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Culture and Foreign Policy

An Indroduction to Approaches and Theory

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Introduction

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Historians concerned with foreign policy deal by and large with political, security and economic issues. The cultural side of foreign policy is a "vast and treacherous area"¹ in which they do not want to get trapped. It is increasingly acknowledged *that* culture matters in the way states deal with one another, but little is done, however, to find out *how*.² This article attempts to make some suggestions and introduce relevant literature, mostly American, on the subject. It does not set out to be an exhaustive analysis, but merely convey some tentative remarks.

Methodological Limitations to the Study of Culture and Foreign Policy

Why has culture not been of interest to diplomatic historians? One obvious reason is that "culture" is such a slippery concept. Anthropologists, whose primary area of research is "culture", have wrestled with the concept for years and are still far from reaching a consensus on what it is. No wonder that diplomatic historians, political scientists and others are hesitant about stepping into the quagmire. Other reasons for avoiding culture in the treatment of foreign policy are methodological in nature.

First, to include culture in the analysis of foreign policy usually means bringing in untraditional actors. Depending on the posed problem, actors who traditionally add up to the "foreign policy establishment" must be supplemented by such diverse groups as artists, journalists, youth, business communities, religious groups, etc. These are tricky, but the overriding problem connected to untraditional actors is, no doubt, the treatment of the "mass", "general opinion" or "general society". The accumulative and abstract nature of the concepts entails huge operational problems for a scholar who has his or her mind set on analyzing them. It can be assumed

Geir Lundestad, The American "Empire" and Other Studies of US Foreign Policy in a Comparative Perspective (Oslo, 1990), p. 32.

Culture is often mentioned as being of great importance, but seldom investigated even if it is apparent that it must be highly relevant to the posed problem. For an example, see Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-52", Journal of Peace Research, no. 3, 1986, p. 267.

that there are collective "dreams", "visions", "prejudices" and "sentiments" typical for a nation,³ but how does one deduce them? To do that, one needs a sophisticated methodological apparatus which, unfortunately, has yet to be developed.⁴

Second, connected to untraditional actors are untraditional sources. Cartoons, magazines, music, art, literature, commercials, various symbols, export of books, TV shows, statistics of tourist-flows, and "sports", "culture", and "leisure" sections of the newspapers; these are but a few examples of sources a student of culture and foreign policy may find useful. Those historians who would not feel uncomfortable doing studies based on these kinds of sources would certainly find them troublesome.

Third, even studying traditional sources might cause problems if culture is included in the search. Concern with culture would, in Michael H. Hunt's words, "increase the scholar's burden as archival texts become denser and questions of societal context proliferate".⁵ To detect the cultural setting and cultural underpinnings of a given foreign policy requires a quite different approach to the texts than what is needed in the mere reconstruction of dayto-day affairs. Some have brought in the concept of "discourse" in this regard.⁶ Simply put, the discursive, or linguistic, approach involves greater attention to the symbols and underlying meanings of a text. "Self-evident" words and phrases like "progress", "democracy", "modernity", "national interests", "common good", etc., do not have the same meanings for different persons, in different contexts, in different countries, not to mention in

³ Akira Iriye, "Culture and International History", in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (eds.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (New York, 1991), p. 215; Peter Duignan and Lewis H. Gann, *The Rebirth of the West. The Americanization of the Democratic World*, 1945-1958 (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), p. 409.

Frode Liland, De som elsket Amerika. Kollektive forestillinger om Amerika i Norge 1945-1949 [Those Who Loved America. Collective Images of America in Norway 1945-1949] (MA thesis in history, University of Oslo, Fall 1992), ch. 1.

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Michael H. Hunt, "Ideology", in Hogan and Paterson, 1991, pp. 200-201.

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Frank A. Ninkovich, "Interests and Discourse in Diplomatic History", *Diplomatic History*, no. 2, 1989, pp. 135-161.

different cultural systems.⁷ But even though the discursive approach encourages greater attention to the hidden messages of a text, which is certainly needed, the methodological problems of finding them unfortunately still exist.

A fourth and last methodological problem is that the treatment of culture very often requires an interdisciplinary approach. The methods and empirical monographs in such fields as anthropology, sociology, folklore studies, literary analysis and media studies will certainly be of great help and quite often be a prerequisite for doing research on culture and foreign policy.⁸ But again, it puts great demands on the individual scholar and forces him or her to step out of well-trodden paths.

Links Between Culture and Foreign Policy - an Overview

The definitional and methodological difficulties are substantial, but of course problems only to those few who are already engaged in doing research in culture and foreign policy. A proposition in this article is that the reason why culture and foreign policy has received such diminutive attention is that many scholars, and laymen no doubt, find it hard to see how culture and foreign policy are linked in the first place. Probably few will reject the link altogether, but many will claim that the link is, at best, of an indirect and vague nature. Moreover, some will maintain that indirect links are of less importance than direct (such as between security considerations/economic concerns and foreign policy). The former assertion is to a large degree correct (but not altogether, as will be shown later), and admittedly, to make the matter worse, indirect links are harder to detect than direct ones. The latter assertion, however, deserves contention. Neither logically nor substantially do indirect links have to be of lesser importance than direct ones.

In addition to Ninkovich, 1989, see Hunt, 1991, pp. 194-196, and Emily S. Rosenberg, "Walking the Borders", in Hogan and Paterson, 1991, p. 27.

Rosenberg, 1991, p. 28. See also John Lewis Gaddis, "New Conceptual Approaches to the Study of American Foreign Relations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives", *Diplomatic History*, no. 3, 1990, pp. 405-423.

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A shared conviction among scholars of culture and foreign policy is that if one is to understand relations between two countries, it is necessary to include in the analysis the societies at large as well as the foreign policy establishments. How culture plays a part in the interplay between these "actors" can be outlined as follows:

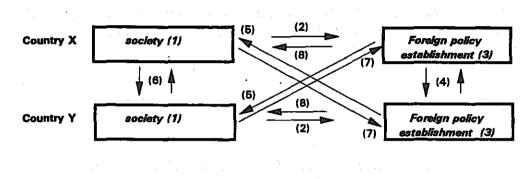


Figure 1

The cultural characteristics of any given society (1) are important, because the cultural characteristics make up the cultural framework (2) in which the foreign policy establishment operates. In other words, culture can be said to be *a foundation of foreign policy*.

