

The United States in the World

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In the past decade or so, the study of the history of the United States in the world has undergone radical, perhaps unprecedented transformations. The broad shifts in the scope and nature of the field reflect a sea change in how a new generation of historians who study U.S. interactions with the wider world sees their field, and how the discipline of history as a whole views it.

The most immediate piece of evidence for this assertion is the chapter title at the top of this page. In the previous edition of this volume, published in 1997, the closing chapter, authored by the distinguished Cornell University historian Walter LaFeber, was titled "Liberty and Power: U.S. Diplomatic History, 1750–1945." But if not so long ago it was still common for history departments across the country to hire historians of "American diplomacy" or "U.S. foreign relations," these days young historians in the field compete for positions in the history of "the United States in the World," "the United States *and* the World," or simply "U.S./World." The speed with which these new designations have taken hold reflects the sense of many historians in the field that the older ones are insufficiently capacious to capture the breadth of their common intellectual project. But the rapid evolution of the field has also left historians both within and outside the field unsure about its precise contours and content. In recent years the halls of professional conferences and the pages of scholarly journals have seen numerous debates, often quite heated, around this question. This essay, therefore, endeavors to trace the shape of a field that is in an extraordinarily dynamic state of flux, capturing its diversity while also lending it a measure of coherence.

A RESURGENT FIELD

A striking aspect of recent developments in the historiography of the United States in the world is its return to a place of prominence within the broad landscape of the American historical profession. From the interwar era through the 1950s, the study of American diplomacy was central to the historical profession in the United States, and its most eminent practitioners—historians such as Samuel Flagg Bemis and Dexter Perkins—were recognized leaders in the discipline who served as presidents of the American Historical Association. But with the rise of new approaches to the study of American history, first social history in the 1960s and 1970s and then cultural history in the 1980s and 1990s, diplomatic as well as political historians saw themselves increasingly marginalized. Thus, Charles S. Maier's rebuke in a 1980 historiographical essay that American diplomatic history "cannot, alas, be counted among the pioneering fields of the discipline during the 1970s" launched a wave of agonizing introspection, self-criticism, and self-defense that played out within the pages of *Diplomatic History*, the journal of record of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR), as well as elsewhere.

These days, however, the fog of self-doubt has been replaced among historians of U.S. relations with the world with a creative frenzy that is redefining the field through the relentless expansion of its spatial, thematic, and methodological boundaries. This newfound confidence was on display in a state-of-the-field roundtable published in the March 2009 issue of *The Journal of American History*. In the lead essay, Thomas W. Zeiler wasted no time in turning the page on Maier's critique, announcing at the outset that "an era of innovation among historians of American foreign relations is upon us." The four respondents to Zeiler's essay presented a variety of viewpoints, some taking issue with his triumphalist tone. But the very fact of the roundtable's publication in such a prominent venue signaled the renewed interest in this field within the American historical profession at large and the growing appreciation for its contributions and perspectives. Two factors help explain this reemergence: first, the dramatic changes in the discipline as a whole over the course of the last decade or so, and second, the deep and multifarious transformation of the U.S./world-field itself.

The great transformation of American history in the 1980s and the 1990s was centered on the "cultural turn," which saw the rise of cultural history from the margins of the profession to its commanding heights. The cultural turn profoundly revolutionized the writing of history, introducing new actors, sources, themes, interpretive lenses, and methodologies. Over the last decade or so, however, the cultural turn has come to an end. This does not mean that cultural history has ceased to be a central part of the discipline, quite the contrary. Rather, its centrality has become a given, universally accepted and no longer eliciting the surprise, indigna-

tion, or passionate debate that it once did. Cultural history remains important, but that is hardly news anymore. Instead, if there is one overarching trend that charts the most exciting recent changes in the American historical profession across its various fields it is the increasing dissatisfaction with the national and regional enclosures that have long defined historical fields and the growing willingness of scholars of all stripes to push against and transcend these boundaries. This shift has become known as the "transnational turn."

One implication of the transnational turn is that American historians as a whole have increasingly been seeking to transcend the nation in their topical interests and analytical frames. In place of a traditional American history whose narrative—even on topics, such as immigration or the American West, where a transnational framing would seem natural—stopped at the water's edge, American historians are now more willing, indeed eager, to frame their investigations in ways that go beyond the borders of the nation. A few intrepid historians, such as Thomas Bender in *Nation among Nations* (2006) and Ian Tyrrell in *Transnational Nation* (2007) have recently even attempted to recast the entire narrative of U.S. history in a global context. Granted, these pioneering efforts at constructing transnational narratives of U.S. history are not robust enough to displace the traditional storyline just yet. Indeed, the tension inherent in any effort to recast a *national* history within a *transnational* frame suggests that it may be a while before they are. Nevertheless, the influence of the transnational turn is now clearly pervasive in the field as a whole.

