-2012 academic year.

SIG’s announcement was no less exciting. Former SIG Chair Susan Thomas ’95 introduced the newly-endowed Jeanne Wahl Halleck Fund, an idea hatched by Thomas and fellow SIG Chair Jon Oram ’96 and realized through the generosity of over 30 SIG supporters to honor the work of long-time advisor Jeanne Wahl Halleck. According to Thomas, Jeanne’s openness, wisdom, and tireless energy had a “tremendous influence on SIG as an organization and as students looking to make a difference.”

After almost seven years of fundraising efforts (kept secret from Jeanne almost until the end), the Halleck Fund is an unprecedented resource for SIG. As we continue to work to bring students as close as possible to the most inspirational and insightful public servants – both through events on campus and through our fellowships – the tenacity of people like Donald Kennedy, Catherine Milton, Susan Thomas, Jon Oram, and the alumni whose collective vision has helped make the Halleck and Milton Funds a reality provides invaluable perspective.

Though most directly a celebration of what has already been accomplished, the reunion brunch also recognized the innovation and leadership development that is yet to come both at the Haas Center and in SIG.
Nuclear Quartet Speaks Out
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The first point made in the panel discussion was that the threat is not just ‘academic.’ Secretary Perry, who is now a professor at Stanford, recalled a time when U.S. military radar was mistakenly showing a nuclear attack from Russia and another time when nuclear weapons were “lost” for 24 hours. Such risks have caused people from across ideological and political divides to call for the dismantling of all nuclear weapons. The Quartet is, however, realistic about expectations. Secretary Kissinger stated that they did not expect the process to come to fruition within their lifetimes, but they still considered it their duty to start climbing this mountain.

After the panel discussion, the Quartet engaged the audience in a question-and-answer session that was both educational for the students and enjoyable for the panelists. Senator Nunn concluded the session on a hopeful note – delivering a “call to arms” of sorts for students to get involved in the nuclear issue and to advocate for the passing of the new START treaty. Both Secretary Kissinger and Shultz were seen leaving the venue after giving “high-five” to students.

SIG organized a reception among them SIG’s own Chair Valentin Bolotnyy, who vowed to host more events to raise student awareness of the issue.

Voter Registration and Promotion On and Off the Farm
By Andy Nguyen ’12

This past election season, Stanford in Government’s Campus and Community Partnership (CCP) committee organized two events to promote civic engagement both in the community and on campus. In a partnership with Stanford Immigrants’ Rights Project (SIRP), a group of seven volunteers from CCP and SIRP hosted a voter registration drive at St. Francis Church in East Palo Alto on Sunday, October 10, 2010. For two hours, volunteers spoke with community members about their right to vote and the importance of exercising that right. SIG members work to register voters in East Palo Alto (Photo: Leah Karlins) because it shows people that they have a political voice not only through voting, but also in being actively engaged.

Prendergast Talks Service, Discusses Sudan with Clooney
By Meredith Wheeler ’14 and Valentin Bolotnyy ’11

Stanford in Government was pleased to host author and human rights activist John Prendergast for a policy lunch on November 3rd and to co-sponsor with STAND a discussion between him and actor George Clooney on November 8th that gripped the university.

A Crothers Hall Visiting Fellow from November 1st to the 12th, Prendergast participated in a range of other events during his stay, from the S.T. Lee Distinguished Lecture titled “The Good News from Africa: Success Stories and their Implications,” to a conversation with experts on the political and human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

During the policy lunch, Prendergast advised students to pursue work in both the public and private sector, as well as in non-governmental organizations. By doing so, he said, young people can develop the network of contacts necessary to advocate for policy in the future. Prendergast contrasted his previous experiences as Director of African Affairs in the National Security Council under President Clinton with his current involvement lobbying for change through the Enough Project, an anti-genocide organization that he co-founded in 2006. He described his initial forays into sub-Saharan Africa and the challenges of transforming his personal outrage at human rights violations into substantive change.

When answering student questions, Prendergast warned against simply immersing oneself in the expatriate community when working abroad, and emphasized the necessity of developing contacts within the local community. The energetic and compelling discussion, peppered with anecdotes about President Obama, George Clooney, and the life lessons of the show “Seinfeld,” offered fascinating insight into the multifaceted nature of public service and activism.

