

Salute to Professor Stephen P. Cohen

Let us suppose that Stephen P. Cohen had pursued a different academic career than that as a Professor of Political Science and History at the University of Illinois for thirty years and, later, as a distinguished Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington D. C.

It is not farfetched to say that, absent Steve Cohen, ACDIS might never have been created, nor would that South Asian studies enjoy today its elevated status in academia and in policy circles around the globe.

The death of Stephen P. Cohen has deprived us of a beloved colleague, an esteemed scholar, a leading influence in South Asian security studies and policy-making, and mentor of scores of students and public servants — and a *mensch* to all who knew him.

Professor Cohen was largely instrumental in creating ACDIS. Also, he was central to the creation of the field of South Asian studies. There is insufficient space here to fully recount all of his original contributions to our understanding of the socio-political and security challenges confronting over a billion people in South Asia. Nor can we fully do justice here to his public service and his many informed proposals to bring peace to that region. These were funneled through his scholarly work and through an uninterrupted stream of journal articles, book chapters, and op-eds in significant academic and policy venues. His leadership and insights will certainly continue to inform the many whom he has inspired to carry on his extraordinary work on South Asian concerns.

I will not repeat the many merited testimonials to Steve's personal and professional achievements that go well beyond his years at the University of Illinois. In this tribute, I will focus primarily on his indispensable contributions to the creation and development of the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security (ACDIS) — the Program's name at its foundation as well as his development of South Asian studies at the University of Illinois.

The ACDIS story begins in 1978. Arthur Chilton, Professor of Nuclear Engineering and a former U.S. Navy Captain commanding the Port Hueneme Naval Civil Engineering Laboratory, knocked on Steve's door one day. He had learned of Steve's widely acknowledged reputation in security studies. I was in an adjoining office to Steve's. We talked at length about how we might develop a program to inform our students and faculty about the security challenges confronting the United States and the Western democracies. This led to our approaching the Director of what was then titled International Programs and Studies for funding. He provided us, a modest grant of \$5,000 to develop ways to engage the university community in the study and understanding of the many security issues confronting the United States.

Steve was already working actively with faculty who were members of a university committee, charged to oversee the academic quality of ROTC programs. Largely as a consequence of the Vietnam War, the ROTC program at Illinois was becoming marginalized as an important unit on campus, and its academic status was considered problematic in many university quarters. Steve assumed leadership of this group and infused new energy and direction in its activities. He was determined to integrate the ROTC program more deeply into the life of the academy. Thanks to Steve's vision and leadership, which were integral to the early work of ACDIS, lectures, workshops, brown bags, and presentations were mounted to advance this objective. Steve insisted that it was important for the preservation of democratic civil-military relations in the United States that the officer corps be drawn from all significant quarters of American society.

A triumvirate of Arthur, Steve, and I led ACDIS at this time. We decided that we would spend the entire IPS grant quickly to advance ACDIS's mission while aggressively seeking outside funding. Ronald Reagan's election provided the occasion for ACDIS's expansion. President Reagan's "Star Wars" initiatives, both to develop missile-defense capabilities to purportedly defeat a Soviet nuclear attack on the United States and to outspend the Soviet Union in military capabilities to exhaust its resources, provoked a major backlash in academia and policy circles. Key private foundations were keen to pour resources into the study of security issues to reduce the heating up of the Cold War. Enter the MacArthur Foundation.

Steve and I made a representation to the MacArthur Foundation to support ACDIS. Steve's reputation as a scholar in South Asian security and his established record of integrating the study of security problems facing the United States into the intellectual, teaching, and research concerns of the academy convinced the MacArthur Foundation to provide ACDIS with several hundreds of thousands of dollars of unrestricted funds to foster knowledge and prompt discussion of arms control, disarmament, and international security. This large infusion of funds moved university administrators to reorganize ACDIS under a Director. Steve took a turn as ACDIS Director and performed with distinction in expanding its teaching and research programs, and in establishing the University of Illinois as a national center for South Asian studies — all done with tact, care for detail, nuance, and infectious humor.

With funding in hand, ACDIS approached university units with the promise of seed money to establish a new faculty position if the hire would develop new courses or research projects in security studies. For example, the Philosophy Department matched ACDIS funds to attract a new faculty member who launched courses in the ethics and morality of warfare. The same strategy was used to entice other departments to create courses at all levels in security studies. A large passel of courses was created as a result. The planting of these courses in the teaching landscape of the university, covering the sciences, engineering, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, law, and the arts, essentially laid the groundwork for the interdisciplinary study of security issues at the University of Illinois. Courses ranged from nuclear proliferation to South Asian security, areas which became central to the ACDIS program. To these initiatives were added

continuing brown bag sessions, lectures, workshops, and conferences on South Asia as well as a continuous flow of presentations by eminent security experts from South Asia. Steve's initiatives established ACDIS as the place to go for South Asian scholars and officials when visiting the United States.

Steve should also be saluted for all his continuous efforts to bring Indians and Pakistanis together. In a sense he was a walking, talking Track Two diplomatic go-between unto himself in attempting to conciliate Indian and Pakistani adversaries. He was on good terms with both sides, however much they were at odds with each other. Illustrative is Steve's privileged interview with General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the military leader of Pakistan, shortly before he was assassinated. Steve also raised funds to hold an ACDIS conference to bring the warring sides together. Notable was the ACDIS conference, arranged by Steve, in Katmandu, Nepal. It brought ACDIS faculty together with army officers, governmental officials, policy analysts, and academics from South Asia to thrash out issues between the two countries. Nepal was chosen because the Pakistani and Indians attending the conference were forbidden to appear in each other's countries.

None of these important contributions to building ACDIS would have been possible without Steve's untiring persistence, imagination, and resourceful leadership. Even before ACDIS was woven deeply into the teaching and research fabric of the University of Illinois, Steve was simultaneously producing significant scholarly work in South Asian studies. His *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation*, issued in 1972, established not only Steve as a leading scholar in South Asian history and security issues but it also formed the foundation of his voluminous body of work in this field. *The Indian Army* was followed by *The Pakistan Army, India: Emerging Power*, and *The Idea of Pakistan*, center pieces of twelve books and an uninterrupted flow of journal articles, op-eds, invited lectures in the United States and abroad, and presentations before public agencies, notably the United States Congress.

Steve was particularly proud of the many students whom he mentored. He always considered them as partners, not surrogates, in the pursuit of South Asian studies. Prominent among them are Kanti Bajpai, Chair of Asian Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. In this circle of prominent students whom Steve guided and inspired are, *inter alia.*, Sumit Ganguly, Kavita Khory, Amit Gupta, Chetan Kumar, Dinshaw Mistry, Sunil Dasgupta, Swarna Rajagopalan, and Shonali Sardesai. Nor should we overlook his selfless offering of his time and expertise to help and advise aspiring public servants in foreign and security matters both in South Asia and in the United States.

This salute to Steve's achievements is limited largely to his many contributions to ACDIS and to the development of South Asian studies at the University of Illinois – what for all of us of the Illinois community will always remain significant in our memories and experience. Lucky he came our way.

We will miss him. I will miss you, too, Steve.

Ed Kolodziej, friend and colleague
Emeritus Research Professor of
Political Science and former
Director of ACDIS and the
Center for Global Studies