For our current purposes, the most interesting result of the transnational turn in the writing of history is that historians who have long focused on the interactions of Americans with other countries, peoples, and regions now find themselves working at the cutting edge of the profession. But they themselves have also changed radically in the intervening decades. They have brought new perspectives and methodologies to bear on the perennial questions of the history of American foreign relations, such as the sources of U.S. foreign policy, the character and uses of U.S. power, the role of American ideas and perceptions in shaping relations with other peoples, and the U.S. role in the history of the cold war. They have also, in addition, opened entirely new vistas on the history of the United States in the world, tackling questions that had received relatively little attention in previous eras. Among these are the active roles of non-Western peoples in shaping U.S. actions in the international arena; the significance of nonstate actors such as international organizations, NGOs, multinational corporations, transnational activists, and others; and the integration of whole new areas of human endeavor, such as family planning, food production, disease control, and human relations with the natural environment into the historiography of the United States in the world. This essay will attempt to outline the emerging contours of these developments.

THE CULTURAL TURN: RACE, GENDER, CULTURE, AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

In the previous edition of this volume, Walter LaFeber wrote that the great debate that defined the historiography of U.S. foreign relations in the post-war decades, beginning in the 1950s and lasting well in the 1970s, was the one between the “realists” and the “revisionists.” In this debate, both sides critiqued U.S. foreign policies, but they did so from opposite perspectives. The realist critique, most famously articulated by George F. Kennan in his *American Diplomacy* (1950) and further elaborated in the work of such scholars as Norman Graebner and Lloyd Ambrosius, viewed U.S. policies as excessively naive and idealistic and recommended a more hard-headed approach to foreign affairs, one based squarely on considerations of national interest and an understanding of great power politics. The revisionist critique, launched in William Appleman Williams’s *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959) and further developed in the work of “Wisconsin School” historians such as Thomas J. McCormick and LaFeber himself, turned the realists’ argument on its head, criticizing U.S. policy makers for their cynical pursuit of narrow interest, particularly, in their view, the economic interest in finding new markets for surplus U.S. goods and capital.

But the revisionists’ most important impact on the field was arguably not the specific nature of their critique but rather their framing of the history of U.S. foreign relations and the methods they used to study it. Earlier scholars of the history of U.S. diplomacy, from Bemis and Perkins to Ernest R. May, had invariably framed their work within the context of international politics, placing their understanding of U.S. policy options and decisions within the context of similar deliberations in the chancelleries of the other major powers—British, French, German, Russian, and occasionally (as in the work of John K. Fairbank on U.S.-China relations) of non-European powers. Williams and his students, however, turned their gaze inward, framing their study of U.S. foreign policies not primarily in the context of international politics but rather within the confines of the domestic U.S. sphere. Broadly speaking, their focus was on the domestic forces and interests—ideological, economic, and political—that shaped U.S. actions in the world. While this shift opened up important new directions in the field, it also meant that historians of U.S. foreign relations turned increasingly inward, limiting themselves to research in U.S. archives and focusing on the ideas and actions of Americans to explain U.S. policy.

Williams and his early students focused on *economic* ideas and interests as the primary drivers of policy, and that focus occupied much of the new work in the field in the 1960s and into the 1970s. Among the most influential of these works was LaFeber’s *The New Empire* (1963). Applying to the period from 1860 to 1898 Williams’ notion that the pursuit of “open door imperialism” could serve as the key to understanding U.S. foreign policy, LaFeber explained post-Civil War expansionism as the result

of a desperate search for new markets following the crises of overproduction that attended American industrialization in those decades. Another Williams student, Thomas McCormick, made a similar argument about U.S. expansion in East Asia in the 1890s in his *China Market* (1967). Such arguments about the centrality of economic interests grew more elaborate over time, evolving in the 1970s and 1980s into what became known as the “corporatist synthesis,” developed by Michael J. Hogan and others. Hogan’s *Informal Entente* (1977), which focused on the interwar years, argued that U.S. officials and business leaders collaborated closely with each other and with their counterparts in major European countries to organize transatlantic cooperative mechanisms that would eliminate the wasteful competition of the laissez-faire system and help solve problems of recovery, debts, reparations, and budgets.

By the 1980s, however, the interpretive emphasis in the field was moving away from economics and toward approaches that reflected the discipline-wide turn toward cultural history, highlighting the role of discourses of race and gender, and (more recently) religion. An important transitional text in this context was Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream* (1982), which showed the connections between the economic and the cultural aspects of U.S. expansion from 1890 to 1945, arguing that they were intimately tied together in the American ideology of “liberal developmentalism.” This notion presaged the now burgeoning literature on the role of ideas in U.S. relations with other peoples. A seminal text that influenced much subsequent work in this vein focusing on ideology and race as major factors in foreign relations was Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (1987). Encompassing the entire history of U.S. foreign relations, Hunt argued that it rested on three main ideological pillars: an abiding faith in U.S. national greatness, or Manifest Destiny; a racist conception of nonwhite peoples; and a fear of social (as distinct from political) revolution, rooted in the American rejection of the radicalism of the French Revolution.