Culture can also be *a part of foreign policy*: the formulation and organization of cultural policy is a task given to the foreign policy establishments (3), as is the cultural diplomacy between nations (4). In addition, the implementation and effects of cultural diplomacy in foreign countries (5) are most interesting themes.

Lastly, it is important to note that culture can function as a foreign policy resource of its own: the cultural interchange between nations (6) may yield power to some countries, foreign culture may have an effect on policy-makers (7) and they may consequently act as "agents" for foreign countries in their own societies (8).

Culture As a Foundation of Foreign Policy

A general incentive for studying the cultural foundation of foreign policy is the feeling that the traditional approach is too narrow. If a comprehensive understanding of foreign policy is desired, then society at large has to be analyzed; a wider perspective is needed.⁹ Accordingly, many studies which set out to examine the cultural foundation of foreign policy may be said to be of *the perspective approach*. These studies are normally welcomed by traditional "power historians", as they feel power is still maintained as the core element. The cultural aspects, they assure themselves, are studied only in order to gain insight into what they consider to be the important areas of foreign policy: political, economic and security issues. Some scholars of culture and foreign policy would undoubtedly feel somewhat uncomfortable being embraced by "power historians", as they would sooner insist that the cultural foundation is a justifiable area of research in its own right.

Be that as it may, let us turn to the heart of the matter for historians doing research on the cultural foundation of foreign policy: a nation's general culture. The task of coming to grips with a nation's culture is tremendous, whatever the purposes. It requires a detailed knowledge of the values, traditions, structures, tensions, peculiarities, and anomalies that make up a nation, but at the same time distance and an outsider's view are useful.¹⁰ This is, as will be understood, not easy to accomplish. Moreover, there is an abundance of theoretical and methodological problems connected to the study of a nation's culture. As some already have been mentioned, it may suffice to consider questions like: What should the operational objects be elites, subgroups or masses? What type of cultural traits is relevant - traditions, mentalities, art forms? Where should one look for answers - newspapers, public archives, galleries? These are, however, general problems

An acknowledgement of this is seen in the wide range of perspectives presented in Hogan and Paterson, 1991. For a Norwegian demand of new perspectives in the study of the Cold War, see Rolf Tamnes, "Forskningen om den kalde krigen - status og fremtid" [Research About the Cold War - Current Status and the Future], forthcoming, *Historisk Tidsskrift*.

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Frank A. Ninkovich, The Diplomacy of Ideas. U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations 1938-1950 (New York, 1981), pp. vii-ix.

of doing analysis on cultures, and an exploration of these would go beyond the scope of this article.¹¹

In the present analysis, a nation's general culture serves only as a framework in which the cultural underpinnings of the foreign policy is to be found. In fact, our interest is at present limited to the cultural elements which are relevant to the foreign policy as conducted by the foreign policy establishment. The crucial questions are of course which elements are relevant, and in what way?

Some historians have chosen a comprehensive interpretation of the relevant elements and have thus been studying a nation's general history, major institutions and basic cultural traits. To them, in other words, the totality of a culture is relevant to foreign policy because the two cannot be separated. Their explicit goal has been to detect the roots, tenets, basic features, and origins of foreign policy. Morrell Heald's and Lawrence S. Kaplan's *Culture and Diplomacy. The American Experience*, and *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* by Michael H. Hunt are good examples of studies of this kind.¹²

Heald's and Kaplan's book is a collection of essays covering a broad thematic range. American missionaries in China, ethnic politics in the Cold War, the Sears and Roebuck enterprises in Latin America, and several other actors and themes are included, all with one purpose: to reveal the basic cultural traits of U.S. foreign policy. The concluding chapter winds up nicely a series of traits they have found to be the important ones: idealism, missionary drive, emphasis on opportunity, the credo of the limited state, an isolationist tendency, racism, and anti-communism to name a few. Perhaps the most distinct and important feature described in the book, the one that separates the USA from most other countries, is the private nature of American foreign policy. Until the mid-twentieth century, the authors claim, the foreign policy of the USA was mostly an expression of numerous private interests, and not a policy carefully and meticulously prepared by

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See instead Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York, 1973), pp. 3-30.

Morrell Heald and Lawrence S. Kaplan, Culture and Diplomacy. The American Experience (Westport, 1977); Michael H. Hunt, Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy (New Haven, 1987).

government officials.¹³ Given this perspective, more insight into American foreign policy would undoubtedly be achieved by paying more attention to private groups with international interests rather than further studies in the archives of the State Department.

As the title suggests, Michael H. Hunt's Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy pays more attention to American ideology than to culture. But for all the practical purposes of this article, and in line with the definition of culture given by Akira Iriye,¹⁴ the distinction between ideology and culture is not vital. "Culture" is here treated as a broad concept which also includes ideology. In Hunt's view, there are three long-standing characteristics of American ideology that deserve special attention: visions of national greatness, a tendency to view the world in a racial hierarchy, and a strong opposition to revolutions. According to Hunt, all three date back to the birth of the nation (the eighteenth century), have deep roots in the American society, and have been clearly visible in American foreign policy. The latter assertion is sustained throughout the book. For example, Hunt reminds us that in the Cold War, when the hegemony of America was undisputed, the general self-confidence was at its highest. Furthermore, Hunt claims that the development policy toward the Third World was an expression of visions of racial hierarchy, and that the containment of the Soviet Union was the operational expression of the opposition to revolutionary thoughts.¹⁵ One may object to Hunt's generalizations, but still recognize the pioneering nature of his work.

A somewhat narrower type of studies focuses on the individual foreign policy actor or a limited group of actors. The aim is often to construct a "cultural topography" based on studies of the cultural environment of the actors as well as the actors' cultural outlook. The general assumption is that the decision-makers' cultural attitudes and tendencies are of vital importance in understanding their opinions, attitudes, decisions and actions regarding all aspects of foreign policy. Studies of this kind deal with what has been called the foreign policy-makers' "cultural assumptions", "mindsets", "core values"

¹⁵ Hunt, 1987, ch. 5.

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¹³ Heald and Kaplan, 1977.