Moderated by FSI Senior Fellow and SIG Advisor Stephen Stedman, Prendergast’s discussion with George Clooney, titled “Sudan: Preventing the Next War,” filled CUberley Auditorium to the brim and drew the attention of numerous news agencies. With oil-rich South Sudan due to hold a referendum on independence from the rest of the country on January 9, 2011, Prendergast and Clooney emphasized the importance of continued international pressure on the current government in Khartoum not to resort to violence if the South votes for secession. Both encouraged the 400 people in attendance to recognize the dangers of an outbreak of genocide in South Sudan similar to the ongoing genocide in Darfur, and to put pressure on their representatives in Congress to prevent it. Engaging and passionate, the speakers left students talking about Sudan and wanting to make a difference.
SIG Announces New Fellowships

Since its inception in 1963, Stanford in Government has dedicated itself to providing Stanford students with unique and incomparable experiences in the public sector. We have placed hundreds of bright young minds in nonprofits, governmental offices, and NGOs. These fully-funded fellowship experiences are available at the state, national, and international levels. Our Fellows come from all backgrounds and have gone on to be prominent policy shapers. We are extremely proud to announce several new fellowship opportunities available during the summer of 2011:

Pacific Institute
The Pacific Institute is a nonpartisan research institute located in Oakland, CA, working to create a healthier planet and more sustainable communities. It conducts interdisciplinary research in a variety of fields, looking for solutions that advance environmental protection, economic development, and social equity. The Fellow will work on one of three projects: (1) developing ways to improve water quality, sanitation, and hygiene based on community characteristics; (2) analyzing the potential of greywater to produce water and energy savings in California; and (3) creating popular education tools to share and discuss research results with community constituents in Oakland and to help them adapt environmentally-friendly practices.

The Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies
CEERT is a nonprofit advocacy organization based in Sacramento, CA that works to promote renewable energy resources in California in collaboration with clean energy companies and environmental organizations. The Fellow will work primarily with the policy and public affairs department at CEERT. The current project includes researching renewable energy as well as preparing reports on CEERT developments for various audiences such as the press, CEERT members, and other nonprofit organizations.

California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
CalEPA is a regulatory agency based in Sacramento, CA that is charged with developing and enforcing various environmental laws in order to ensure the future existence of California’s ecosystems. Current regulation focuses on maintaining high air and water standards as well as protecting and restoring the environment. The Fellow will work on projects involving climate change legislation and the CalEPA budget for the 2012-2013 budget year.

Santa Clara County, Office of Sustainability
The Office of Sustainability was created within the Office of the County Executive in 2010 in order to support Santa Clara County’s efforts to become more environmentally-friendly, energy-efficient, and resource-conserving. The Fellow will have the opportunity to help develop the new Comprehensive

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SIG Alum and Ambassador to Mexico
Carlos Pascual Shares his Experiences

By AJ Sugarman ’14

Stanford in Government was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with United States Ambassador to Mexico, Carlos Pascual ’80, who was on campus for his 30th reunion during Homecoming Week.

Ambassador Pascual, a former SIG chair, gave a lunchtime seminar on the state of Mexico, followed by a question-and-answer session. The seminar— for faculty, distinguished guests, and a limited number of SIG members—was a candid, off-the-record talk on the tough challenges Mexico faces, and how the US can best help it overcome those challenges. While he did not sugarcoat Mexico’s problems, Ambassador Pascual pointed out that the media tends to focus on the sensational negatives rather than the mundane positives, and that there are many encouraging signs for the country; for example, the notorious current violence is confined to only a few states.

For SIG, the highlight was the exclusive Q-and-A that followed. Moving to a smaller setting, about 10 SIG members had 30 minutes to ask the ambassador any questions they had. In keeping with SIG’s mission, the questions focused on how Ambassador Pascual became interested in public service and to have an impact even before beginning his official career. SIG was a great first step to eventually fulfilling his goal of helping to effect systemic change. Discussing his desire to make a lasting impact, the ambassador said, “What got me excited was to work on policy changes that can somehow have more of a systemic impact, that it wasn’t just looking at the case-by-case change.” He also recounted a lesson he learned at USAID while deciding whether to accept a new assignment to promote peaceful change in South Africa. He discussed the risks and rewards of foregoing the traditional career path and accepting this unconventional assignment, ultimately encouraging students “to be willing to take those risks, to not necessarily do the things that are obvious in one’s career.”
Sustainability Master Plan for keeping the county green, as well as working on how to educate the public on the important issues of conservation and climate change. Working closely with the Sustainability Executive Committee is sure to be one of the highlights of the work in this fellowship.

