

Rethinking Culture and the State in International History

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Intro

When I started my studies in international history, I quickly noticed that the field seemed to be in a constant state of crisis. Listening to the alarmism, I had anxieties about the field's disciplinary and theoretical marginalization and the effect that the loosely defined, often sticky concept of "culture" might have on our work.¹ But as I worked on the history of the social sciences in America, the newness and threat of culture began to seem less unique to my field alone. As a result of the clumsily defined "cultural turn", the social sciences have all had to face what Anthony Giddens has called the "double hermeneutic" inevitable in this line of work: the notion that language, what we choose to work on, and how we approach our research are deeply interrelated to our findings. Only recently, however, has this realization taken hold in foreign relations and diplomatic history, moving the field to reflect on the possibility that what we find in history is more often a reflection of what we are looking for than a discovery of what was once actually there.²

Unfortunately, the field has been slow to consider what are, arguably, mandatory questions stemming from this realization. Principally, how will it deal with the changes ushered in by the "cultural turn"? Has the cultural history that has already made its way into international history helped us see the contingency of our analytical categories? Has a truly historicist position been embraced by the new cultural histories in the field, and can it be sustained?

I would like to propose that, when we begin to ask and answer these questions, we find that culture has been embraced rather weakly by the field. Initially feared, cultural analysis and the cultural turn have since been all but absorbed into existing ways of thinking and doing international history. This movement from fear to assimilation – which I will posit as two distinct *phases* in the concept of culture's relationship to

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international history – can be detected as recently as the September 2008 issue of *Diplomatic History*, in which Petra Goedde argued that a series of essays attempting to couch biography in cultural analysis drew on the “innovations of the cultural turn without being drawn into the vortex of postmodern deconstructionism.” Goedde continued by arguing that “Diplomatic history might not have moved ‘beyond’ the cultural turn yet, but it certainly can no longer ignore it.” While the field is purportedly moving beyond its initial reservations about culture, it appears to have been driven by the desire to assimilate insights from the cultural turn into well-established and largely outdated modes of thinking about culture – modes which tend not to resonate with a new generation not only of historians, but of those working outside the field.

The roots of the debate over “culture” in international history are part and parcel of an ongoing crisis in the social sciences’ ability to explain the emergence of nation-states in progressive developmental terms. This is not to say that the nation state does not matter to the social sciences—in fact, quite the opposite. However, the wider crisis has presented a particularly poignant puzzle for international historians: how to maintain the nation-state-centered focus that built the field, while adapting to or simply surviving the influx of new work that seems intent on displacing the centrality of the nation-state? Because of its intense focus on state-to-state relations and the need to presuppose the nature of states, international history is the canary in a larger social scientific coalmine. All disciplines are feeling the ground shaking as a new generation of scholars continue to question the stability of the nation-state. But what is for most disciplines nothing but a minor tremor is for international historians a complete realignment of its foundations. Thus, the way they have wrestled up until now with the deconstruction of their field’s axiomatic foundations is an important case study. Specifically, it serves to flush out important lessons about what makes the social sciences effective explorers of social and cultural knowledge in the face of what *could* be crippling criticisms raised by the cultural turn.

However, the lessons learned are not necessarily positive ones. As this essay will show, the turn to culture in international history has failed to result in a *necessary* rethinking of the field’s methods and epistemological assumptions. I am judging this failure on a pragmatic and historicist principle with which some readers will disagree. As yet, a disappointing majority of the now connotatively infamous turn’s most promising innovations have been flattened and folded into older ways of thinking. We are left with approaches still focused on analyses of nation-states as essentially static systems of governance in which academics measure success or failure according to abstract variables like ‘state interests’ and ‘national value’. Only now, culture is simply

added as a derivative of national setting, something that either stands for or against the nation as it exists *tout court* in the international sphere.

Proceeding from this quick survey of the stage on which culture is being asked to perform, I will look briefly at some the performances themselves. Specifically, I will explore the treatment of culture as something that is materially fixed to, and legitimated by, its position within the nation state, or as something that becomes most apparent when it moves across national borders. I will conclude by suggesting that we should resist centering our questions of culture around the state, by *rethinking* what it is that constitutes the state for international and foreign relations historians. My suggestion is the idea of expanding *governance*, as an alignment of particular concepts of *the* social, to include and account for *governmentality*—those practices and ideas through which individual subjects participate in creating the structural foundations for government, policy and governance broadly understood. Put another way, I propose creating a multi-planed way of thinking about how states function and interact by expanding questions of governance to include not just those apparatuses traditionally associated with the state (the military, bureaucracy, government). Instead, this piece advocates an expansion of the notion of the state to include systems of knowledge that form epistemological communities that in turn constitute the structural foundations, the possibilities, for individual and collective behaviour within them. By treating culture as both real practices and as an integral part of the constant governing impulse to capture and *make culture real* through a particular social imaginary, international historians can maintain the importance of culture as an analytical category while acknowledging its diffusion and fluidity, and allowing room for a critical but positive project in which culture becomes imperative to the power of the state.

This Haunted House: Spectres of Culturalism

Theoretical uncertainty has almost always haunted the work of diplomatic historians. While the field appears to most outsiders as an extremely well-established disciplinary house it may be worth restating outright that international history is now, more than ever, a house with many rooms. The field has been divided and subdivided by almost constant realignments of its language and supposed *raison d'être*. Take, for example, the global shift from the widely accepted identification of the field as diplomatic history to its current moniker of international history in the 1950s and 60s.³ Or take the more recent debates over realism, revisionism and the move towards what some hoped would be a “post-revisionist” synthesis — a debate that ironically caused even deeper fragmentation rather than the professional homogeneity post-revisionism seemed to hope after. While this infighting certainly persists, in the late 1980s and 1990s

there emerged a new controversy that would all but eclipse the old ones. Specifically, the social sciences all seemed focused on buttressing well-established professional boundaries against the rising spectre of what was clumsily defined as post-modernism.⁴

The work of gender studies and post-structuralism in particular (not to mention science and laboratory studies) generated debates over the roots of social scientific knowledge (epistemology), the centrality of nations to history and social theory, and the role that social scientists themselves play in creating or supporting categories of analysis (the ontological dilemma). The fear in international history was, in short, that social science was moving past the nation-state as the central analytical node around which all narratives could rotate, and prominent diplomatic historians like Michael Hunt did not miss the importance of this epistemological and ontological shift. Hunt proclaimed that the field was in a “long crisis of confidence”, while non-diplomatists like Charles Maier went so far as to announce that the field had lost its entire *raison d’être*.⁵