In recent years, numerous scholars have probed the influence of race on the history of U.S. foreign relations. Among the pioneers were Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (1981), and Alexander DeConde, *Ethnicity, Race, and American Foreign Policy* (1992), which showed how racial identification, especially Anglo-American identity, have shaped U.S. foreign policies and expansion throughout its history. More recently, Joseph M. Henning, *Outposts of Civilization* (2000), explained how conceptions of race and religion have shaped relations between the United States and Japan from the outset. Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti* (2001) showed how U.S. racial views, particularly those of U.S. Marines from the Jim Crow South, shaped the U.S. invasion and nearly two decades of military rule in Haiti, from 1916 to 1934. Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government* (2006), explored how U.S. and Filipino elites joined to construct hierarchies of race and civilization that underpinned U.S. colonial rule over the islands. These last two works are among the outpouring of excellent new scholarship on

U.S. colonial rule, not only in Haiti and the Philippines but also in Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

Attention to questions of race and the ways in which it shapes politics and policy has also enriched our understanding of the history of the United States in the world during the postwar era, giving rise to a rich vein of scholarly work on “cold war civil rights” literature, after the title of Mary L. Dudziak’s pioneering 2000 book. This work has illuminated important connections and cross influences between U.S. postwar foreign policy, particularly toward the developing world, and the domestic struggle over African-American civil rights. Works such as Dudziak’s and Thomas Borstelmann’s *The Cold War and the Color Line* (2001) showed how, after 1945, U.S. officials in the White House and the State Department viewed the practices of segregation and racial discrimination in the United States as a liability for America’s image abroad, serving as it did as a recurring theme in Soviet propaganda at a time when American elites saw themselves as fighting for the “hearts and minds” of the decolonizing peoples of Africa and Asia. For such officials, civil rights for African Americans became a cold war imperative, helping push Washington along as it slowly inched toward the progress in race relations that would culminate with the civil rights legislation of the mid-1960s.

But the impact of the cold war and decolonization on race relations within the United States was by no means simple. Carol Anderson, in *Eyes off the Prize* (2003), focuses on the ways shifting international circumstances shaped the African-American freedom struggle. She shows how the early postwar effort to deploy the discourse of human rights, which reached a high point with the United Nations’ promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, was effectively stifled by segregationists who, at the height of the McCarthy Era, tarred those who demanded full human rights for African Americans as traitorous “reds.” This, in turn, caused a split within the African-American community between the “moderates,” including the leadership of the NAACP, who were willing to downplay demands for social and economic rights in the pursuit of political or civil rights, and the “radicals,” such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson, who continued to demand full human rights for African Americans and found themselves hounded and marginalized. Thus the cold war context and the fight for the “hearts and minds” of postcolonial peoples made racial discrimination in U.S. society less tenable, but the trope of anticommunism served as a potent weapon for those who sought to undermine the campaign for equality.

Exploring the importance of African Americans in the history of the United States in the world, recent scholarship has made it clear that the history of U.S. race relations often intersected with the history of foreign relations and must therefore be seen in its full transnational context—just as many saw it at the time. Marc Gallicchio’s *The African American Encounter with Japan and China* (2000) showed how black Americans in the first half of the twentieth century explicitly linked their own struggle to

the efforts of emerging nations of color to attain equality in international society and tried, though largely unsuccessfully, to forge transnational alliances in a common cause. Penny M. Von Eschen’s *Race against Empire* (1997) traced the efforts of African-American activists in the mid-twentieth century to advocate for African independence and locate their own struggle within the global struggle for black liberation. And when, in the 1950s, the State Department recruited African-American jazz musicians, including the great Louis Armstrong, to tour Africa as part of the struggle for third world “hearts and minds,” the effort to foster good will for the United States often faltered on the shoals of America’s domestic record on civil rights and its international record of support for European imperialists and postcolonial autocrats. In sum, paying attention to racial discourses and to African-American actors has helped to transform our view of the history of U.S. foreign relations as well as that of the civil rights struggle.

Gender analysis, too, has generated new perspectives and explanations of U.S. foreign relations. Kristen L. Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood* (1998) showed the significance of the language of masculinity in the public debates that led up to the wars against the Spanish and the Filipinos in 1898. She argued that the desire of a new generation of leaders, such as Theodore Roosevelt, who had not taken part in the Civil War, to find proving grounds for their manliness was among the factors that pushed the United States into these conflicts. Robert D. Dean’s *Imperial Brotherhood* (2001) similarly used gender analysis to dissect the worldview of U.S. policy makers in the early cold war era, arguing that the American elites, reared in private academies and Ivy League universities within a “culture of masculinity” and sexual orthodoxy, formed an “imperial brotherhood” in which foreign policy reflected norms of tough, virile masculinity, helping, among other things, to propel the United States into the Vietnam War. And, in a series of innovative articles, Frank Costigliola has shown how gendered anxieties shaped the thinking and policies of such figures as Franklin D. Roosevelt and the architect of containment, George F. Kennan.