Culture, Iriye says, "is the creation and communication of memory, ideology, emotions, life styles, scholarly and artistic works, and other symbols" (Iriye, 1991, p. 215).

or "general moods".¹⁶ Such studies are traditional in the sense that they try to explain and understand a limited number of cases, actions or actors, but untraditional by doing so with reference to the cultural environment. The actors under scrutiny may be many or few, the issues marginal or important, the policy general or specific; the common denominator is that all of them explain the actors' decisions and actions mainly with reference to culture.

Two branches of the study of international relations bordering on this, concerning "images" and "social-psychological" factors respectively, have recognized that in order to sort out the images of foreign policy-makers and to analyze their social-psychological fundament, references to culture are required.¹⁷ Few historical studies explicitly pursue the construction of a cultural topography of actors,¹⁸ but most traditional foreign policy studies include sections or paragraphs where the cultural environment is given explanatory power for certain actions or attitudes. Also, authors of political biographies actually examine the cultural foundation when they try to explain the actions of an important actor by analyzing his or her childhood, external influences, turning points of life, etc.

In this connection, it is worth noting that a number of studies deal with domestic cultural influences of a foreign origin that affect the foreign policy actors,¹⁹ but these are on the borderline of what we are discussing here; more will be said of this later. For an indication of the content of such studies, consider the title of one of Chantal Cinquin's essays: "President Mitterand Also Watches *Dallas*: American Mass Media and French National Policy".²⁰

¹⁹ Liland, 1992, is an example of this.

²⁰ Chantal Cinquin, "President Mitterand Also Watches Dallas: American Mass Media and French National Policy", in Roger Rollin (ed.), The Americanization of the Global Village: Essays in Comparative Popular Culture (Bowling Green, 1989).

¹⁶ The expressions belong to Rosenberg (1991, pp. 28-29); Iriye (1991, p. 217); and Herbert C. Kelman ("Social-Psychological Approaches to the Study of International Relations: Definitions of Scope", in Herbert C. Kelman (ed.), *International Behavior*. A Social-Psychological Analysis (New York, 1965), pp. 13-17).

¹⁷ See Kenneth Boulding's classic *The Image* (Michigan, 1956) and Kelman, 1965.

¹⁸ For an example of a study which does, see Liland, 1992.

Consciously or unconsciously, studies of the perspective approach, whether broad or narrow, very often rest on a premise that foreign policy is a reflection of culture: how foreign policy is formed, the underlying reasons, and the substance are to be found in a nation's culture. For example, when Heald and Kaplan recognize and underline the private nature of American foreign policy in the nineteenth century by saying: "Until the mid-twentieth century, American foreign policy was the end product of the conflicting cultural influences which compose American society",²¹ that is an expression of what we may call the mirror-assumption. That assumption is not without problems.

Consider America's foreign policy in the interwar period. The generally accepted label is of course "isolationism", describing a policy of detachment and reluctance to become involved in affairs outside the U.S. borders. However, isolationism is certainly not an accurate account of how American culture and business related to the world, quite the opposite. Emily S. Rosenberg and Frank A. Costigliola have demonstrated that America in this period was strongly involved with the outside world.²² America's relations with Latin-America, Europe and Asia were plentiful and, in terms of trade, voluminous. As a matter of fact, the interwar period was perhaps the very period America truly became internationally orientated. That is American *culture*, not foreign policy. This reminds us that even though culture may be important, as this very article is anxious to show, a direct line cannot be drawn between culture and a nation's foreign policy. Power, geography, economic interests, and security are of course factors with mighty independent weight. Culture can reinforce, contradict, or help explain the background, content, or peculiarities of these, but is not necessarily the prime agent in the process that leads to foreign policy.

A sober and, to my mind, more useful way to look at culture in relation to foreign policy is not as a mirror, but as a place to look for explanations. Akira Iriye is an advocate of this. In one of his articles, he sees power and culture as two different systems that are of reciprocal importance, but should

²¹ Heald and Kaplan, 1977, p. 10.

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Emily S. Rosenberg, Spreading the American Dream. American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945 (New York, 1982); Frank Costigliola, Awkward Dominion. American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933 (Ithaca, 1984).

be analyzed separately.²³ The foreign policy establishment is primarily considering security interests, economic interests, and political interests in forming foreign policy, but the scholar may find the legitimation for, and the content and shape of the various foreign policies by looking at domestic culture. The natural follow-up question, of course, is whether every country then has its own unique foreign policy, rooted in its domestic culture. Iriye is reluctant to give a blanket answer. He gives examples of American foreign policies, e.g. Wilsonian idealism and the corporatism of the 1920s, that can be traced to distinctive features in American culture, but is also fully aware that culture and foreign policy can be distinctively different.

Culture As a Part of Foreign Policy

The notion of culture as a part of foreign policy is uncontroversial among traditional diplomatic historians because *cultural diplomacy* has deep roots and can easily be found in the archives of the foreign ministries. But recognizing cultural diplomacy is not to acknowledge its importance. Cultural diplomacy has traditionally been conducted by lower staff in a negligible department of the foreign ministry and is equally important as the visa office. Or so it may seem, judging by the number of scholarly works devoted to the subject. Admittedly, there are justifiable reasons for the diminutive attention paid to cultural diplomacy. In many countries it plays an insignificant role, and for *all* countries, political, security, and economic questions are self-explanatorily important. Thus, less important fields, such as cultural diplomacy, are dealt with in due course when the others are exhausted. The scholarly approach to cultural diplomacy may therefore be called *the incremental approach*.