U.S. Campaign for Burma
D.C./National Fellowships is working with Patrick Cook-Deegan, a recent Fulbright scholar and the Director of Strategic Partnerships at the U.S. Campaign for Burma (USCB) to establish a new fellowship. The USCB is “a U.S. based organization dedicated to empowering grassroots activists around the world to rally for human rights and to bring an end to the military dictatorship in Burma.” The fellowship will be located in D.C. and will provide the Fellow with the opportunity to work on promoting human rights, democracy, and freedom in Burma. It might even involve some traveling!

Project on Government Oversight (POGO)
POGO is an independent, non-partisan nonprofit that investigates and exposes corruption and other misconduct in order to achieve a more effective, accountable, open, and ethical federal government. POGO uses the methods of investiga-

tive journalism – working with whistleblowers and policymakers – to expose problems and explore solutions. The Fellow’s responsibilities will involve everything from filing Freedom of Information Act requests and writing opinion-editorials for press release to working with whistleblowers and assisting in the writing and editing of testimony to be delivered at Congressional hearings.

SIG’s Campus-Wide Voting Guide
By Becca Siegel ’13
In preparation for the midterm elections, Campus Community Partnerships, in cooperation with Campus Awareness, compiled a comprehensive, nonpartisan voter guide to the multiple, sometimes confusing, measures on the California ballot. The goal of the guide was to educate voters, enable them to more easily fill out their ballots, and thereby encourage increased civic participation among students. The guide provided a “plain English” description of each measure as well as “for” and “against” arguments. The guide was widely circulated in the Stanford community and the feedback was outstanding. Stanford students and other members of the community were very appreciative of the help the guide provided when filling out their ballots.

SIG Fellowships take Stanford students across the world. This past summer Sarah Flamm visited some friends in the Alps while working for the International Labor Organization in Geneva. (Photo: Kate Chadwick)

Dispatch from Beijing
By Victor Luong ’12
This past summer, I was a Stanford in Government Fellow with the International Labor Organization (ILO). I spent six weeks in the ILO-Beijing office and two and a half weeks in the ILO-Hanoi office, working primarily under the direction of Dr. Chang-hee Lee, the supervisor in Beijing, and Mr. Young-mo Yoon, the supervisor in Hanoi. My work consisted mainly of writing a report on U.S. trade-labor linkage as it applies to China and Vietnam, which I then translated so it could be disseminated in the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor. In addition to working on this report, I conducted research for Chang-hee and worked on the ILO Convention 111 on labor rights and discrimination with a team from ILO-Bangkok.

Dr. Lee and Mr. Yoon’s focus is labor relations and fostering the ILO-designated tripartite collective bargaining system. They work extensively with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in China and the Vietnamese General Confederation of Labor in Vietnam, the two state-sponsored labor unions. Dr. Lee and Mr. Yoon gave me complete access to their work with the Chinese and Vietnamese governments, as well as insight into how these two governments function. In Beijing, I had the opportunity to accompany Dr. Lee to meetings with foreign and domestic journalists, leaders of research institutes, and other academics. In Hanoi, I accompanied Mr. Yoon to meetings with high officials at the Ministry of Labor and the Central Economic Management Institute.

I learned about the ILO’s role as a UN agency and a part of the government system. The ILO is an agency that is well respected in its particular field, and there are plenty of paid leave days. While the ILO may be best known for Conventions and Fundamental Standards, implementation and promotion of these legal instruments depend on country field offices, which rely very heavily on local governments. “Capacity-building” is as much a reflection of progressive values as practical necessity.

I was surprised by how much time Dr. Lee and Mr. Yoon devote to building relationships – a kind of personal diplomacy. In retrospect, it is logical, given the extent to which ILO officials rely on local governments to carry out the organization’s agenda. In particular, the trust that Dr. Lee has built with Chinese Ministry of Labor officials has been very important to the efficacy of his work.

The highlight of my internship was undoubtedly the privilege of working with Dr. Lee and Mr. Yoon. They were exceptionally kind and went out of their way to give me interesting work. We also shared many long and enlightening conversations that deepened our relationship. Dr. Lee is now on my Skype “friend” list, and Mr. Yoon is a Facebook “friend,” Surely, few of my student friends can say that about their former bosses!
Stanford in Government is grateful for the generous contributions from donors and alumni who support SIG programming, fellowships and other opportunities that help increase political awareness on campus. We hope that you will consider supporting SIG in its mission to engage students and faculty in a broader civic dialogue and to connect students with opportunities in public service.

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