Beyond introducing new interpretive lenses into the field, the cultural turn has also shaped it in more literal ways. It has encouraged scholarship on U.S. cultural diplomacy, or the conscious efforts to promote U.S. culture abroad, as a component of the nation’s diplomatic efforts, as well as on the broader impact of American cultural forms and productions on the wider world. Pioneering works such as Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas* (1981), and Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion* (1984), which between them covered the period from the Versailles Treaty to the early cold war, traced the ways in which American ideas and cultural productions helped to facilitate the rise of U.S. influence in Europe and became fixtures of U.S. “cultural diplomacy” in the cold war. More recently, work such as Christopher Endy’s on American tourism in France during the cold war showed how both the U.S. and foreign governments worked to promote leisure travel as part of their foreign relations agenda. On a broader

canvas, Richard Pells, *Not like Us* (1997), placed the “Americanization” of Europe—in consumption, entertainment, fashion, youth culture—at the center of the relationship between Americans and Europeans after World War II, while Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire* (2005), refined that argument even further, positing the triumph of American-style consumer society in Europe as the driving force in the rise of U.S. hegemony over Europe in the last century.

The title of de Grazia’s book reminds us that, in recent years, the idea of empire has been front and center in the writing on the history of the United States in the world, used to describe the entire expanse of that history and not solely or even primarily the U.S. experience in formal overseas colonialism. This idea is not new, of course, and has long been deployed by critics of American foreign relations (and occasionally by its supporters as well). But the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have brought it back to the fore with a vengeance after the brief post-cold war interlude of the 1990s, when international cooperation seemed the order of the day. Charles S. Maier, for example, explored the rise of U.S. global hegemony in *Among Empires* (2006), identifying the prodigiousness of American consumption as well as production as the engine of U.S. global power in the twentieth century. Indeed, the imperial framework often mixes easily with another recently popular concept, globalization, as they converge around the influence of American production, consumption, and culture across the globe. These trends are exemplified in recent work by Walter LaFeber on the worldwide impact of an American icon such as Michael Jordan. And finally, Jeremi Suri has sought to connect cultural revolutions with international politics by exploring the intersection of the upheavals of the 1960s around the globe with the great power politics of the era, viewing the turn toward détente in the early 1970s as at least partially the result of efforts of great power leaders—Nixon, Brezhnev, Mao—to regain a semblance of control in the face of domestic challenges from disaffected youth.

THE TRANSNATIONAL TURN: THE UNITED STATES IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

The cultural turn, then, has advanced our understanding of the ways in which cultural factors have shaped the history of the United States in the world. But tools borrowed from cultural history also helped historians to see interrelationships, as in the “cold war civil rights” literature, between transnational contexts and “domestic” developments, putting the historiography of the United States in the world at the forefront of the transnational turn in the field of American history as a whole. The move toward the internationalization of the history of the United States in the world has also been driven by a growing sense that, despite the welcome thematic expansion that the cultural turn brought, the study of U.S. relations with

the world was still constrained by its very definition as a subfield of American history and the corresponding emphasis on understanding the domestic determinants—whether political, economic, or cultural—of American foreign policy. After all, to study the foreign relations of one nation in isolation is to listen for the sound of one hand clapping.

To some extent, the move toward internationalization is a return to an older mode of scholarship. Prior to the rise of the revisionist school in the 1960s, most historians of American diplomacy included non-U.S. perspectives, actors, and sources as a matter of course, and work in archives outside the United States and in languages other than English was viewed as a sine qua non among practitioners in the field. This scholarship, however, was Eurocentric, focused on elites (overwhelmingly white, male, and powerful), and methodologically conservative, forever documenting, in the words of one famous critique, what one clerk said to another. The challenge of the new international history, then, has been to bring that broad international perspective back into focus while preserving and developing the rich methodological and thematic advances that have accumulated in the decades of scholarship since the 1960s.

The new work in this vein, it should be said, is not evenly distributed across the chronological span of U.S. history. Much of it is concentrated in the twentieth century, and even more so in the post-World War II period. Still, there has been some important new work on earlier periods. Historians have always understood, of course, that the events of the American Revolution could not be studied without reference to the broader contexts—ideological, political, military—in which they unfolded, and U.S. relations with the world in the early republic have long been studied as part of the epic conflict between the British and French empires for what could only be described as world domination. But in his global history of the Declaration of Independence, David Armitage has shown not only that the American founding was embedded in global contexts, tracing how the transnational flow of ideas shaped the declaration, but also how, in subsequent decades and centuries, the ideas articulated by the Founders reverberated across space and time, serving as a model for independence movements throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth—in Latin America and the Caribbean, then in East-Central Europe, and finally across Asia and Africa.

It is not only American ideas, however, that have come to encircle the globe, but also American military power. The recent escalation of U.S. military involvement in the Middle East has rekindled some interest among both academic and popular historians in the Barbary Wars (the first fought from 1801 to 1805 and the second in 1815). Privateers from the North African principalities of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli (in present-day Libya) had long attacked commercial traffic in the Mediterranean, and, if before the Revolution American shipping was protected under British treaties with the pirates, by the 1780s the United States was on its own. Despite early attempts at accommodation, the Jefferson administration in the end opted

for war. The ensuing battles created the new nation's first naval hero, Steven Decatur, and became enshrined in the official hymn of the U.S. Marine Corps (which begins "From the Halls of Montezuma, To the shores of Tripoli"—the first line refers, of course, to the U.S.-Mexico War). Nevertheless, the history of the Barbary Wars still awaits a deeper historical treatment, one that would probe its lasting impact on U.S. culture, not least military culture, and also locate it in the broader context of international affairs in the Mediterranean and integrate the perspectives of the North African actors into the narrative.