In short, cultural diplomacy is the creation of cultural activities - often in the form of "programs" - aimed at foreign countries, the implementation of those activities, or the public aiding, founding or coordination of private cultural initiatives aimed at foreign countries. Large programs involving millions of dollars made to enlighten foreign audiences through the distribution of books, pamphlets and brochures are part of cultural diplomacy. So are smallscale state-sponsored art exhibitions in a foreign country. The motive behind

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Akira Iriye, "Culture and Power: International Relations as Intercultural Relations", *Diplomatic History*, no. 2, 1979, pp. 115-128.

both, as for cultural diplomacy as such, is usually to diffuse information and obtain congenial attitudes in foreign countries.²⁴

As could be expected, those who do research on the subject have tried to upgrade its importance. Many arguments have been given, some not particularly plausible. But a few are convincing, for example the one underlining that the tenets, major trends or legitimation of foreign policy are more easily deduced from cultural programs than other parts of foreign policy, because cultural programs are less disturbed by the day-to-day fuzz than other areas.²⁵ Another argument takes the opposite view and claims that the knowledge of cultural diplomacy is in itself rewarding and is not dependent on the illuminating effect it has to other areas. However, the most convincing argument, to my mind, is the one that maintains that culture is becoming more and more significant in relations between nations because media and mass-communications are playing an increasingly larger role in the world community. Akira Irive has defined culture in the study of international relations as "the sharing and transmitting of consciousness within and across national boundaries"; hence, the expansion of the means of transmitting "consciousness" will affect, and probably increase, the cultural component in international relations.²⁶ Anthropologists, political scientists and sociologists have for their part realized that media and communication research ought not to be left to media and communication experts alone; the communication revolution during the last decades and the implications it has on the society is far too important for that. Diplomatic historians should follow suit.

The apparently increasing significance of cultural diplomacy in international relations only accelerates the need for historical analysis. It is conventional

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Iriye, 1991, p. 215. He is even so brave as to put forward a prediction that the importance of culture (with a reservation that current trends continue) will increase in the 1990s: "For several decades after the 1930s, security, strategic, and geopolitical issues were at the forefront of international relations [...] from the 1970s on such economic questions as natural resources, balances of payment, gold reserve, and rates of exchanges steadily grew in importance [...] at the end of the twentieth century [...] cultural questions will become increasingly important. In fact, they may already have come to overshadow purely economic issues" (p. 224).

²⁴ For an elaboration of this, see J. M. Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations* (London, 1986), pp. 12-21.

²⁵ Ninkovich, 1981, pp. 2-4.

wisdom - at least among historians - that to understand current trends, one must turn to history. Cultural diplomacy has probably played a part in relations between nations and peoples at all times, but in modern times particularly the Russians and the French have been known to use culture for foreign policy objectives. In the eighteenth century cultural diplomacy was personal. The disposition of the individual ruler, his or her personal attitude to culture, was very important. The establishment of Alliance Francaise in 1883 is thought to be he birth of cultural diplomacy in its modern institutionalized form. In the early twentieth century, the Germans and Italians were renowned for creating large institutions whose aim was to spread "Die deutsche Kultur" and the blessings of the fascist state, respectively, across the world. The British, having of course the colonial bureaucracies to diffuse the Anglo-Saxon way of thinking around the globe, found it equally useful to establish the British Council in 1934, whose purpose was to spread the British language and culture.²⁷

In contrast to their European counterparts, the Americans were largely indifferent to cultural diplomacy, and did not have a public administrative apparatus for that purpose until 1938, when the Division of Cultural Relations was set up in the State Department.²⁸ World War II changed the American attitude to cultural diplomacy. Given the ideological nature of the war, ideas were acknowledged to be powerful weapons and money was poured into cultural and informational programs. In the Cold War era, ideas were not less crucial; consequently, the administrative apparatus of cultural diplomacy expanded further. Culture became at last an important part of U.S. foreign policy.²⁹

The lion's share of historians' attention to American cultural diplomacy in the Cold War period has been given to domestic administrative struggles, policy formulation, the creation and development of institutions and programs, etc. A few studies have examined the bilateral relations between the USA and a handful of other countries - notably Germany and Japan -

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²⁹ For this paragraph, see Ninkovich, 1981.

²⁷ For this paragraph, see Mitchell, 1986, pp. 22-27, and Duignan, 1991, pp. 420-429.

The reasons for the late date, may be that the USA was a young nation without an "established" culture, had a heterogenous population, and had a strong belief in private initiative.

and they have been concerned with both the social level and the political level. General historical literature on the U.S. cultural programmes has been scarce. Considering the substantial dimensions of the programmes in the post-World War II period directed to friends and foes alike, scholarly interest has been surprisingly low. It may partly be explained by the general difficulties of cross-national and comparative studies and the lack of interest in cultural diplomacy as such, but more likely the weighty general problems of doing research on the effects of a given policy have been the major obstacle. This also sheds light on why Japan and Germany are exempted from the general trend: because they were directly occupied by the U.S., they have given scholars the unique possibility of studying the implementation, development and consequences of American cultural diplomacy. In a way, Japan and Germany were "controlled experiments" on the effects on cultural policy. Consequently, they were special cases; insight gained from the work done on Japan and Germany cannot be transmitted to other countries without problems.

Of the few historical works of the general American cultural policy in the Cold War period, the best is written by Frank A. Ninkovich.³⁰ The title of his book, *The Diplomacy of ideas. U.S Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950*, is somewhat deceptive concerning the time span, because it traces the origins of the American cultural policy decades before it was institutionalized. It is accurate, however, in that it examines the cultural relations in view of the overall American foreign policy. Ninkovich's approach is quite traditional with regard to sources and methodology, but the detailed development of policy and institutions is related to the broad cultural characteristics of the USA throughout the book. In fact, most of the themes covered by Ninkovich are, despite the American setting, of such a general nature that they would have to be accounted for in any nation's cultural policy. Let us therefore briefly consider three important ones.

Whether cultural relations with other countries should be a public domain or be reserved for the private sphere is perhaps the single most prominent issue in Ninkovich's book. As noted by Heald and Kaplan, the general U.S. foreign policy until the mid-twentieth century was largely the outcome of various private interests. In the cultural sphere, this was certainly the case.

³⁰ See note 10.

