

A Roundtable on Christopher Dietrich, *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations*

Thomas W. Zeiler, Grant Madsen, Lauren Turek, and Christopher Dietrich

Introduction to Roundtable on Christopher Dietrich, *Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations*

Thomas W. Zeiler

When David Anderson, acting as a conduit for editors at the *Journal of American History*, approached me at a SHAFR meeting in 2007 to write a state-of-the-field essay, I accepted, in part because we were sitting in a bar where I was happily consuming. The offer came with a responsibility to the field. I was serving as an editor of our journal, *Diplomatic History*, as well as the editor of the digitized version of our bibliography, *American Foreign Relations Since 1600: A Guide to the Literature*. Because these positions allowed me to survey our vibrant field, accepting the offer seemed natural. And I was honored to be asked to represent us. Did I mention we were drinking?

I'm sure that Chris Dietrich accepted the invitation to oversee this next-gen pioneering *Companion* volume from Peter Coveney, a long-time editorial guru and booster of our field at Wiley-Blackwell, for similar reasons. This, even though there were times when, surrounded by books and articles and reviews that piled up to my shoulders in my office (yes, I read in paper, mostly), I whined, cursed, and, on occasion, wept about the amount of sources. What kept me going was not only how much I learned about the field, including an appreciation for great scholarship written through traditional and new approaches, but both the constancy and transformations over the years, much of it due to pressure from beyond SHAFR that prompted internal reflections. Vigorous debate, searing critiques, sensitive adaptation, and bold adoption of theory and methods had wrought a revolution in the field of U.S. diplomatic history, a moniker itself deemed outmoded.

To say we were self-reflective is an understatement. At my first SHAFR presentation, in the 1990s, I vividly recall one of the panelists under attack from an audience member, and responding, "I should have worn my crotch protector." Meanwhile, those inclined to more timeworn topics and categories stuck to their guns and continued to write superb history. We were also wringing our hands over the supposed demise of the field, then wringing them some more because we repeatedly discussed why we talked so much about our demise. Such doom and gloom in itself got tiring, and we sniped, self-flagellated, and drank some more.

All the while, as the job market dried up, SHAFR experienced a boom over the next two decades. We became a big tent for the study of American foreign relations. Nomads from a myriad of other fields and disciplines, from around the world to boot, attended the conference in greater numbers than ever before. We got a ton to come to the Rocky Mountains in the mid-1990s, and later to

other places across the country, and in Canada, in droves. The Organization of American Historians that sponsors the *JAH* looked to us for financial support; other groups sought our members' participation in their conferences. It helped that wise investment guidance from wise leaders in SHAFR made us flush with cash, money we used to expand programs and launch new initiatives as well.

But it was history, and history-in-the-making, that also fueled our success. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and subsequent wars, the impact of globalization and a worldwide economic downturn, the rise of China, humanitarian tragedies like refugees, and the dark rise of populism in many countries only made us more important. Looking at America from the perspectives of society, foreigners, and movements connected us to other fields. Sure, elders from other fields still quip that we are outmoded, a worn-out path among the new turns. But they came to academia in an earlier era dominated by social, then cultural, history, and they never kept up with the trends. American foreign relations became trendy!

So, while I periodically swore to seek revenge on David Anderson, I also silently thanked him and the *JAH* for providing me the opportunity to lay bare our field to outsiders, as well as SHAFRites. I actually bought him a beer—in yet another bar. But toasts go to Chris Dietrich's *Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations*, which exhibits our field for what is always was: vital to the study of history and international relations.

Grant Madsen and Lauren Turek have ably captured the essence of this wonderful compendium that so brilliantly represents the pathbreaking scholarship that has internationalized our field, across all time periods and a diversity of themes. Cultural historians can rejoice, as the "turn" is clear, but the interests of political and security scholars appear as well. It is also time to cease the drumbeat of criticism that the field is obsessed with the Cold War. It was and is, but as these two volumes display, we've also moved on to embrace the pre-World War II era (though more modern history still attracts us). The United States is both dominant but also another player. We are a mess, writes Madsen, but it is like the recently deceased congressman and civil rights leader John Lewis' "good trouble"—it is a good messiness! Turek zeroes in on this chaos on display in several chapters. For his part, in the tradition of our mature field, Madsen takes issues with some of the conceptualization of the collection and wishes a few topics were more singularly addressed.