Reaction from diplomatic historians to these early antagonist claims caused an all-out attack on “culture”, which became the semantic whipping boy for larger anxieties about the gathering storm that threatened the epistemological foundations of the field, the discipline of history, and the social sciences at large. In diplomatic history, well known revisionist Melvyn Leffler suggested that debates over multiculturalism and, that ever-present misnomer, “political correctness”, had augmented public scepticism about the relevance of international history, threatening to fragment the field into inaccessible specialties. Leffler proposed that “Post-modernist writers and the practitioners of cultural studies [who] question our capacity for objectivity, rejoice in deconstruction, and celebrate fragmentation” were undermining the real appeal of state-centred critiques of foreign policy — namely to explain why the state does what it does and why it thinks the way it thinks. Working from the concept of ‘new cultural history’ gleaned from Lynn Hunt’s landmark text of that name, he suggested that the field and discipline as a whole were in a relatively Manichean battle — between those concerned with theory and culture, and the apparently antithetical stance of those who abided by realist epistemologies:

Rather than finding inspiration for an ‘empirical’ or ‘scientific’ history espoused by Leopold von Ranke or Karl Marx, they look to Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. They are concerned with discourses rather than subjects, structures rather than actions, processes rather than agency, the construction of meaning rather than the definition of experience...But a reaction is also visible. Some historians lament the ‘descent into discourse’; others decry the sentimentalism of culture. Almost every discipline

bemoans its marginality...the plea for synthesis echoes through the profession and it takes interesting forms...if diplomatic historians listen closely we should hear that...we are uniquely positioned to deal with many of the issues that other historians deem central to an understanding of the American experience.⁶

Leffler's words reveal a belief — often shared across divided realist intellectual camps such as orthodox historians, revisionists and post-revisionists — in the need to maintain 'positivist' conceptions of the state and a selectively "materialist" historical method to explain and prescribe state behaviour. Rather than wondering whether culture mattered, diplomatic history had to regain its relevance by asserting and "dealing" with the material and ideological factors that exert a significant impact on state-to-state policy and behaviour: for Leffler, these were "power, politics, and the state."⁷

Leffler's position reflects a sweeping assumption that it was impossible, if not undesirable, to reconcile "new cultural history" with pre-existing notions in historical work of the nation and its modes of power. The calls for both historical "synthesis" and a return to materialist history are, at root, veiled calls for a return to a deeply disciplined and clearly defined style of foreign relations history. Competing theoretical perspectives could only function in the field if, as Michael Hogan noted, one could "envision how these approaches can work together to answer the questions we deem most important."⁸

There is a basic practical problem with this proposition. Fitting cultural history into pre-existing "questions that we deem most important" overlooks the very basic way that much of the work on culture and international history is specifically meant to challenge *what* questions international history ought to ask, *in addition to* how it should go about answering these questions and who should be asking them. It ignores, as Clifford Geertz has argued in another setting, that there has been "a sea change in our notion not so much of what knowledge is but of what it is we want to know."⁹ The response to culture, it follows, has brought the field's epistemological roots to the surface, revealing, as Anders Stephenson has argued, deep problems with the concept of 'the sovereign state' as the "classical locus of diplomatic history" and its use to explain how states "conduct policy and diplomacy toward other, similarly territorialized entities in the name of sovereignty." The problem, as many see it, is that without this assumption, there would be no domain of "international relations"; a non-state-centric model is possible, but simply "outside the purview and interest of international history."

After all, if international history is not concerned with state-to-state relations through the examination of state sovereignty, what is it concerned with? Stephenson again sheds some important light on how this question has been asked and answered in the field. The marginalization that diplomatic and international historians were feeling in the 1990s, and continue to feel in some corridors, is for Stephenson a direct result of the field's resistance to engage with "a vastly expanding world of signs and media, increasing commercial and popular mobility, new and fluctuating identity, and, most strikingly, the decline of the sovereign itself along with the geopolitical." In the "pre-9/11," globalizing, 1990s world, representations and language became widely understood as dispersed and generally non-national, making the idea of a stable nation-state impractical for any history that wished to understand contemporary society — especially those concerned with the emerging problematic of how and from where neo-liberal hegemony emerged in the international arena.¹¹

Adherents of what Stephenson termed "soft realism" were and are not willing to let go of a state-centered model so easily. To illustrate this, we need only look at the opposition of New Left Marxists and economic materialists like Walter LaFeber and Robert Buzzanco. Both insisted that assimilating the cultural turn into the long standing Leftist tradition of materialist and economic history was the only way to continue valuable work started in the 1960s. For them, the culture wars were needlessly splitting a critical left across the disciplines. Like so many Marxist critiques of the "cultural turn", the assumption was that new theoretical frameworks were actually neoliberal ideologies, distracting people with matters of discourse and culture.¹²

The Third Move?

Early reactions to culture notwithstanding, there *has* been a slow but no less important rethinking in the field about how to move beyond the strictly "realist" and "sovereigntist" approach to international or foreign relations history. For example, historians like Stephenson, Emily Rosenberg, Michael Hogan and James Livingston — to name a few — have all proposed that a reassessment and critical application of William Appleman Williams' work provides one of the most promising directions for international historians. Each have argued, in their own way, the need to see how *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959) represents a call to open the door to a pragmatic, if not radical, historicism, which asks what relevant historical variables are, and how we can use new ways of doing history to explain the nation-state, and the power it possesses in our vision of the global arena.¹³ Rather than accepting the restrictive reading on Williams often put forth by the New Left, Williams' work and other work on ideology in foreign relations has been revisited and revealed to act with

culture to explain why states, governments and people make the decisions they make. Deeply motivated by contemporary concerns about the use of history and “interests,” this pragmatic approach to history uses current debates within and outside academia as its starting point, while advocating a consciousness about how one’s own ideological position influences what we look for and find.¹⁴

James Livingston has argued that Williams’ work is best read as an attempt to make readers aware of the “tension and the transaction” between theory and history — “aware, that is, of the ways in which theory and history inform each other, and sometimes even change places, in the course of his or any other argument.” The negotiation between theory and history is *only* possible, according to this formula, through a rethinking of narrative and the very process of cause-effect; “as a way of accepting and transcending, recognizing and transforming, preserving and annulling, the *lack of an intelligibly linear or meaningful sequence of events in the past as such.*”¹⁵ Long before contemporary historians used post-structuralism to assail the un-reflexive use of dichotomies to underpin history, and before “post-modernism” allegedly pointed to the historicism implicit in all meta-narratives in history and the social sciences at large, Livingston proposes that the likes of Williams, in international and foreign relations history, introduced the idea that narratives are functions of “philosophies of history, and that the line between fiction and non-fiction was more difficult to draw than we might think.”¹⁶ Still others trace the roots of a consciously historicist stance in international history as far back as Charles Beard and the Progressive historians’ search to understand the “intellectual assumptions that guided American policy makers.”¹⁷

Thus, the theoretical inroads made by Williams and the New Left can be seen as the foundational predecessor to the cultural turn, and not its antithesis. It was, after all, the New Left that opened the door to rethinking narrative and causal underpinnings of the nation-state by blurring the lines between domestic and foreign; it was their “new history” (and the progressives’) that thrust the question of interdisciplinarity into foreign relations history and challenged what constituted “legitimate sources” in a restricted field.¹⁸ We are again at a point where internationalists must, as they did during the rise of The Open Door School with Williams and his students, and as their progressive teachers did during the rise of the “new history” at the turn of the nineteenth century, ask fundamental questions about how we define state, government and the nation, and how we can use history to explain our contemporary world. Through these redefinitions, and the deep empirical work that goes into them, we do more than expand the base of what archives we use — we change the way we *do* international history