A private, philanthropic and idealist tradition emphasizing freedom and progress prevailed, and the institutions conducting international cultural relations, established at the beginning of the twentieth century, adhered to this tradition. The Carnegie (1910) and Rockefeller (1913) foundations are good examples. This is not to say that their policy was in conflict with the official policy; on the contrary, it was in perfect harmony with the overall U.S. policy of free trade, "Open Door" and modernization. In the 1930s, as a reaction to the increasing German and Italian cultural influence in Latin America, the Division of Cultural Affairs was established in the State Department. All the same, the reluctance to become involved in matters which "really belonged" to the private sphere lingered on. The new personnel conducting cultural affairs in the State Department were to a large extent recruited from the private organizations, and insisted on the separation between "national interest" and cultural relations. Cultural relations were not allowed to be "politicized". In addition, a large part of the official cultural diplomacy was administered through private organizations. In fact, the socalled "cultural offensive"³¹ by the U.S. government was guite meagre.³²

During the war, the need for political control over overseas information straight-jacketed the private or semi-private cultural diplomacy. New institutions were set up and tight control was imposed over all foreign relations, including the cultural. But war is a time of emergency; the experience from World War I was that after the war political control would slacken considerably. This time, however, it did not. The Cold War and the containment of the Soviet Union demanded that not even the cultural sphere could be exempted from a coordinated official policy. The realization of the need for a public cultural policy in peacetime thus appeared in the late 1940s.³³ The private tradition was strong, however, and only reluctantly did the U.S. government create cultural programmes. As it were, the desire to avoid politicizing culture turned out to be a futile effort. In contrast to for instance the Carnegie Foundation, the Fulbright Foundation, established in

32 33 For this paragraph, see Ninkovich, 1981, ch. 1-3.

³¹ Rosenberg, 1982, p. 202.

It is, of course, a question of interpretation whether the Cold War era was a period of "war" or a period of peace. See Fred Ingels, *The Cruel Peace*. *Everyday Life and the Cold War* (New York, 1991), as opposed to John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace*. *Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York, 1987).

1946, soon became a means of obtaining the overall foreign policy ends: to contain the Soviet Union and to consolidate the "free world".³⁴

A second general theme discussed by Ninkovich is whether cultural policy is pursued along national or international lines. The strong idealist and internationalist tradition of the early days of American cultural policy rested on a belief that international cultural understanding was a precondition for peace and world harmony. Thus, culture should not be allowed to become a political tool in the hands of politicians whose primary concern was "national interest". But as we have seen, in the age of the Cold War idealism withered and cultural policy became just another policy of advancing American interests. Because of the strong internationalist tradition, however, this could not be explicitly acknowledged, but had to be explained away. For this task the argument was put forward that American culture and values really were universal. Hence, promoting them actively abroad was in line with the internationalist tradition. The argument was further sustained by the fact that much of the American energy in cultural affairs was channelled through UNESCO and the UN. The reality was of course, as Ninkovich notes, that the American dominance of the UN and UNESCO made it possible to turn these international institutions into harbingers of American policy. Ouite the reversal of the original idealist and internationalist position.

The third essential theme examined in Ninkovich's book relates to the dichotomy "information" versus "propaganda". A large portion of cultural diplomacy is related to information. Informational activities are of various kinds and information is diffused through a series of different channels: newspapers, press releases, seminars, pamphlets, shows, exhibitions, language courses, radio broadcasting, support of various private initiatives, exchange of persons, etc. Information may be directed toward the general public, influential "agents" or "opinion-leaders", different segments or elites. Furthermore, information can be of a "showcase" or "mirror" type, have an overt political purpose or be of a genuine non-political nature. The line between pure information and propaganda is a fragile one and, needless to say, not easy to draw objectively. The assessment of American Cold War policy in this regard has thus resulted in strongly conflicting views. But irrespective of whether the USA has predominately presented "the truth of

On the politicizing of the cultural programmes, see Ninkovich, 1981, p. 167.

America" to foreign countries or is guilty of aggressive propaganda or "cultural imperialism", the undisputed fact is that the USA dominated, and still dominates, the international information industry. That fact leaves room for a series of interesting questions, not possible to investigate here, concerning the power of information and dominance in international relations.³⁵

One question and one general point may be worth noting before closing this section on cultural diplomacy. The question is whether cultural diplomacy becomes more important in times of conflict than in times of tranquillity. The argument that cultural diplomacy becomes more important in times of conflict because more energy is put into cultural diplomacy, is of course a biased one. The fact that other activities boom as well is then overlooked. Security-related questions become nearly all-prominent and cultural diplomacy is reduced to a means of achieving the security ends. One may argue, however, that cultural diplomacy becomes more valuable in conflicts of values than in conflicts of interests. The American decision to create a separate cultural division in the State Department in the 1930s, for example, was a response to the fascist German and Italian cultural offensive in Latin America. Likewise, during World War II, films, documentaries, radio broadcasts and written material were produced in large quantities to promote democratic ideals. And in the ideological struggle between the superpowers in the post-war period, cultural diplomacy demanded increasingly higher resources because it was deemed efficient to show both the enemy's fundamental deficiencies and one's own admirable characteristics.

A final point is that cultural diplomacy may be more appropriate for major powers with global ambitions than small countries with no political ambitions outside their borders.³⁶ One of the many reasons for this may simply be that resources are limited. Another, and probably more weighty factor, is that cultural diplomacy is seen by the big power as a "friendly", "peaceful", "harmless" and "positive" foreign policy, suited to accompany less friendly, peaceful, harmless and positive power-oriented policies. Great

See instead Herbert I. Schiller, Communication and Cultural Domination (White Plains, N.Y., 1976).

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Exempted from this are perhaps nations distinguished by a special culture, e.g. Israel and Iran. Being strongly associated with a special culture, they are likely to use that in foreign policy as well as domestic policy. Britain used culture extensively to sustain the Empire, France's standing in the world has always been closely related to its cultural reputation, and in their struggle for hegemony, during the Cold War the USA and the Soviet Union used cultural diplomacy to prove that their systems were better than the opponent's.

Yet, even though small countries may neither have the means nor the ambition to promote an official cultural policy, they may still have a strong cultural appeal abroad. And such an appeal can have a substantial effect, indeed, even become a foreign policy resource on its own. That is the next subject we will turn to.

Culture As a Foreign Policy Resource on Its Own

The questions of whether the "cultural foundation" of foreign policy and "cultural diplomacy" are more important or less important than political, security and economic matters, are re-occurring among scholars of culture and foreign policy. In general the questions are fruitless.³⁷ One purpose of studying the cultural foundation may be to understand the strength, weakness, particularities or shape of whatever rests on that foundation: "foreign policy proper" - political, security and economic matters. In that case, culture is subordinate. On the other hand, one can argue, as Frank Ninkovich does, that

Although cultural relations are a minor form of diplomacy, at the same time the entire foreign policy process is itself subordinate to larger cultural dynamics [...] a nation's foreign policy is only an expression of powerful cultural forces beyond its grasp.³⁸

In that line of argument, culture is superior. But it is also apparent from the quotation, when it comes to cultural diplomacy as such, Ninkovich does not pretend that it is superior to other forms of diplomacy. On the contrary, he legitimizes the incremental approach in the study of American cultural diplomacy by saying that the study of cultural diplomacy hopefully can

³⁸ Ninkovich, 1981, p. 2.