Dietrich need not don a crotch protector; the reviewers vigorously applaud his massive undertaking. His is an impressive sweeping look by young scholars. I raise a glass to Chris Dietrich's collection that demonstrates for a new generation—by a young generation—that our field's bandwagon is rolling along.

Review of *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations: Colonial Era to the Present*, ed. Christopher R. W. Dietrich

Grant Madsen

A little more than a decade ago, when I was working to finish my dissertation, nearly all my fellow grad students agreed that the best way to get a job was to internationalize our topics. We had read *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, had followed the *American Historical Review's* "conversation" on "Transnational History," and had consumed the *Journal of American History's* "Diplomatic History Today: A Roundtable."¹ Whether we researched race or religion, colonial or contemporary eras, we tried to "globalize" our topics. We jumped on the "diplomatic history bandwagon" (to borrow Thomas Zeiler's well-known phrase). In my case, that meant finding the overlap between policy history and diplomatic history (as Robert McMahon recommended in an important article from 2005).²

Wiley-Blackwell's updated *Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations* represents the downstream consequences of that prior decade's flood of interest in internationalizing the field of American history. In the preface to this two-volume set, Christopher Dietrich writes that "the essays here represent the work of a new generation of scholars" (xi), fifty-two of whom contributed a chapter to these volumes. Most of these authors came of age at roughly the moment I describe above, and their diverse approaches to U.S. Foreign Relations reflect the frenetic energy I felt in graduate school to cross disciplinary boundaries and embrace a more global perspective.

Dietrich appears to concede that this effort has gone in all directions at once. The scholars in these volumes have "unearthed . . . economic, racial, and patriarchal structures" through investigations of "popular culture and politics," along with "social movements, media, and nongovernmental organizations," by using "a wide variety of methodologies" drawn from "U.S. political, diplomatic, legal, and military history" as well as "the study of American culture, ideology, race, gender, and religion" (xi-xii). He calls the result "wonderfully messy" (xii).

I agree. There is something wonderful and something messy about the collection of essays, although it struck me that not many users of this anthology will come away with that impression, because few readers will approach *Companion* as I did, starting on the first page and soldiering on to Robert Singh's final line on the last page of text: "All that can be said with confidence now is that Obama departed office, and Trump entered, with the struggle for the soul of U.S. statecraft joined anew once again" (1,118). Writing now, in January 2021, I find it hard to imagine a pithier way to understate the wrenching experience of the subsequent four years.

Most readers will likely take up *Companion* piecemeal, looking for a broad overview of this topic or that, mining the long list of references at the end of each chapter to flesh out a comprehensive exam list or fill a gap in a syllabus. These readers will find what they need. The many contributors have provided thoughtful summaries of their topics. As in most anthologies, the majority of the chapters give a historical summary of the topic, a review of the historiography, and suggestions for future research, although not always with the same emphasis. In general, essays that deal with older, familiar topics (such as Ross Kennedy's chapter on Woodrow Wilson) emphasize historiography, whereas chapters that engage a less developed subfield (such as

David Narrett's lead-off essay on colonial and early republic foreign relations) often provide more historical narrative. While the historiographic reviews are helpful, they can be repetitious for people reading from beginning to end. For most readers that will not be a problem.

Many of the chapters reperiodize their subject matter, usually by demonstrating a longer historiographic arc than is usually associated with their topic. For example, Elisabeth Leake alerts us to the fact that the United States has had a "century-long relationship . . . with the Afghan state," not the "20-40 years" that has "been the predominant focus of scholars" (1005). Other chapters make reperiodizing the focus of their argument.

Dietrich explains that "research in the last decade has drawn our attention to . . . trends in the history of U.S. foreign relations" (xiii), and when taken as a whole, *Companion* demonstrates those trends in terms of the topics engaged (or not engaged), the approaches taken (or not taken), and the issues that appear (or remain hidden). For example, *Companion* signals that the Cold War continues to lose its centrality in answering the "moral question of how to judge U.S. behavior" (631). While several chapters work within a Cold War framework,³ only two take up the Cold War as such. Both provide very nice overviews of the massive historiography on the topic, and both carry a hint of a postmortem in their tone.