But while the cultural turn might be cast as a mere supplement to the initial critique that led revisionists to challenge the fabric of international history, culture has arguably done more. Primarily, it has become a rallying concept around which many international historians have thrown themselves, asking new questions that bring in the idea of “everyday life” as a site of and influence on foreign policy, diplomacy and international relations. A rising tide of culturalists in international history have constituted what Anders Stephenson has called a “third move” in diplomatic history. Focused simultaneously on ideational and material variables, outside of the traditional base-superstructure formula of Marxism, the methodological approaches under this “third move” can be seen as deeply indebted to both a re-reading of Williams and broader shifts in the social sciences.¹⁹ There has been an explosion of literature outside of the field of international history proper that is attempting to use Williams and international history to emphasize interconnections between the social, literary, scientific, political, economic and cultural while exploring the role of nations in Empire, imperialism, political economic world systems and beyond.²⁰

However, as Andrew Rotter has argued, all of this interest raises a key problem: explaining or defining what exactly culture is.²¹ While Rotter and others like Walter L. Hixon have tried to define culture prior to their analyses in anthropological terms provided by Clifford Geertz and James Clifford, I would like to suggest that there is a deep shortcoming in how it has been normalized for consumption by the international history community.²² To show this, I will divide cultural work into two different threads.

Culture as Representation

The least prominent and most controversial of the two threads is work that takes language as its starting point. By unpacking narratives and rhetoric, exploring how language directly affects policy through the building of psychological and (in turn) cultural (or “shared epistemological”) mind-sets or values, this growing body of work explores the interplay between what it sees as a particular cultural environment (generally the nation-state or policy circles), language and policy decisions. Works like Kristin Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood* and Elaine Tyler May’s *Homeward Bound*, to name only a couple of the best known works, have explored how the rhetoric of gendered discourse shapes diplomacy. By affecting the symbolic structures and boundaries of American thought, both have shown how culture constituted the limits of possible policy behaviour towards other nations through policies by institutionalizing jingoism, in the case of Hoganson, or reiterating the public-private divide through interaction with other cultures, as May demonstrates.²³

This method is, at least by now, familiar to international historians. Frank Costigliola made the connection between language, psychological identity and policy over a decade ago, arguing that foreign policy must be understood as dependent on “tropes explicitly or implicitly associated with gender to naturalize relationships of unequal power.”²⁴ This treatment of culture as a rhetorical/linguistic process has helped diplomatic historians make the crucial move past seeing language as transparent, and toward accepting that concepts like “state character” or “national interests” are themselves in a state of constant, negotiated flux, possessing a certain power when they are left un-interrogated.²⁵ It seems that this approach to “culture as discourse” has flourished particularly in America where neo-pragmatists like Richard Rorty, cultural anthropologists like Geertz and theoreticians like Hayden White have served as lightning rods for debate on post-structuralism and its role in the so-called cultural turn. Discourse is, for much of American diplomatic history then, something that functions through laws of text, either in tropes or representations or signifying practices, that are identifiable products of culture and which are allowed to stand or represent reality.

Culture Beyond the State, Between Nations

A second and more recent methodological movement to carry the mantle of culturalism might be best defined as the “cultural transfer” approach.²⁶ Like the previous thread, this one seems to have moved to the anthropologically-inspired view of “culture as practice.” Growing faster than its narrative/discourse counterpart, this thread is concerned with the transmission of cultural values and systems of knowledge across regions, and appears much more rooted to explaining culture in an anthropological sense than a psychological one, focusing more on transnational historical movements. Largely rising out of the work of American historians like Akira Iriye and Thomas Bender, who continue to argue for a role for “national cultures” within transnational and global history, this work has combined with the cultural studies movement originating in Birmingham, and theoretical works emerging from postcolonial studies, to focus on cultural systems.

Emily Rosenberg’s work on international informal financial systems and Iriye’s work on NGOs are two of the most prominent examples.²⁷ Theirs, and Andrew Rotter’s recent work on religion and international history, shows a growing move to think “beyond the state” to those instances of soft power constitutive of what many now call the “New Diplomacy.”²⁸ These are, at root, culture systems (networks of belief and practice that belong to no particular state or nation per se, for Rotter) which are explored as practices transferable across spaces, times and cultures, along with the resulting

“hybrid” or “creole” practices in everyday behaviour that become normalized through repetition and ritual.²⁹

In her more recent work in, *Culture and International History*, Jessica Gienow-Hecht has argued similarly that, within diplomatic history, notions of what culture is must continue to shift beyond cultural policies (in a formal sense) between national governments towards a notion of it as a process of diffused, informal exchange between private businesses, individuals, and organisations.³⁰ Since the 1990s, Gienow-Hecht proposes, a new generation of scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have assumed a much more pragmatic and reform-driven, rather than radical leftist, approach to the study of culture and international history. One can assume she is referring to a new cohort of scholars forcing diplomatic history away from stalwart beliefs in sovereignty as the culmination of historical processes and, in doing so, moving the field into an interdisciplinary arena where it is in conversation with fields such as social history, cultural studies, sociology and anthropology.³¹

This inter-disciplining of diplomatic history is happening, and it seems to be having real effects on what can be said to belong to the field today. The footing of the state as *the* guiding, static entity behind understanding international history and, therefore, politics and foreign policy, has certainly been shaken. We have begun to radically rethink how the nation-state interacts with cultural forces, and how culture underpins, outlines and redefines its actions in the international arena. We have, in Williams’ controversial line, begun to blur the domestic and foreign by asking what cultural discourses, habits, and rituals have facilitated foreign policy decisions by remaining buried within the epistemological and ontological assumptions of particular ways of thinking about the world. But despite much rhetoric to the contrary, the cultural approach in international history remains largely rooted to questions of state sovereignty. The focus has stuck on a search for explaining the state-as-nation formula that originally defined the field, only now via a restrictive reading of culture and the state as national.