A good model for such work is new scholarship on the U.S.-Mexico War of 1846-1848, which helps us see it not only through the eyes of Americans—not simply as "Mr. Polk's War"—but also through those of other participants, including Mexicans and Native Americans. The former perspective is highlighted in Timothy J. Henderson, *A Glorious Defeat* (2007), which approaches the story of the war from the Mexican side and argues that, in order to understand both the outbreak and the outcome of the war we must consider not only the expansionist urges of the James K. Polk administration and the U.S. public's faith in its "Manifest Destiny," but also the condition of the Mexican state, divided as it was along lines of race, class, and region, which helped propel its political class, determined to rise in defense of Mexico's honor after the loss of Texas, into a conflict that most Mexicans knew they could not win. And in *War of a Thousand Deserts* (2008), Brian Delay has excavated fascinating new sources to illuminate the role of "independent Indians"—Apaches, Navajos, and especially Comanches—in shaping the contours of the conflict during an era in which, most historians have hitherto assumed, Native Americans were no longer an independent force in the international affairs of North America.

No event in American history has produced more historical output than the Civil War, and perhaps no event has been so insistently if understandably studied within the confines of national rather than transnational history. But that is now beginning to change. Sven Beckert's recent work on the global history of cotton has shed light on the Civil War as an event of global consequences in the political economy of the nineteenth century and beyond. He shows that, outside the United States, the main immediate significance of the great conflict between the Union and the Confederacy was the deep and sudden disruption it caused in the global supply of cotton, the raw material that powered the engine of the Industrial Revolution. This disruption in turn spurred, almost immediately, huge spikes in cotton cultivation elsewhere, especially in Egypt and India. With the end of American slavery in the wake of the war the main mode of antebellum cotton production was dead. Capitalists and governments—British first and foremost, but also Germans, Japanese, and others—launched a frenzied search for alternative sources and modes for producing cotton, with far-reaching consequences for global regimes of agricultural labor and industrial production.

If Beckert's work shows how a global perspective can shed new light on a well-known event, other recent work on the nineteenth century has focused on events largely forgotten or ignored by previous historians. Gordon Chang has reminded us of the significance of the U.S. war against Korea—not the one that took place in the early 1950s but rather the conflict of 1871, sparked as the U.S. Navy sought to force open the societies of northeast Asia to American trade—using that episode to explore the two sides' divergent discourses of "civilization" and "barbarism" and show how they shifted to accommodate changing interests and strategic requirements. And the work of Ussama Makdisi on the mid-nineteenth century peregrinations of American missionaries in Ottoman-ruled Lebanon explores their complex relationships with the surrounding society as they sought to "civilize" members of one of the world's oldest Christian communities. This work, part of a growing wave of scholarship on the role of religion in U.S. relations with the world, reminds us of the multiple actors and modalities involved in the interactions between Americans and other peoples and of the multifaceted role that religion has played in the history of U.S. foreign relations. It is a story that, partly under the influence of events since 2001 that have brought to the fore the role of religion in international affairs, is only now beginning to be told more fully.

Still, much of the recent scholarship in the history of the United States in the world has focused on the twentieth century. New work on the U.S. colonial empire in the Pacific and the Caribbean in the early twentieth century has not only expanded our understanding of that central chapter in U.S. history but also shown how it can illuminate many other aspects of American history, such as race relations. If until recently most of the historiographical interest in the U.S. occupation of the Philippines concentrated on the debate over empire at the turn of the century rather than on its actual practice on the ground over the next five decades, we now have substantial work on diverse aspects of U.S. colonial rule there, much of it conveniently summarized in *Colonial Crucible* (2009), edited by Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano. Recent work by Patricio N. Abinales, Warwick Anderson, Anne L. Foster, Paul A. Kramer, and others on this subject means that we now have a much more detailed and textured story. It helps us better understand the complex interactions between Americans and Filipinos and also places the ideology and practice of the United States as an imperial power in relation to other imperial powers, such as the British and the French, and more generally in the context of the broader culture of empire in international society at the time.

World War I and the Paris Peace Conference have long been viewed as major turning points in the history of the United States in the world, but here, too, new scholarship has illuminated these events from fresh perspectives. President Woodrow Wilson, who committed Americans to fight overseas on a scale far beyond anything that came before, wanted the extent of the war aims to match the scale of the sacrifice and so outlined a radical

vision for the postwar reordering of international affairs. Building on the work of previous generations of scholars, Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars* (1993) showed how the idea of a League of Nations came to form the core of Wilson's vision for a peaceful postwar order, illuminating especially the extent to which activists and intellectuals from the left helped to shape Wilson's ideas. Knock also showed that the struggle in the United States over the League was not between internationalists and isolationists, as many previously thought, but between two distinct visions of internationalism. One was Wilson's "liberal internationalism, which focused on the right of all peoples to self-determination and the empowerment of an inclusive League of Nations as an arbiter of international affairs. The other, the "conservative internationalism" advocated by Wilson's opponents, including Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt, prioritized close collaboration among the great powers and saw the League as primarily an instrument for the Anglo-American management of world affairs. The outcome of the struggle between these two camps was not preordained, and John Milton Cooper has argued persuasively that the incapacitating stroke that Wilson suffered in October 1919 was crucial in dooming the chances for a compromise over Senate ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, and thus for U.S. membership in the League of Nations.