Historians no longer ask the question "Who began it?" Masuda Hajimu writes in his chapter, "but more 'How did it work?' and then 'What was it?'" (634). In her chapter, Sarah B. Snyder distills current scholarship into four core questions: "periodization," "how effective U.S. policy was in ending the Cold War," who made which "contributions" to ending it, and finally what "legacies" will follow it (1083). Both historians, in other words, describe a research agenda that takes the Cold War more as an event within U.S. foreign relations rather than the central paradigm for understanding U.S. foreign relations.

Several authors express the hope that their fields can finally break free from the weakened Cold War framework. For example, Andrew Johnstone voices his relief that the focus of recent work on World War II is not "simply the origin of the Cold War" (418). Similarly, David S. Foglesong hopes to free the history of Russian-American relations from its Cold War narrative: "As historians utilize [new archival] materials in new studies, they should guard against a tendency to view the 1917-1945 period in hindsight simply as the era of the origins of the Cold War" (447). In short, the Cold War as an organizing paradigm continues to fade even as scholars continue and try to make sense of what it all meant.

Speaking to a more recent controversy, we might read *Companion* as confirming Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall's fear that "the turn to international and transnational history has led historians, at least implicitly, to deemphasize unduly subjects that traditionally stood at the center of the historiography."⁴ Or not, depending on how we read the word "unduly." By my count, roughly ten of the fifty-two chapters would fit comfortably within Bessner and Logevall's framework of "elections, institutions, coalition-building, business interests, ideologies, individual pride, and careerist ambition" as the primary drivers of foreign relations.⁵ This includes five chapters devoted to presidents: Charles Laderman on Theodore Roosevelt, Kennedy on Woodrow Wilson, Kiran Klaus Patel on Franklin Roosevelt, James Graham Wilson on Ronald Reagan, and Robert Singh on Barack Obama. Whether this represents an over- or under-emphasis depends, I suppose, on what one considers the "right" balance within the field.⁶

With the decline of the Cold War as the primary focus

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for historians of foreign relations, regional interests have shifted as well. If *Companion* is any guide, in the coming years we should see a great deal of scholarship on Asia and Latin America, followed by the Middle East, with Africa and American Indian nations the regions where scholarship has the most ground to make up. Europe still garners interest, but perhaps the least as a region.⁷

With the decline of the Cold War as the central focus for foreign relations, the new paradigm taking its place is “empire.” If my search engine can be trusted, the term appears 1,051 times in *Companion*, with another 876 appearances of the word “imperial,” for a grand total of 1,927 mentions of the concept. By contrast, my engine noted 1,092 uses of the words “culture/cultural,” 805 instances of “race/racial/racist/racialized,” 704 instances of the word “president,” and 215 uses of the word “gender”—the terms we typically associate with investigative frameworks. Some terms that might have gotten a lot of play in the past have faded almost into obscurity: for example, “corporatist/corporatism” saw only 16 mentions (indeed, only Brandon Wolfe-Hunnicuttt’s chapter on U.S.-Iraq relations engages in depth with the corporatist historiography). What surprised me is that variations on the term “diplomatic” (including variants such as “diplomat,” “diplomats,” and “diplomacy,”) appeared 1,607 times, more than many other search terms but still second to “empire/imperial.”

Of course, word counts do not tell us everything. My search engine did not differentiate between titles, citations, and meaningful utterances. Still, the rough story these wordcounts tell fits my experience reading through *Companion*. Nearly all the chapters either situated themselves within the framework of American empire or felt a need to respond to it (such as when Charles Laderman discusses Theodore Roosevelt’s “anti-imperial imperialism” [299]).

On the one hand, this emphasis provides a certain amount of order to the entire work. It turns out that, at least thematically, the essays are not as “messy” as the preface leads us to believe, and I can imagine that in assigning and compiling the chapters Dietrich may have intended something like this outcome. Whether we read Megan Black’s chapter on mineral extraction or April Merleaux’s article on U.S. drug policy, most (although not all) the chapters connect to each other like so many angles delimiting American empire.