Robert Dean has noted the similarity between older realist diplomatic history and much of the apparently new cultural international history, observing that in debates over culture there continues to be an undergirding drive towards understanding how things “actually were” in relation to the ever-present state. The problem with this, he argues, is that diplomatic and international historians are constantly historicising culture into the state rather than the state into culture, thus feeding existing theoretical assumptions about how states form, what they want and the apparent separation between real interests and distorted/ideological ones.³² But international historians are not alone in this

tension. George Steinmetz has observed a similar problem with history broadly, recognizing what he has called the “widespread but flawed” approaches connecting culture and the state.³³ Others have more recently echoed this concern pointing out that theorizing culture by falling back onto its oppositional relationship to nature, and by extension the state, has allowed social science to create an artificial dichotomy between nature and culture that both falls back onto the realist opposition between nature and society while remaining largely ignorant of the cultural construction of nature itself.³⁴

Historians employing this second concept of culture have effectively distilled culture into ideology, placing it outside the traditional realist tent, and systematically dismissing it as the thin edge of a wedge that will pry open international history to a sort of relativism. This treatment of ideology as culture worked for sometime and made it possible to argue that material historical forces or causes can be separated from the ideational, and privileged as a vista onto a deeper un-ideological reality. Obviously, seeing culture as immaterial and secondary to the ‘real world’ has consequences for debate in international history. At its most basic level, such treatment feeds the power of states: cast as historical and social entities apart from ideational cultural forces, states are seen to cause rather than emerge from culture. The possibility of the reverse, or a state-culture dialectic, is ignored. Culture then, continues to be seen as one ideological tool among many, employed *by* the state to supplement its existing material structures. This author is not alone in dissatisfaction with this narrow *voir* of culture. Volker Depkat has argued that one potential problem with the “sociological” or anthropological approach to culture and international history is that “culture refers to a complex circle: a community produces certain perceptions and imaginations about the self and the other, and in turn, perceptions and imaginations produce and sustain ‘imagined communities’.”³⁵ While this opens up “new vistas on the foundations of national interest that may not only be defined in terms of security, trade and honor but also in terms of identity struggles...is it really about the history of diplomacy and international relations?”

I would propose an emphatic “yes” to Depkat and all those concerned that culture ‘distracts’ international history from its true and materialist focus on inter-state relations. But, I would qualify that in order for questions of identity and culture to matter we must move past treating culture as an ideological outgrowth of a deeper material and knowable nature which the state and society stand in accord or opposition to. Indeed, international historians must explore the possibility that such treatment is itself connected to a disciplinary impulse to maintain the centrality of state sovereignty to the field and, I would also propose, the sovereignty of the field of international history. While some argue that culture has only entered into international history recently, this ignores the fact that the field has been built on a lasting aversion to exploring culture —

one which has routinely kept the language of cultural analysis out while assuming particular cultural alignments in a normative capacity. Even in those works that now proudly display their integration of culture into the field, for the most part, adhere to the narrow treatment of culture I have described, overlooking the possibility of multiple, simultaneous concept(s) of culture and of nature underpinning multiple notions of the state and the nation.

A Genealogical Look at Culture, the State and Diplomatic History

A brief genealogy of culture in international history should flesh this argument out further. Raymond Williams famously posed that “culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language...mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought.”³⁶ While he attempted to map the history of culture broadly, I want to examine the rise of the concept of culture in relation to both the nation-state and the concomitant rise of nation-centric political history as a field.

A number of scholars have pointed out that ‘culture’ first appeared in the English language before the 18th century and was treated as a way of explaining and analyzing the natural growth of civilizations and societies. Far from its contemporary connotation, culture was originally meant to articulate the process of natural growth, which was extended through metaphor to the idea of human growth or development. However, Williams observed that when the word emerged in German, borrowing the word from the French, which interlaced culture with connotations of civilization, it gained much of its modern meaning and began to split into camps that emphasized either the ideational or the material roots of the term. On the one hand, faced with the power of revolutionary and imperial France, Romantic philosophers like Johann Gottfried Von Herder and Friedrich Schlegel were concerned with the importance of finding a plurality of cultural forms through history that partitioned German identity from a more monolithic European identity.

For German culturalists and romantics, culture helped support an idea of nationalism against a larger pan-European identity. It was nationalism, after all, that allowed much of the German intellectual class of the 18th and 19th centuries to buttress local and national interests against the sweeping universalism of the enlightenment, and the often violent reforms that swept through Europe in the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras. At its base, culture was a way of arguing against the idea that local practices and ideas were ideological because they stood in the way of understanding the natural, knowable and enlightened human subject. Drawing the line at the nation, German

Romantics played a key role in the development of fixing nationalism to the state, proposing that what many had called ideological factors like religion, political traditions, and even forms of entertainment were deeply rooted cultural currents that defined the boundaries of societies by showing a likeminded people their truly natural foundations, apart from their shared Europeanism or humanism.³⁷

It was indeed within the context of intensifying nationalism and the nation-state that the very idea and language of culture emerged. As Raymond Williams notes, implicit in this was the valorization of what would become known as “Folk-Culture” which was “later used to attack what was seen as the mechanical character of the new civilization then emerging: both for its abstract rationalism and for the inhumanity of current Industrial development. It was used to distinguish between human and material development.”³⁸ The romantic notion of culture that came to define much of the Counter-Enlightenment sought to understand it as the alignment of particular aesthetic tendencies, such as architecture, language, art and even reason. From the outset, culture was defined according to emerging ideas about how the social and the natural aligned to create identities, justifying the act of governing along these natural divisions.

However, as time went on, the Counter-Enlightenment melded with some of the impulses of the enlightenment and nation-states became an increasingly powerful and less questioned entity around which the re-emerging practice and disciplines of history would attempt to make sense of political and cultural behaviour. It was, importantly, the work of post-Hegelians like Leopold von Ranke who bound post-romantic notions of culture more firmly to the progressive narratives of the enlightenment and the centrality of the state in world history. But attempting to explain the rise of a liberal middle-class and nationalism while also supporting a long existent conservative belief in the overarching connection of all people to a common “civilizations,” von Ranke effectively marginalized culture in history by burying it in a spiritual obscurity. As Carl von Clausewitz alluded to in *On War*, Ranke also emphasized the importance of understanding culture and the state not as transcendent aesthetics or romantic forms, but as the culmination of real people, groups and states. Culture was real for Ranke but only in so far as it fit into the rational process of a universal and world historical development that culminated in nations contained by state interests.³⁹ It would appear then that Ranke, still the touchstone for many “traditional” diplomatic historians,⁴⁰ swung the pendulum of historical thinking about culture away from the idealism of Hegel, toward the materialism associated with the post-Hegelian movements.

But the supposed tension between materialism and idealism in Ranke’s work actually reveals an importantly, and under-explored, ambiguous conception of “culture”

at the outset of history's disciplinary quest to explain social organisation and alignment. On the one hand, Ranke explored the Hegelian notion that culture springs forth in different forms as a product of particular ideas often embodied in great men whose times are captured in an "intellectual culture" – an overarching universal form that bridged cultural and social divides.⁴¹ On the other hand, for example, in his 1836 *Political Dialogue*, Ranke argued that states, far from being a social construction based on a theory of social contract, were unique entities "like cloud formations, I see them as spiritual substances, original creations of the human mind — one could say thoughts of God."⁴² What this reveals is a distinct tension between the ideational and the material in proto-conceptions of culture within historical analysis. And Ranke seemed content to leave these tensions intact. As Hayden White observed, "Ranke dealt not in 'laws' but in the discovery of the 'ideas' of agents and agencies which he viewed as inhabitants of the historical field."⁴³ Ranke, far from un-theoretical, was extremely conscious of the role that ideas, "spiritual, creative forces," and "life itself" played in delimiting the political and the potential for action within it — even if he never showed great reflexivity on this point.⁴⁴

In any case, the politically focused thinking that underpinned the disciplinary emergence of diplomatic history under Ranke assumed normative and analytical divisions between culture, the social, the political, the state and religion—divisions that are still deeply integral to liberal conceptions of history and progress. Diplomatic history, by positioning nation-states as central to the narrative of political history, and asking the social and the cultural to answer to this centrality, immediately limited the topography possible for historians. Cultural history, seen as dealing in the loose immaterial questions of shared practices, art forms, spirituality and epochal moments survived in this period, fighting against the compartmentalization of the cultural from the political that Ranke's work pressed. From this emerged the works of Jakob Burckhardt and the germination of poststructural critiques in the genealogical work of the likes of Nietzsche.