Despite Wilson's spectacular failure in his own time, many historians now consider the vision he articulated as one of singular importance in the subsequent history of the United States in the world. In U.S. foreign policy, Frank Ninkovich has argued, the twentieth century was the "Wilsonian century." In the aftermath of the cold war in 1991, and even more so after the events of 9/11, a heated argument raged over the precise content and the suitability of the Wilsonian vision as a guide to the U.S. role in the world. But while there has been a tendency, occasionally evident even among professional historians, to reduce Wilson's views to a handful of (in)famous snippets—"making the world safe for democracy," "teaching Latin Americans to elect good men"—recent scholarship has made a compelling case that it was the establishment of multilateral international institutions, rather than the spreading of democracy as such, that stood at the center of Wilson's vision. Still, my own book, *The Wilsonian Moment* (2007), showed that Wilson's ringing wartime rhetoric had far-flung unintended audiences and, therefore, far-reaching unintended consequences, helping to mobilize colonial peoples against the system of imperial rule. Even as Wilson himself soon disappeared from the international arena, replaced in many cases by Lenin as an inspiration for anticolonial struggles, the momentum unleashed in the colonial world in 1919 continued to gain force, helping to shape the eventual process of decolonization and the recasting of international society that came in its wake.

Another aspect of the U.S. role in the world that has roots in Progressive Era politics as well as in America's imperial projects is the ideology and practice of what Emily Rosenberg has called "liberal developmentalism." The burgeoning literature on the history of U.S. development pro-

grams abroad brings together a number of historiographical strands that run through the history of American interactions with the world. It connects the "civilizing mission" of nineteenth-century missionaries, the push for overseas empire in the early twentieth century, and the massive public works programs of the New Deal to a central element of U.S. foreign policy after 1945, namely, the pursuit and advocacy of "modernization" around the world, especially in what was then known as the third world. This theme also, and not at all incidentally, carries distinct echoes of the ideologies of Manifest Destiny, racial and civilizational hierarchies, and an American mission to recast world order. It also bears important connections to central themes in domestic U.S. history, from westward expansion through progressivism and the New Deal to the Great Society and beyond.

An important advantage of thinking about the history of the United States in the world through the lens of modernization and development is that it highlights continuities in U.S. attitudes toward and relations with the rest of the world across the traditional divide of 1945, illuminating the myriad ways in which the policies and actions of the cold war era were connected to earlier American ideas, views, and practices. Thus, Michael A. Latham's pioneering work on the Kennedy administration's ideology of modernization tied its development initiatives in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia—the Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps, the Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam—to the tradition of ideologies of civilization and empire that guided earlier U.S. interactions with nonwhite peoples. David C. Engerman has explored the ways in which early American views of Russian modernization and economic development shaped U.S. policies toward the Soviet Union, while David Ekbladh has shown how the domestic development experiments of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the 1930s later became the basis for American modernization programs in Vietnam's Mekong Valley and elsewhere.

While World War II remains one of the defining events in the history of the United States in the world, recent work, rather than viewing the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as a radical break, has tended to see the entire period from 1917 to the 1945 as the era in which the United States emerged as the preeminent world power, and in which the European imperium was gradually but inexorably replaced with an American one. The emerging pillars of U.S. world power no doubt included the military-industrial complex, the national security state, and the vast network of military bases in Europe and the Pacific Rim, on which excellent scholarship has been and continues to be written—Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron* (1998), on the origins of the national security state, is but one example. Increasingly, however, historians are recognizing the extent to which the U.S. vision for the new world order included the construction of international institutions and reshaping of international norms. Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the United Nations* (1997), show the central role that the establishment of international structures played in

Washington's wartime planning, though much work remains to be done on the rather tumultuous history of relations between the United States and the United Nations. Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World* (2005), traces central normative aspects of the new American internationalism forged during the war years, reflected not only in declarations of principle such as the Atlantic Charter but also in the institution building that took place at Bretton Woods and San Francisco and the internationalization of justice that occurred at Nuremberg.

Borgwardt's work is a prime example of the work in the new but already substantial field of human rights history, a field that is now at the center of historiographical (not to mention moral) debates about the U.S. role in the world and which, not coincidentally, intersects with the greater attention now paid to international organizations in the making of the contemporary world. Frank Ninkovich has recently delved back into the Gilded Age to show how the crystallization of a set of views on global interconnectedness in the late nineteenth century fostered the emergence of a global consciousness among American elites that underpinned the rise of both imperialism and internationalism, setting the stage for an international politics of human rights. And Mary Ann Glendon has carefully reconstructed the creation of the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, locating Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the committee that wrote the declaration, at the center of the multinational group of intellectuals that included the French jurist René Cassin, the Lebanese philosopher Charles Malik, and the Chinese scholar P. C. Chang. Indeed, numerous historians have now begun to trace the rise of international rights regimes, first concerned with the rights of minorities within national polities and then, after World War II, focused on the universal human rights of individuals, uncovering the complex web of interests and motivations involved and exposing the hypocrisies and failed promises. In the process, they are elucidating the growing role of international norms and institutions in the postwar world.