³⁷ Except if the purpose is to rebuke allegations that culture is altogether unimportant.

illuminate political, security and economic issues.³⁹ Moreover, if one looks at culture as a foreign policy resource on its own, as we are now about to do, cultural matters may be said to be of equal importance as matters of political, security, and economic interest. What may seem a paradoxical reason for that is that culture then is analyzed in terms of power, the traditional cornerstone of the political, security and economic approaches.

The study of international relations and foreign policy has primarily focused on power. In every standard textbook on international relations, power resources which supposedly determine the power of nations are reeled off: size, geographical position, population, wealth, military strength, and so on. Historians of international relations and foreign policy have done their duty and provided thorough empirical studies of such resources. Neither political scientists nor historians, however, have paid much attention to culture as a power resource, even though sometimes culture is actually included in the textbooks'lists.⁴⁰ The few studies that focus on culture as power, therefore, really bring an additional aspect to the traditional power resources. That is why we may call this *the extra-dimensional approach* to the study of culture and foreign policy.

The extra-dimensional approach stems from the proposition that societies influence societies. The culture of a nation makes an impact - minor or major - on other nations' culture. We may call it interchange between societies as opposed to interchange between governments, people-to-people contacts as opposed to government-to-government contacts, or simply "extrapolitical contacts" across the borders. The non-political interchange between nations takes place in numerous ways: commercial interchange (trade, transportation), personal interchange (tourists, immigrants), media (movies, books, magazines, TV), information conveyed through friends and relatives, etc. The significance of the various channels may vary over time. For example, TV has increased its importance in the last decades, whereas the role of radio has decreased. But the overriding fact is that as technology provides fast, cheap and simple devices of communication, overall cultural interchange between nations expands rapidly.

³⁹ Ibid., p. vii.

See for example K. J. Holsti, International Politics. A Framework for Analysis (New Jersey, 1988), pp. 144-147.

In today's media world the large, transnational media networks become important actors, not merely channels. In addition, one can imagine a development where a few countries can gather a lot of power through the control of important media, notably television. On the other hand, the multitude of media actors and the complexity of the media situation can make it difficult for one nation to use media for carrying out its interests. The questions and scenarios regarding the role of media are many, the answers few. What is sure is that the development of the communication channels are crucial in understanding the power of culture.⁴¹

There are great variations between nations in their capacity and willingness to export culture, and equally variations in their capacity and willingness to receive foreign culture. Furthermore, the effects of foreign culture depend on the domestic structures of the recipient nations. In the realm of exporting culture, the USA has probably been the most influential country of this century. America's non-political interchange with the rest of the world is therefore given relatively much attention in the academic community. Two good historical works are Emily S. Rosenberg's Spreading the American Dream and Frank A. Costigliola's Awkward Dominion.⁴² Large parts of them are devoted to the vast American cultural and economic expansion after World War I. Both stress the major impact the expansion had on the receiving countries and on the relations between them and the USA. Both Rosenberg and Costigliola conclude that the USA may have been isolationist in political terms, but was certainly not so in terms of culture and economy. In Europe, American products of almost every kind were found, American managerial and production techniques were imitated, American movies were extremely popular, and jazz music and American lifestyle caught on rapidly. Two significant consequences of all this were the diffusion of the American ideology of "liberal-developmentalism" and the so-called "Americanization" of Europe.⁴³ The same labels may be applied to America's role in Europe after World War II as well; Duignan and Gann have depicted the USA as the role model for Europe in its struggle for restructuring and modernization. and give ample evidence of the "Americanization" of Europe.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Duignan and Gann, 1991.

⁴¹ Schiller, 1976.

⁴² See note 22.

⁴³ Rosenberg's and Costigliola's labels, respectively.

The numerous contacts and conveying of messages between nations will invariably lead to people developing various images, attitudes, and feelings about other countries. True or false, significant or trivial, the messages about other countries will manifest themselves in the receivers's minds as knowledge, prejudices, stereotypes and illusions. Some of these impressions are superficial, others lasting and profound, and some will take on a symbolic function.

Several studies have dealt with cross-national images, and many of them consider the images of America.⁴⁵ One example is my own study on Norwegian collective images of America in the period 1945-1949.⁴⁶ It traces the long historical roots of the various images, and ascertains that Norwegian emigration to America between 1860 and 1920 had a significant impact on the images. Nearly all images found in the years following World War II can be traced back to the emigration period, although they had distinctive contemporary characteristics. Three positive images were dominant: America as an affluent wonderland, America as *the* modern country and America as a land of freedom and democracy. Complementary to these were less prominent, negative images: America as a country with hidden problems of poverty and apparent ones like the racial issue, America as a vulgar country, and America as an imperialistic and predatory capitalist country.

Although the societal impact of general cultural interchange between nations and the study of the various cross-national images are intriguing and fascinating areas in their own right,⁴⁷ they are irrelevant to this article unless the cultural interchange has an impact on foreign policy. So let us briefly consider what e.g. Donald Duck, Coca-Cola, or Rita Hayworth may have to do with foreign policy, and how it matters what people think of another country.

⁴⁵ See note 10 in Iriye, 1991.

⁴⁶ Liland, 1992.

⁴⁷ As underlined by several: Iriye 1991, p. 219; Liland, 1992, pp. 7-9; Spencer R. Weart, *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), p. xiii; Robert Jervis, "The Military History of the Cold War", *Diplomatic History*, no. 1, 1991, p. 98.

Ariel Dorfmann and Armand Mattelhart have written an entertaining book, How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialistic Ideology in the Disney Comic, in which they argue that Donald and other Disney figures were undermining the Chilean regime of Allende in the early 1970s.⁴⁸ The downgrading stereotypes of Third World peoples in general, and especially the portraits in Donald Duck of Latinos as lazy, childlike, and prone to revolutions were in fact felt to be so offending that the popular duck was censored by the Allende regime.