Culture was, at its conception, a manifestation of the idea of the folk, of a nation, beholden to and ethnological search for a cohesive grouping of people and wedded tightly to claims for power over the state. While the centrality of "the folk" in this formula would change as time passed, the use of culture as a tool for making claims to the right to govern remained. The rise of socialism, the splitting of Hegelianism and German conceptions of counter-enlightenment culture into Marxist and liberal-utilitarian variants, the collapse of overtly religious foundations for governance in the West, and the almost global rise of new *social sciences* at the turn of the 19th century all acted to realign the relationship between what was increasingly called culture and the state in

Western thought—but the power of the term culture remained central to governing. Additionally, new theories about race, civilization and eventually the very vernacular of internationalism intertwined with the idea of culture, slowly morphing culture from a word focused on upper class expressions of habit and custom to the more amorphous, ubiquitous and fractured popular culture that most know today.⁴⁵ Jackson Lears has observed as much, arguing that, plagued by the questions of race, labour, gender and the collapse of religious structures, culture became a way of ordering the world and carving out a space of respite from the increasing pressures of modernity. For an emergent middle class, culture provided a way of feeling as though one could resist the forces of modernity, as it had been for Herder: a form of resistance against ideas about universality and a desire to legitimate non-enlightenment rationalities as more than abnormal and therefore ideological. In the West, culture came to be the consumer cosmopolitanism and therapeutics people retreated to — things we are still seeing today — and the concept has emerged as a way to conveniently encapsulate tastes, preferences and disciplinary regimes within a still emerging liberal, middle-class order.⁴⁶

Appropriately (and somewhat ironically) then, it was from countervailing post-Hegelianian Marxism, in Cold War America and Britain especially, that there emerged the first sprouts of a revised notion of the material foundations laid out by Ranke. I focused earlier on the influence William Appleman Williams' work has had on diplomatic history. Beyond what I have already covered, he and many of the scholars in his generation gave a central role to *Weltanschauung* — 'the unifying principle that expresses itself in different times, as the social totality unfolds in history.' Probably one of the most disputed terms in diplomatic history, *Weltanschauung* opens up diplomatic and international history to an important debate, as Livingston observed above, which blurs the line between the material and the ideational, the theoretical and the evidentiary. Importantly, there is a thread that binds the work of early German conceptions of culture and *Geist* with attempts to reclaim Williams' idea of *Weltanschauung*. Both propose that ideology is pervaded by a particular and often single, overarching principle or tendency, which in both lines of thinking could be conceptualized as a motivational spirit leading to a particular vision and way of being in the world— a unified and governing culture that deeply affects how history unfolds.

This is by no means an exhaustive history of the relationship between culture and the state within historical literature, but it is sufficient for making two points. First, notions of culture were and are deeply ambiguous and cannot be fit into either strictly material or ideational camps of an overly simplified dichotomy. Using Ranke or Marx as a point of retreat when it comes to the question of culture in international history avoids wrestling with the core epistemological questions the cultural turn has presented

historians and social scientists writ large. If anything, a retreat to Marx or Ranke simply illuminates the disciplinary and ontological boundaries many of the field's practitioners feel the need to patrol.

But, and this brings me to my second point, trapping and naming culture in any form is not without consequence and is inevitably an act that reveals as much about contemporary power as it does about the past. This as much applies to self-proclaimed culturalists as to those who wish to keep culture on the outside of international history's disciplinary walls. The boundaries we want to draw as international historians, between analytical categories like culture and the state, influence what we see as culture, and how we historicize it out of the past. Put in the simplest of terms, we must remember that culture itself has a history but that the narrative of where culture comes from depends on what an historian is trying to prove culture in the here and now is.

I have explored here how culture is a discourse indebted to the rise of the nation-state: specifically, how the latter served as an ideological line in the sand for holding back universalistic ideas of culture brought to the fore; this meant that national culture was equally deployed as a means to hold back the forces of imperial armies as well as revolting working classes. But the contemporary 'reclaiming of culture' in the form of popular culture is not without power either. It remains that what we decide on as cultural depends largely on how we understand the alignment of society—culture is, like 'the social,' a mapping of societies that follows from our assumptions about what is material and what ideal we are reaching towards. By dealing axiomatically with the state and accompanying assumptions about how societies ought to function, by seeing the state as something that must behave in a particular way, and by restricting culture to questions of state policy, international historians risk pre-defining what the possibilities of culture are before actually looking at the historical moment or the alignments of social behaviour that created them.⁴⁷

Culture in Governance and Governmentality

So I would propose that what is needed, then, is a rethinking of how the social – the idea of the management and containing of people and populations – continually influences our *idea* of what is cultural. I am not trying to rescue the social from cultural determinism here. Instead I am arguing that there is a need to think of the social as operating in a fluid field with the power that culture as a concept exerts. This is particularly important for international historians looking to how culture plays through the filter of the (inter)-national. In our age, the concept of "the social" as the act of ordering or attempting to give order to a group of people in space and time, emerged along with the question of how to govern through the apparatuses we now call nation-

states. Thomas Bender has alluded that what was commonly called ‘the social problem’ in America and Europe for years, emerged at precisely the same time that very particular technologies for managing populations were forming around and with the nation-state — for example the rise of the social sciences, bureaucracies, statistics and the rise of the new international through organisations like the League of Nations.⁴⁸ It was the rise of strategies for managing populations in an increasingly industrialized society and the growing demand to define a domestic national sphere as apart from the global that tied the state to the social. But importantly for this examination, it was this buttressing of liberal nationalism through expertise and professions about the social that seemed to bring culture around to its position as a useful tool for actually asserting the uniqueness of particular nations. Raymond Williams has shown that the idea of culture as tied to the nation emerged first as a reaction to universalistic forms of governance and management in the early days of the enlightenment, then as high culture, which served to embody and assert elite taste and interests in society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But culture as a useful tool for analysis and governing people’s behaviour underwent an additional and important transformation—one that was brought about by a uniquely liberal and international moment in thinking about society’s relationship to the cultural and the natural.