THE NEW COLD WAR HISTORY, AND BEYOND

Notwithstanding the rich, important scholarship already outlined on the pre-1945 history of the United States in the world, much of the new work published in the last two decades in the field has focused on the period following the end of World War II that saw the advent of the global conflict known as the cold war. Partly, this prodigious output was the result of the flood of new sources that, for a while in the 1990s, came gushing out of previously inaccessible archives in former Soviet bloc countries, as well as from the new (though still very partial) liberality of the Chinese archives. But though most (though by no means all) of these newly available sources have come from Europe, some of the most important work to emerge from them has actually nudged the historiography of the cold war away from its old Eurocentric focus and toward a growing recognition of the importance

of third world countries, both as arenas and as actors, in shaping international affairs in the postwar era. A leading example of such work is Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (2005), which mined a vast trove of new documents in numerous languages to lay out in great detail how the intersection of postcolonial conflict and superpower competition meant that, in much of the Global South, the "cold war" was in fact a very hot one. For Westad, it is the third world, rather than Europe, that should be viewed as the central arena of cold war conflict.

Another important insight to emerge from recent work on Washington's relations with Third-World countries relates to the impact of the often irreconcilable conflict between anti-imperialism and anticommunism that plagued U.S. policy. The work of Salim Yaqub, for example, explored the efforts of the Eisenhower administration to craft a Middle East policy that would contain communism and replace retreating British and French influence with U.S. power while at the same time fostering good will among the region's newly independent states. But the attempts to convince leaders such as Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser (or, for that matter, India's Jawaharlal Nehru) that the United States supported their right to self-determination while also demanding that they declare allegiance to the United States did not usually go very well, to the great frustration of Eisenhower and his fiercely anticommunist secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. The United States, as Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution* (2002) has shown, was operating in a changed international environment and had to contend with new norms, forums, and actors in international society. In this new order, Algerian freedom fighters could challenge, and eventually defeat, their militarily far stronger French overlords by leveraging support in sympathetic forums such as the UN General Assembly and plugging into global revolutionary networks that stretched from Cuba to Vietnam.

Indeed, historians using newly available materials from the Cuban archives have been able to shed new light on central episodes in cold war history. Thus, Alexander Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble* (1997) integrated Havana's perspective into the history of the Cuban Missile Crisis while Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions* (2002) outlined the central role of Cuban advisers, aid workers, and soldiers in postcolonial conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. Among other things, such work has highlighted the independent agency of Third-World actors in the postwar world, showing how they were often able to shape in decisive ways the international contexts that decision makers in Washington and Moscow faced. During the cold war era, U.S. officials commonly had to choose between what they saw as the imperative of containing communism and the demands of peoples in the Global South for self-determination. And quite often during this period, the perceived need to bolster European allies or to counter real or imagined communist threats won out over any inclination to support the claims of colonial or postcolonial peoples. The classic case study and (at least from the American perspective) the most tragic one was the U.S. decision, in the

late 1940s, to support the desperate French efforts to retake its colonial possessions in Indochina, a decision that, as Mark Atwood Lawrence has recently reminded us, led directly to the U.S. war in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War has long fascinated historians of the United States in the world and it has remained a major topic of interest, though here, too, scholars have recently explored some new themes and perspectives. The attention to the role of culture in foreign relations, as well as the new concern with the role of religion, is evident in the work of Seth Jacobs, who has argued that South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem's Catholicism helped him gain support among U.S. elites, who tended to view non-Christian Vietnamese as passive and untrustworthy—in essence, as uncivilized. Such cultural analysis of foreign policy is illuminating but has its limits, which are apparent when we recall that it was President John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, who acquiesced in the 1963 coup against Diem once it was deemed that he had become more of a threat than an asset to U.S. goals in Southeast Asia. Another cultural perspective on the U.S.-Vietnam relationship is offered in the work of Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America* (2000), which shows how understanding the history of mutual perceptions between the two peoples can help us make sense of their subsequent interactions.

An important feature of new work on the Vietnam War is the move toward seeing the war as more than simply an American event. This has meant, among other things, contextualizing U.S. decisions leading to the war within the broader interplay of international politics at the time, as the work of Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall has done. And it has also, and no less importantly, meant using Vietnamese-language sources to integrate the various Vietnamese actors into the narrative, as in the work of Robert K. Brigham on the South Vietnamese army or Lien-Hang Nguyen on the policy debates within the North Vietnamese leadership. This shift in the scholarship has now begun to filter into general classroom texts. If one of the most popular of the previous generation of surveys on the Vietnam War, George Herring's *America's Longest War* (1979), was written primarily from the perspective of U.S. history, more recent efforts by Lawrence (*The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*) and Bradley (*Vietnam at War*) remind us that the war must also be understood as international history, and as Vietnamese history.

