Attachment 3. Notes from panel on “Learning from the History of US Foreign Assistance 1790-1950”

**John Sanbrailo**, speaking on “US Foreign Assistance 1789-1900,” noted that it is only recently that historians are rediscovering that the US has provided foreign assistance abroad since the founding of the country. This assistance began with Thomas Jefferson’s promotion of democracy internationally, “extending the revolution” overseas. Throughout the 19th Century, the US provided food aid, humanitarian assistance, and technical assistance in democracy building, and institutional and infrastructure development to numerous countries in Europe, Latin America, as well as to Liberia, Russia, Japan, Armenia, and India. Sanbrailo concludes that foreign assistance is deeply rooted in American history, was inspired by the American Revolution, and influenced by a mixture of realistic and idealistic impulses.

**Julia Irwin**, presenting on “US Humanitarian Assistance 1890s-WW II,” pointed out that much of US assistance was carried out by private citizens and organizations in the early 20th Century, in particular by the American Red Cross (ARC). In 1900, the ARC was granted a federal charter by Congress as the official voluntary aid association. Most US Government humanitarian relief was provided via the ARC, but some was done directly by the USG, including the military. During WWI, citizens were encouraged to provide relief in the form of food, socks, bandages, and money. In addition, people traveled to Europe to provide relief, mainly medical, as well as assistance to refugees and orphans. Dozens of U.S. groups, including the Salvation Army and YMCA, became involved. From 1919 to 1923, the new USG American Relief Administration distributed food in Europe. While the ARC remained the principal provider in the 1920s and 1930s, other relief organizations were established. In 1942, the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations was established, marking the entry of the USG as a central provider of relief. In 1945 the USG promoted the establishment of and provided 70 percent of the funding for an international organization, the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to provide further assistance, and in 1947 the Marshall Plan was created to provide assistance to 16 European countries.

**Curt Tarnoff,** presenting on “The Marshall Plan”, outlined the basics of the Plan, established in 1947 to assist the recovery of the economies of 16 European countries devastated by war. The Plan continued for three years, after which the countries had recovered and the threat of communism had receded. Tarnoff noted that despite vastly different circumstances, “Marshall Plans” have often been proposed to resolve major difficult situations internationally and in the U.S. over the past 40 years. The Marshall Plan did establish a number of precedents that have been replicated by USAID and other aid agencies, including:

* The adoption of a country mission system
* Favoring grants over loans
* Emphasizing policy reform, leveraged by commodity import programs and counterpart funds, and with a clear goal to achieve economic growth and greater economic integration
* Participant training programs
* Emphasis on country ownership, including creation of the Organization European Economic Cooperation which was responsible for making country allocations.

Tarnoff noted that there is disagreement on whether the Marshall Plan can actually be credited for the economic success of the countries involved, but that the political impact is undoubtedly immense. He also noted that its perceived success helped fuel support for foreign aid more generally.

Discussion focused on

* Why US foreign assistance is in the American interest;
* To what extent the impulse to provide foreign assistance was historically unique to the US;
* The role of immigrant groups in promoting and lobbying for foreign assistance;
* Whether the Marshall Plan included in its annual reviews the opportunity for recipients to review donor performance; and
* To what extent early foreign assistance provides precedents for development assistance other than humanitarian assistance.