Put simply, there is a need for a rethinking of what exactly culture *is* in international history and what its historical relationship is to both the state and conceptions of the social that guide our attempts to map out the history of an international world. International historians must shift their questions away from simple arguments about why culture matters to the state *tout court*. Instead there needs to be a systematic unpacking of how the relations between culture and various concepts of the social — as it is arranged in state structures — create very different strategies of rule that reiterate the power of the nation-state while not actually participating in official “state policy.” For example, how has the rise of non-governmental organisations changed states’ governing notions of culture and its relationship to ideas about progress, civilization and development? How has the development of professional societies such as those in the sciences, medicine and social sciences affected and influenced popular notions of what constitutes nature and by contrast the cultural? How have local organisations that refused to abide by state-sanctioned cultural or heritage policies created the conditions from which the state was forced to redefine not only cultural policy but the very notion of what constitutes culture? What discourses have floated into and outside of the consuming tent of culture and what do these shifting currents reveal about the power and behaviour of a state?

To take this line of questioning even further, I would propose that culturalists attempt to explain not only what is culture and how it changed but how culture is captured and presented as models for living. From this it becomes possible to propose that governing involves the inevitable act of capturing and placing on a pedestal particular forms of self-discipline, legitimated by patterns of behaviour which must be displayed as “culture.” It is this act of claiming to know and displaying the cultural, through anything from religious ties to ideas of citizenry to patterns of consumption, that connect the individual into larger modes of behaviour that collectively delimit the reach and possibility for governing—these modes of governmentality define the structural possibilities of both domestic and foreign policy. To borrow from Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, it follows that we need to move beyond seeing the state as “employing” culture as though it were a separate tool, or an appendage, into an examination of those “technologies [or systems] of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, and objectivising of the subject.”⁴⁹

While work that uses this approach to incorporating regimes of knowledge, disciplined behavior and norms into understandings of states’ cultures is limited, solid examples are emerging. Nick Cullather’s 2007 work on the concept of the calorie has gone past the idea that foreign policy and international relations function entirely through conscious policy decisions, showing how it results as much from attempts to regulate particular behaviours—such as those related to diet—and construct norms from ‘model’ ideas and actions. Less an idea pressed in on the masses by elites, the calorie serves as an example of how a locally developed idea introduced into the global arena transformed behavior around the world, and actually proved integral to the construction of American foreign development policy in the post-war period. Cullather’s work shows how something as seemingly benign as the cultural practice of counting calories connects to American foreign policy and nation building via its institutionalization of a particular mode of measuring, comparing, and contrasting “developmental milestones” across the international community.⁵⁰

Along with emergent societal statistics like infant mortality rates, fertility rates, school test scores, personal credit ratings, crime and delinquency rates, crop and fiscal reserves and more, Cullather argues, the calorie was just one of a plethora of modes of statistical thinking that cultivated particular ideas about how people ought to live their lives. The calorie, examined critically, reveals how individual conduct feeds into larger cultural identities, which are then invoked and translated into criteria with which to judge other cultures. Importantly, Cullather’s work does not assume that culture itself is a particular thing, but rather that an exploration of particular behaviours and epistemologies allowed American society to develop concepts of “normalcy” and “risk”

in diet and nutrition that would slowly but surely conquer the world and become a truly international norm. Normative markers, in this case the statistical measurement and distribution of the calorie, gave people a way to relate deeply personal development to the social and political development of other nations—food and caloric intake became a way that every person could measure, judge and comprehend the level of development in other states according to the level of calories taken in and their availability. Connecting the personal to the political, Cullather points out, the disciplined bodies of Americans created a normative system in which policing and monitoring other cultures through the measurement of calories was not only acceptable, it was expected that the state would watch and know these things about their own and other cultures. Cullather's work is important because it shows how the individual in American society, by adopting particular traits that would become *markers of their particular culture*, became imperative to the development and proliferation of a discourse (in this case that of the calorie) that Americans—and increasingly other cultures—assume ought to govern individual behaviour and connect them into the larger social fabric. Put simply, the calorie offered individual Americans a way to gauge or judge development in relation to the American experience. Like GNP/GDP and oil and gold reserves, it started as a localized idea and became an international structural system that measured the success of the state and, simultaneously, the individual, according to particular cultured norms that were elevated to the level of social structure through governing.

Cullather's work does not focus on the use of some pre-defined cultural export by elites through state centered policy. Instead, in examining the development of “normal healthy citizens,” it adopts a Foucauldian method that connects questions about how people behave, and why people internalize national disciplinary regimens that are fundamental to the shape of policies and the justification for international intervention. For example, U.S. intervention was justified and publicly supported in many countries after each of the World Wars on the basis of the lack of food, or even the hoarding or excess of calories, both of which were cast as breaches in the allowable deviation from normal consumption.

This innovative approach is important because it holds a light to how historians can connect particular concepts of personal development to wider regimes around the body, and, in turn, to questions of how culture becomes a useful tool for state interests and empire not as something formally wielded or exported, but rather *through the spread of basic everyday practices*.⁵¹ As Matthew Connelly has noted: “It remains remarkable how eager people are to participate in the process, instructing one another in how they should think and talk about their food, or their children, or their finances.”⁵² And it is even more remarkable how culturally particular ways of looking at phenomena

are granted a universal and essential nature by those inside these culturally specific discourses. Cullather, then, reminds historians that developmental norms—particularly those cooked up within science and social science which then migrate into policy and popular discourse—serve an imperative, yet often overlooked, role in rationalizing rule over other people; often this is done in the name of a more effective, efficient, or humane regime. Treating culture as a system for distributing and stabilizing power in a certain configuration offers international, diplomatic and transnational historians a way to see how well-meaning knowledge is laced with ideology and power that cuts in multiple directions.

But international historians, if they choose to examine culture as power, are not limited to examinations of those behaviours which are captured by the state and defined as cultural exports or products. Instead, approaching culture as a fluid notion, and seeing the power inherent in the act of naming or defining an event as cultural, can also reveal how ideas from abroad have colonized what we assumed were hermetically sealed cultural units. For example, Kristin Hoganson's work in *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity* explores how local or provincial settings adopted imports from the wider world and melded them into local cultural practice. While not directly focused on the question of policy formation, and largely devoid of what would have been a fruitful explicit discussion of culture, Hoganson's work in *Imperium* drives at how particular behaviours, in reflecting larger relations of power, were captured as desirable foreign culture for local consumption. Furthermore, her work on how accessories, fashion and tourism affected collective mentalities provides an important look at the state, forced to use social norms and ideas of "culture," sustained a particular international political economy that hemmed in and directed the state's own definition of what culture was and what its possible character could have been. Hoganson's work shows that cultural identity and belonging are not just defined by what people and states produce, but also by how and what states and the people in them consume, and in this case how "consumption constituted a form of interaction with the wider world."⁵³ In a world in which conspicuous consumption is increasingly the linchpin for identity, culture is based as much on consumption as production; therefore it is crucial that we try to comprehend the deep connection between such consumption behaviour and the power relations in societies.