"Coca-colonization" is a concept used by several to describe the impact of American products and lifestyle on foreigners.⁴⁹ In the book *The United States and the Making of the Postwar France*, 1945-1954, Irwin M. Wall illuminates the expression by quoting a 1950-dialogue between a deputy for the Communist Party in the National Assembly in France and the Minister of Health:

Deputy: "Mr. Minister, on the grand boulevards of Paris, they are selling a drink called Coca-Cola."

Minister: "I know it."

Deputy: "What is serious is that you know it and yet do nothing."

Minister: "I have no legislative authorization to act."

Deputy: "This question is not simply an economic question, or even a question of health. It is also a political question. One must know whether, for political reasons, you are going to permit French men and women to be poisoned."⁵⁰

Anticipating what has been called the "Marilyn Monroe-doctrine",⁵¹ the Norwegian Social Democratic author Nils Johan Rud wrote ironically in the midst of the heated NATO debate in 1949:

^{so} Wall, 1991, p. 123.

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⁵¹ Wagleitner, 1989, p. 286.

Ariel Dorfmann and Armand Mattelhart, Anders And i den tredje verden. Imperialistisk ideologi i Disneys tegneserier (Copenhagen, 1978). [Translated to English: How to read Donald Duck: Imperialistic Ideology in the Disney Comic (David Kunzle, New York, 1975).]

⁴⁹ For example Reinhold Wagleitner, "The Irony of American Culture Abroad: Austria and the Cold War", in Lary May (ed.), *Recasting America. Culture* and Politics in the Age of Cold War (Chicago, 1989), p. 297, and Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of the Postwar France*, 1945-1954 (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 113-126.

A NATO does not meet an unprepared people here in Norway. We need no change of mentality. The country is prepared [...] for the politicians and generals. Not only because so many of us have relatives in the USA, and that our own tribe is over there. If we do not have relatives, we all know somebody there. Not anyone from that country is a stranger on Norwegian soil, in Norwegian homes. We have for a long time regarded the Americans as being our brothers and sisters: Rip Kirby (by the way, Rip has got his Norwegian citizenship under the name of Rip Kirkeby), Tarzan, Lyn-Gordon [Flash Gordon] and Rita Hayworth. They are all being loved by the Norwegian people, which felt that love long before Lange and Acheson became foreign Ministers.⁵²

The question of the link between images and foreign policy is discussed in Robert Jervis' review of Spencer R. Weart's book *Nuclear Fear: A History* of Images. Weart's work about American popular images concerning nuclear energy and nuclear weapons since the beginning of this century is a pioneering book about public images and foreign policy-related questions. In opposition to Weart's conclusion "that the images we cherish have a greater role in history that has commonly been thought",⁵³ Jervis says he does not believe the public myths to be powerful and autonomous. He explains:

By powerful I mean whether they influence foreign policy, domestic politics, social life, and individual psychological wellbeing. It seems probable that the size of the effect is in the order given, being smallest in foreign relations and greatest on individual psychology.⁵⁴

Obviously, there are great variations in the importance of images, and Jervis is right in pointing out that few bear any impact on foreign policy. But it is highly conceivable, for example, that popular images, attitudes or feelings about a foreign country can indirectly influence the policy toward that country. At least it can limit the range of possible policies toward the country or put pressure on the government to pursue a specific policy.

⁵² Dagbladet, March 26, 1949. (Translation by F.L.)

⁵³ Weart, 1988, p. xiii.

⁵⁴ Jervis, 1991, p. 99.

Thus, if popular images, opinions, or attitudes are regarded at all important by scholars, it is most often due to the indirect influence they may have. That is why the "two-step model" is quite common in scholarly works. Behind it lies the assumption that what concerns the general opinion concerns decision-makers if they want to be re-elected. Hence the concepts of "Gallup-democracy", "weather cock policy" and "pollster-politicians". However, the problem with the two-step model is that its proponents too often assume an abyss between the decisions-makers and the opinion. It is either implied that the two entities live in separate worlds, or policy-makers are completely rational and omnipotent whereas the opinion is prone to irrational feelings and volatile changes.

Regretfully, the prominence of the two-step model has led to the negligence of the importance of the direct influence, or the one-step model if you wish. That model stresses that policy-makers are influenced by the same sources as the opinion: insofar as the foreign policy-makers are part of the society, they are influenced by the presentation of foreign countries through media, films, books, cartoons, symbols, etc. The policy-maker will of course have access to more sources than the general public, but is still not excluded from the influence exercised by the more easily accessible ones. This is a point Frank Ninkovich makes in his superb article "Interests and Discourse in Diplomatic History".⁵⁵

The same point is given prominence in my own *De som elsket Amerika* [Those Who Loved America].⁵⁶ The study puts forward the idea that foreign policy-makers exist within a "cultural-ideological framework" that shapes their attitudes and influences their actions. In looking at the prevailing images of America in the governing Labor Party in the crucial years 1945-1949, the study concludes that the positive images of America as a rich and prosperous country, a modern country with the future on its side, and as the principal guarantor of democracy and freedom, helped overcome the doubts about entering into a military alliance with the principal capitalist country of the world. The decisive argument was perhaps based on political and strategic calculations, but the positive images of America as a culture helped, or was to blame for, Norway's entry into NATO: the ardent NATO advocates could benefit from the positive images in the public agitation; the

See note 6.

⁵⁶ See note 4.

positive images helped overcome the lingering doubts of many party members; and after the decision to enter NATO was made, the images helped to subdue the opposition to the military alliance.

The positive images of America seen in Norway after World War II, are relevant to what Joseph S. Nye calls "soft power".⁵⁷ Soft power is different from many other forms of power because it is a "co-optive power": "the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own".⁵⁸ The means of achieving this are "intangible power resources such as culture, ideology end institutions".⁵⁹ Especially central are "cultural and ideological attraction as well as rules and institutions of international regimes."60 There is actually a quite simple principle behind "soft power": "If a state can make its power legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If the culture and ideology is attractive, others will more willingly follow".⁶¹ In this lies the "power of attractive ideas".⁶² Soft power may be working indirectly or directly, it may work without being actively assisted by the government, or may be helped by a vigourous and flexible cultural diplomacy. In a world in which the means of communications are dramatically changing people's visions of other countries. cross-cultural interchange rapidly is increasing, and interdependence between nations is growing, it is highly conceivable that soft power will be an increasingly important factor.