Perhaps the single most important feature of recent writing on the history of the cold war is that, in the last two decades, historians have been able to glimpse it in the rearview mirror. What was so shocking about the end of the cold war was not so much that it came relatively peacefully (the violence that tore up Yugoslavia was, of course, a glaring exception), but rather that it ended so definitively, with one of the two major antagonists, the Soviet Union, simply disintegrating into thin air. Great empires have fallen before, but typically as a result of war or invasion; one is hard pressed to think of a historical precedent for a major world power simply willing itself out of existence. Unsurprisingly, the debate over the expla-

nation for this puzzling denouement has been vigorous. Some historians, such as John Lewis Gaddis, have awarded substantial credit for the collapse of the Soviet bloc, if not the Soviet Union itself, to Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II, while others have highlighted the role of Mikhail Gorbachev and of the unintended consequences of his efforts to reform the Soviet system. But despite the outpouring of excellent new scholarship—the year 2009, the twentieth anniversary of the dramatic events of 1989, saw numerous volumes published on this subject—the debate over the causes and consequences of the end of the cold war is still far from over.

In the context of this chapter, however, perhaps the most interesting consequence of the end of the cold war is not historical but historiographical. Namely, it is the conviction among a growing number of historians that the concept of the “cold war” no longer offers the only or the most compelling framework for understanding the history of the United States in the world between 1945 and 1991. One problem with viewing postwar history through the cold war lens, as already noted, is that it lends excessive importance to 1945 as a bright dividing line in the history of U.S. relations with the wider world. But more importantly, a focus on the cold war as an interpretive framework tends to efface other, arguably more central themes or processes in the history of the postwar world. Two such themes that have begun to emerge as contenders for framing our study of the postwar era are decolonization and the rise of new nations in Asia and Africa, and globalization and the emergence of new international regimes of global order and disorder.

Building on the seminal work of Akira Iriye, Matthew Connelly has recently called on historians to “take off the cold war lens” and to “see beyond the state” as they reconsider the history of the postwar world, and a new generation of historians has begun to answer that call. Still, recent work has shown that we need not, indeed should not ignore the cold war or the indisputably important role of states and state power in international affairs as we open up new topics and themes for historical investigation. Thus, Nick Cullather and Kristin Ahlberg have highlighted the significance of food aid and agricultural modernization in the history of U.S. foreign relations. Amy L. S. Staples has traced the ways UN specialized agencies, along with the networks of international civil servants that cohered around them, laid the groundwork for regimes and practices of global governance in the fields of economics, food, and health. And Connelly himself has uncovered the history of the global campaign to control world population, tracing the elaborate networks of state and nonstate actors that took part in a struggle that both supporters and opponents saw literally as a matter of life and death, not only for individuals or even nations but for the planet itself, and for humanity's moral and biological fiber.

Some of the most exciting new horizons now appearing in the historiography of the United States in the world, then, combine traditional concerns with new approaches and themes. The resulting work gives us a better sense of the roles of non-Western peoples, not merely as objects of

U.S. perceptions and policies but as active agents that have played an important part in shaping the history of U.S. interactions with the world. It also pays greater attention to nonstate actors—not just international organizations, which have emerged as increasingly important, but also missionaries and religious organizations, businesspeople and multinational corporations, philanthropists and activist lobbies, immigrants and diasporic networks, and transnational “epistemic communities” of experts that cohered around shared knowledge, norms, and practices. In short, this new work seeks to write the history of the United States in the world not only as a chapter within U.S. history but also as a central component of the history of international society. And even as the field remains committed to traditional concerns with military conflict, diplomacy, and economic interests it is also paying greater attention to such themes as the development of international norms and institutions, humanitarian interventions, and global campaigns against hunger and disease, among others. From our twenty-first-century perspective, conscious as we are of living in a global era, it seems only fitting that the history of the United States in the world should have this breadth.

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The “Cultural Turn”

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Cultural historians of the United States find themselves in an unusual position. On the one hand, they are part of a uniquely popular, exciting, and encompassing field of historical inquiry. On the other hand, the remarkable growth of the field in the twenty-first century has rendered it less distinctive than in its incarnation in the 1980s and 1990s as the up-and-coming “new cultural history.” Cultural history has triumphed; it is everywhere in the historiography of the United States. Between 1990 and 2005 the number of historians claiming this label doubled, and, by the latter date, nearly 60 percent of American history departments had at least one self-identified cultural historian. As the concerns of cultural history have diffused throughout the profession—as James Vernon announced in 2001, “we are all cultural historians now”—it has become difficult to determine what makes it a unique field.

At the same time, cultural history has benefited from the infusion of new methods and approaches. Some of these—such as disability history, visual studies, and sensory history—while initially associated with the field, have become distinct areas of inquiry. Many other fields have been reinvigorated by their engagement with cultural approaches. (Indeed, many of the topics treated in this chapter of necessity blend into the subjects of the other topical chapters of this volume.) If we have all become culturalists, the forms and practices of this cultural turn in the United States have varied dramatically. However widespread and diverse, the cultural turn has not been directionless, and this chapter will map the growth of the field and tease out its definitional cornerstones. The map, as we will see,