Fundamentally, the Foucauldian approach to international history I am proposing is about connecting the disciplining and displaying of people, their bodies, ideas, ideals, identity and concepts of belonging to particular social alignments that are at once within and beyond the nation-state. For international historians, concerned with interactions between nations, this would mean the discussion of how these disciplinaries and

displays feed into or reshape notions of a world ordered through the envisioning of nations. Key to this discussion is a consciousness that culture is as much about the claiming of collective identity and the decision to elevate particular behaviours as though they are summative of actual, on-the-ground practice. This approach, however, introduces one very problematic hiccup for international history: it is difficult, once this line of questioning is opened up, to ignore the fact that the nation is only *one* of a plethora of important discursive forces in history and society. Showing how regimes of knowledge build epistemological communities that have a shared sense of purpose, belonging and identity may reach beyond the nation as the ultimate structure for understanding international history and relations, but the nation is still no less important as a central passing point through which ideas and behaviours must travel to become “cultural.” Cullather and Hoganson’s work attests to this, as both do not, and arguably cannot, simply displace the nation altogether upon recognizing its limited role in the larger picture. Instead, their studies drive at the question of culture as a source of discursive power that, while it often runs through the nation for legitimacy and much of its shape, is equally affected by other transnational and supranational ideas, communities and discourses.

For international historians and international relations theorists fundamentally focused on relations between states, it is time to expand our notion of what the state is. It is not enough to talk of cultural diplomacy as a tool of the state. There must also be an explanation of the aims which cultures were applied toward, and how these goals and aspirations either aligned with or against the state and worked to reinforce or challenge an international order by solidifying nationalism’s centrality or de-centering the nation as the governing apparatus. If international or transnational communities exist outside of the state as we traditionally conceive of it, how does the nationstate reach out to these communities to consume or discredit particular behaviours, technologies, and institutional settings? Statements of what the state’s interests are and how those interests function through harmonization on the international stage must follow from explorations of the discourses or mentalities that, functioning locally or domestically, create the social foundations for possible ranges of behaviour which are then exported and imported through what would traditionally be seen as extra-governmental networks and institutions.

Culture in the international might best be seen as an outgrowth of selective picking and choosing of particular domestic and foreign behaviours which are put on display as norms worth striving towards, things we have been told are cultural because they represent elevated civilization and a higher state of taste. The state plays an active role in defining culture by circumscribing it with law, policy and other official “state”

functions, but it also simultaneously meets its limits in the same “culture”-apparatus that it deploys in the formation of State-subjects. As those techniques whose rationality can be called “cultural” are deployed in the everyday practice of “orderly,” “civilized,” or “superior” behaviour, their legitimacy is found precisely in the concept of “culture” itself.

If we begin to understand the state as the collection of practices that make claims to truth, knowledge and order possible and sustainable across communities, and that propose how we *ought to live*, then we find a way out of the crisis of efficacy that has plagued international and foreign relations history for so long. We can begin to explore how concepts of “the social” exert power over policy decisions by adapting non-state modes of the population’s self-disciplining to programs that determine the shape and direction of governance. With this multileveled concept of culture we can begin to gain a sense of how concepts of culture are themselves imperative to claims that the state exists apart from ‘the social’ while it actively seeks to engineer it through truth-claims. An international or foreign relations history that is conscious of the principle of double hermeneutics (reflective upon the historicity of the concepts it employs and the role it can play in reconstituting concepts of culture) is an international history that can begin to understand and explain both what our field’s relevance is to other fields and what role our work and practices play in larger systems of governmentality.

Endnotes

¹ Michael J. Hogan, ‘Presidential Address: ‘The Next Big Thing’: The Future of Diplomatic History in A Global Age,’ *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (January 2004), 1. Using the work of historians like Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and, most notably, Charles Maier, Hogan has argued that a turn back to the themes of state power, national identity and foreign relations is underway only now modified by the shifts in the theoretical terrain in the last two decades.

² I am referring here to double hermeneutics as it is used both by Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), and by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Science of Science and Reflexivity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³ While this move was an attempt to include new work being done outside the field on foreign relations and economics, strategy and propaganda, to name a few, it is now at times a deeply ambiguous distinction, and one which warrants further discussion. For the sake of this essay, I have used them both somewhat interchangeably to refer to the same field, opting for one over the other where the people and theories I refer to identify themselves with one ‘side’. This solution is a provisional one; the issue deserves extended attention, in another forum at another time.

⁴ Patrick Finney, *International History*, (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 3-7.

⁵ Michael Hunt, ‘The Long Crisis in US Diplomatic History: Coming to Closure’, in Michael J. Hogan, *America in The World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations Since 1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 93. Charles Maier, ‘Marking Time: The Historiography of

International Relations', in Michael Kammen ed., *The Past Before us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 357.

⁶ Hogan, 'The Next Big Thing,' 173-174.

⁷ Melvyn P. Leffler, 'Presidential Address: New Approaches, Old Interpretations, and Prospective Reconfigurations,' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 19 No. 3, 174.

⁸Michael Hogan, 'Presidential Address: 'The Next Big Thing': The Future of Diplomatic History in A Global Age,' 173-174, 179. Emphasis added.

⁹ Clifford Geertz, 'Blurred Genres: the Refiguration of Social Thought.' In *Local Knowledge. Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. (New York: Basic Books, 1983) 34.

¹⁰ Anders Stephenson, 'Diplomatic History in the Expanded Field' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Fall, 1998), 595.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 595-596; Robert Buzzanco, 'Where's the Beef' *Diplomatic History*, 2001, 589.

¹² The Historical Society was another endeavour explicitly designed to offset and offer an alternative to the American Historical Association's embrace of increasingly diffuse methods.

¹³ Michael Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (eds), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10; 24-35.

¹⁴ Frank Ninkovich, 'Interest versus Interpretation' in *The Wilsonian Century*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1-16.

¹⁵ (emphasis mine) James Livingston, 'William Appleman Williams: A Roundtable: Social Theory and Historical Method in the Work of William Appleman Williams,' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 2001), 279.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 280.

¹⁷ Quoted in Finney, *International History*, 12.

¹⁸ Peter Novick, *That Nobel Dream: The Objectivists Question and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 89-91.

¹⁹ It is important to point out that I am mainly addressing the literature on international history produced in the United States. There are, as Jessica Gienow-Hecht has pointed out, very different trajectories and epistemological assumptions at play in international history when it is examined in other Western nations. For more see Gienow-Hecht's introduction to *Culture and International History*.

²⁰ I am referring here particularly to the explosion of work being done on Empire in the humanities. Working within the space carved out by the New Americanists, Donald Pease, Amy Kaplan and the post-national work created by John Carlos Rowe.

²¹ Andrew Rotter, 'Culture,' in Patrick Finney (ed), *International History*.

²² Walter L. Hixon, *The Myth Of American Diplomacy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

²³ Hoganson, May.