So far, we have largely concerned ourselves with how culture may influence the foreign policy establishment, or how the foreign policy establishment uses culture for foreign policy ends. The final point in this analysis is that foreign policy actors can act as advocates for a certain domestic culture, "agents" for other countries, or as channels for the soft power of other

⁵⁷ The concept is used in the book *Bound to Lead. The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York, 1990 [1990a]), but is more elaborated in the article "Soft Power", *Foreign Policy*, Fall, 1990 [1990b], pp. 153-171.

- ⁵⁸ Nye, 1990b, p. 168.
- ⁵⁹ Nye, 1990a, p. 32.
- ⁶⁰ Nye, 1990b, p. 168.
- ⁶¹ Nye, 1990a, p. 32.
- ⁶² Nye, 1990b, p. 166.

nations. That the foreign policy-makers are advocates of a certain domestic culture is self-explanatory. That is what politicians do; they represent different people, opinions and cultures. It may be unconscious, perhaps, but they also serve as agents (not used in a derogatory way) for other countries or channels for their soft power when they speak, without political motives in mind, on their behalf in a domestic context.

Let us take a concrete example on how this may work. Martin Tranmæl, in 1949 editor of the mouthpiece of the Labor government in Norway, *Arbeiderbladet*, had been a leading man in the labor movement for decades and enjoyed enormous respect within the Labor party. In an editorial advocating NATO membership and entering into an alliance with the USA, he used the words "freedom" nine times, "democracy" and "peace" five times each.⁶³ There are two possible reasons for that. One is that it reflected his own views on what America and NATO represented. In that case he may be seen as an agent, or a channel, in fact a very influential one, of the soft power of America, notably its ideological appeal. The second interpretation is that he was a shrewd agitator, which, actually, is an established fact, and was convinced that an argument based on the virtues of America and NATO would appeal to the public. In that case, he can be seen as an active agent on behalf of America, advocating views that were very much in line with the image America desired.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this article has been to draw attention to the ways in which culture and foreign policy can be linked, provide some thoughts about them, and indicate a few important works about the theme. Few have dealt with the subject, and, subsequently, very little empirical knowledge is available to us. But if "good history is as much a matter of providing less than definitive answers to difficult questions as it is a matter of answering easy questions thoroughly",⁶⁴ then one can expect much good history in this field in the years to come.

⁶⁴ Gaddis, 1990, p. 419.

⁶³ Arbeiderbladet, Jan. 8, 1949.

Of the three ways of studying culture and foreign policy examined in this article, the study of culture as a part of foreign policy is the most straightforward exercise. Regardless of the content of a policy and purpose of an institution or program, policy formulation and development of institutions and programs have some basic features; research into political, military and economic matters have provided us with so much insight into the dynamics of politics that the incremental approach inherently presents the scholar with old and familiar problems and a range of old and familiar solutions to them. The perspective approach, on the other hand, demands more ingenuity on the part of the diplomatic historian, as he/she must divert his/her attention from the sharp, definite outlines of the foreign policy establishment to the blurred, unknown components surrounding it: "cultural framework", "cultural images", "mental maps", "ideology", etc. The general society is a necessary, but certainly a troublesome component to bring into the analysis. Lastly, the extra-dimensional approach is, many have come to recognize, of importance if one is to come to grips with the dynamics of international relations, because it may enable us to understand better how culture can yield influence across borders and be a power resource of its own.

Many themes relating to culture and foreign policy are covered in this article, but many are completely omitted. For example the effects of the emerging global culture, the implications of "global cultural systems" interacting with each other,⁶⁵ and the conducting of diplomatic affairs across cultural barriers. Some themes have only been briefly mentioned, such as how foreign policy issues can influence the culture of a society. Stephen Whitfield examines this in the book *The Culture of the Cold War*, in which he gives a colorful portrait of the anti-communist xenophobia that haunted American society in the late 1940s and 1950s, and ascribes it to the ideological competition between the USA and the Soviet Union.⁶⁶ Some grand themes only hinted at in the present article are for instance "cultural hegemony" and "universal values". Some have argued that America in the twentieth century has enjoyed, as Great Britain did in the nineteenth century,

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Iriye 1991, p. 216; Rosenberg, 1991, pp. 30-35.

Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore, 1991). However, whether it is culture that influences foreign policy of vice versa is not always easy to determine. The classic problem of cause and effect obviously becomes obtrusive in this regard.

a cultural hegemony that has given the nation considerable leverage. "Soft power" is a concept that accounts for some of the implications of cultural leverage, but a broader perspective opens up as one introduces the concepts of cultural hegemony and universal values. Americans like to think that freedom and democracy are the foremost American values diffused under the supposedly American cultural hegemony.⁶⁷ Without taking sides on the question on whose ideas they are, it is not too daring to suggest that many conflicts could be avoided if values like freedom and democracy were to become universal. This is more than merely wishful thinking; such thoughts are also put forward on the basis of historical research. That democracies do not fight each other is the most well known assertion underlining the advantages of diffusing democracy. Another assertion is the one that claims that "wars are becoming obsolete" because of the emergence of universal values democracy being one of them.⁶⁸ In other words, ideological and cultural factors have consequences of the uttermost important nature: war and peace.69

With that in mind, maybe we will come to understand that the most significant feature of the Cold War era was not the competition between the superpowers, the arms race, or the lingering fear of nuclear holocaust, but rather the cultural and ideological interdependency and understanding between the Western powers. The foremost *legacy* of the Cold War, in this line of thinking, is thus the diffusion of the ideal of democracy and freedom across the globe.

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- John Mueller, Retreat from Doomsday. The Obsolescence of Major Wars (New York, 1989). See also his article "Quiet Cataclysm: Some Afterthoughts about World War III", Diplomatic History, no. 1, 1992, pp. 70-71.
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Stephen R. Rock, Why Peace Breaks Out. Great Power Rapprochement in Historical Perspective (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989), pp. 9-11.

As President Clinton put it in his inaugural speech: "...our greatest strength is the power of our ideas, which are still new in many lands. Across the world, we see them embraced and we rejoice. Our hopes, our hearts, our hands, are with those on every continent who are building democracy and freedom. Their cause is America's cause". (USIS, Presidential text, Jan. 21., 1993).

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