²⁴ Frank Costigliola, 'The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Western Alliance,' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall, 1997), 163. Similarly, Andrew Rotter who has extensively explored the religion in American and Asia, has argued that new discursive approaches to narrative have resulted in an entirely 'new methodology that at its best can permit the consideration of Others by diplomatic historians and can take into account gender, race and class [...] as well as other cultural elements, as ways of understanding relations between peoples and nations.'

²⁵ *Ibid*, 183; Andrew Rotter, 'Christians, Muslims, and Hindus: Religion and U.S.-South Asian Relations 1947-1954' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall, 2000), 594.

²⁶ Finney, 2.

²⁷ Emily Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900-1930*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). Akira Iriye, 'A century of NGOs,' *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 3, (Summer 1999): 421-435.

²⁸ Michael J. Hogan, Thomas G. Patterson, *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8.

²⁹ For example see, Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*, (New York: Verso, 2006). Combining the desire to understand the development of the national in a global context through the Gramscian hegemonic studies and Raymond Williams' critiques of cultural imperialism this cultural transference approach appears to have taken a particular hold over European scholars.

³⁰ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht's, 'Shame on US: Academics, Cultural Transfer, and the Cold War – A Critical Review,' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (Summer, 2000), 465-494. Also see the Commentary for more on the place of the state in cultural transfer debates; 'Science and the Cold War: A Round Table,' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 1, (Winter, 2000), 21-127. The most recent example of this process of cultural transference can be seen with David Engerman's work in 'American Knowledge and Global Power,' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (September, 2007), 599-622. Here he argues that historians must explore how ideas reinforced the understanding of national interests and played an imperative role in creating national and regional cultures; De-centering the state and traditional sources in diplomatic history is only possible if historians explore systems of knowledge (theories) have been transformed within the transnational arena. The only problem with Engerman's approach, however, is that it assumes that the primary unit for aligning cultural practices and systems is along geographical lines. This ignores that culture is not necessarily rooted to physical place, and assumes that cultures can themselves be seen as independent of one another, rather than as a series of intersecting practices. This is especially sticky when we discuss ideas, in a strictly abstract and practiced sense. Unlike an emphasis on culture as particular technologies or mechanisms that can be located in localized space and place, there is less certainty in any analysis of ideas per se, which seem to float across the local to create new practices that still appeal to the original idea or ideal that informed them. The question from this is, then, which practice actually represents the idea? What cultural division embodies the idea?

³¹ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht 'Introduction' in ed. Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Franck Schumacher, *Culture and International History*, (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 3-26. While some of the works in this field seems to focus on how culture is not necessarily delimited in this thread of work vis-à-vis the political, they argue that it is delimited through shared epistemological communities, which are not located in the nation necessarily, but are always related back to an essentially static concept of national interest and desire.

³² Robert Dean, 'Commentary: Tradition, Cause, and Effect, and the Cultural History of International Relations' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall, 2000), 616.

³³ George Steinmetz, Ed. *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 12.

³⁴ Beate Jahn, 'The Power of Culture in International History' in Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Franck Schumacher ed., *Culture and International History*, (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 27-44.

³⁵ Volker Depkat, 'Cultural Approaches to International Relations,' in *Culture and International History*, (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 179-180.

³⁶ Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, 'Culture' (New York: Oxford UP, 1983), 87.

³⁷ Eric Wolf, *Pathways of Power* (Berkeley, University of California, 2001), 83-99; 307-319.

³⁸ Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, 'Culture,' (New York: Oxford UP, 1983), 89.

³⁹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 112. Leopold von Ranke, *Universal History: The Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks* (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1884), xi. Ranke, 'On Universal History' in *The Secret of World History*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 247.

⁴⁰ See for example the H-Diplo debate that emerged around Joan Hoff's *A Faustian Foreign Policy from Woodrow Wilson to George W. Bush*, with particular attention to the discussion comments of David Kaiser. Kaiser argues that there are two defining moments in the modern historical profession. The most recent being the ferment that followed from the American-Vietnam war, but this follows his foundational Ranke moment—'when Germans led by Ranke began to argue that a scientific investigation of the past, based upon the most thorough investigation of original documentation, could produce books that made a reasonable approximation of the past available to present-day readers.'

(<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Diplo&month=0811&week=d&msg=k%2b/HyBWrSvMzceG6GzHQcg&user=&pw=>)

⁴¹ *Universal History*, 226, 279.

⁴² Ranke, Ed. Roger Wines, 'Introduction,' *The Secret of World History*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 11.

⁴³ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1975), 16, 28-29.

⁴⁴ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 11.

⁴⁵ I am thinking of Thorstein Veblen, Albion Small, William G. Sumner, and John Dewey, to name a few of the foundational American social scientists that reframed the parameters of inquiry for examining the relationship between culture and emerging ideas about the self, the psyche, the social, and the political economic as interdependent and linked spheres of existence that, for the sake of their work, revolved around the search for national and—while radically different in their visions of it— liberal order.

⁴⁶ Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-Modernism and the Transformation of American Culture-1880-1920*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). The same story can be applied to the recent turn to localism in some historical and a great deal more popular literature. Much akin to the turn to romantic-nationalism in previous eras, the recent turn to localism is a demarcation that, far from natural, is a chosen boundary to buffer local cultures from the ameliorating forces of liberal economic globalism. But

what goes unsaid is that ‘the local’ is largely a new capturing of ‘the social’ By a different name. Part of a larger kick-back against the idea of demarcating societies and the search for ‘community’, this return to the local provides a new way of being that we should aspire towards, and which government—especially in the liberal and Marxist modes—can participate in directing or engineering society towards. While retreating to a particular notion of culture it does not deal with the power implicit in claims to know culture and be cultural.

⁴⁷ Put differently, culture, in its presently amorphous form in international history, has been allowed to come to represent all things in such a way that every action, thought and word can be dismissed and explained as cultural insofar as it is a *representation* that either feeds into state interests or not—a position which can only possibly be determined by referring to or crutching on pre-existing and deeply held notions of state interests or the state as a preconfigured and fully formed entity. For example, in One might say that the notion of culture that is at work in international and foreign relations history is itself dependent on the deeply disciplined culture of the field—a culture that encourages a lack of questioning and consciousness about the tandem relationship between the state and culture. To explain this a little further, let me offer a very quick and necessarily limited history of the term ‘culture’ and its relationship with the state over time.

⁴⁸ Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: Americas Place in World History*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 281-295.

⁴⁹ I borrow this language and terminology from Nikolas Rose’s and Peter Miller’s work on Michel Foucault in ‘Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government’ (Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller) *British Journal of Sociology*, 1992, 43, 2, 182. Also see, M. Foucault, ‘Space , Knowledge and Power’, in P. Rabinow, (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986.

⁵⁰ Cullather, Nick, The Foreign Policy of the Calorie. *The American Historical Review* 112.2 (2007): 60 pars. 25 Aug. 2008 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/112.2/cullather.html>>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Matthew Connelly, Review of “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie” for H-Diplo. (<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/Connelly-Cullather.pdf>), 1-4.

⁵³ Kristin Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity*, (Hapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 11.