With that in mind, certain claims make a lot more sense, such as Marc-William Palen’s assertion that “by the 1970s, the Open Door imperial thesis . . . would become the dominant historical framework for understanding U.S. imperial economic expansion from the country’s founding to the Vietnam War, a position of prominence that it still maintains today” (271). Indeed, most of the scholars in *Companion* take empire as a given and seek to move to the next set of questions the framework implies. “[I]f we can readily acknowledge that the United States is and has been an empire,” writes Andrew Friedman, “then perhaps it is time to study more directly the lived shape of that empire, and the diverse material and spatial practices that have constituted it over time” (652).

Many of the chapters provide helpful historiographic overviews of empire on their way to their specific topic. In this regard, Sarah Steinbock-Pratt’s chapter is particularly useful. Ostensibly focused on the turn of the twentieth century, the chapter mostly provides a useful and succinct walk through the “historiography of U.S. foreign relations,” beginning with Samuel Flagg Bemis, continuing through its cultural turn, and ultimately triumphing as the dominant analytic for scholars today (233). Starting in the 1980s, scholars had modified William Appleman Williams’ “Open Door” thesis because “cultural categories of analysis have provided ways to appreciate both the unities and the disjunctions of American imperialism”; moreover, cultural analysis could better “link domestic and foreign

historiographies” (233). Indeed, by the “early twenty-first century,” culture had become the “primary lens for the history of foreign relations” (241). This is all familiar to historians of foreign relations, but it is nicely stated and has a celebratory historiographic plot.

Companion also demonstrates what cultural historians have argued for decades: that the chief advantage to the cultural turn lies in its ability to bring to historical consciousness the lives and experiences of non-American, non-state actors. As Colleen Woods summarizes in her chapter on the U.S. foreign policy and the Philippines, the cultural approach has “widened the lens of historical inquiry to provide rich accounts of people, places, and belief systems previously overlooked” by the earlier, more traditional versions of diplomatic history (510).

While many chapters depend on “empire” for their investigatory framework, they do not agree on exactly when it began. Emily Conroy-Krutz sees the early republic as the moment that started the imperial ball rolling; Phil Magness sees the late antebellum period as perhaps more decisive. While making an argument for the “fallow years” (1865–86) as particularly important in the evolution of American empire (217), Daniel Margolies nevertheless acknowledges a continuity in “beliefs, institutions, policies, and practices in the American experience as part of the country’s evolving grand strategy” throughout the nineteenth century—and into the twentieth (219).

Scholars have debated the usefulness of the imperial framework almost to death (in the pages of *Passport*, among other place), and I have no intention of relitigating it here. As an alternative, perhaps I can add something in the spirit of the many chapters that offer suggestions for future research—or, put another way, let me suggest some concerns about a few themes that seem surprisingly underdeveloped in *Companion*. First, when the next *Companion* comes into being, I hope scholars of foreign relations have circled back to economics with a bit more nuance. To be sure, the term “economics” comes up often in the current *Companion* (1,020 times, according to my search engine), but usually to describe American interests. Those interests themselves remain only partially analyzed, and never in *economic* terms. To pick one example, consider Christy Thornton’s discussion of the historiography on Mexican-American relations: “Historians of U.S.–Mexican relations have long been necessarily concerned with economic considerations, attempting to ascertain to what extent economic interests ‘determined’ U.S. or Mexican action” during the course of the Mexican Revolution (333).

Certainly, policymakers—not to mention international corporations—have pursued economic interests, and those interests have often motivated empire. But you could finish *Companion* without much sense of the *economic* consequences of those interests, including one that seems quite important in our time: global inequality. We know that inequality has grown in some parts of the world but shrunk in others. Why? How has U.S. foreign policy played a part in these disparate outcomes? In this regard my search engine produced its most surprising result: the term “inequality” appears only nine times, and only three of those refer to economic inequality.

Again, I do not want to draw too many conclusions from a simple word search. Still, given the tremendous amount of scholarly work produced on globalization and global political economy, I would have appreciated more engagement with the topic. Stephen Macekura’s chapter on development is a case in point. He very nicely outlines the historiography on development, along with the changing motivations American policymakers had while pursuing development after World War II. This is all very useful, to be sure. But in his otherwise excellent review, we do not learn a great deal about what all these efforts accomplished, specifically in terms of development.

In fairness, Macekura just remained close to the historiography he describes, and so my concern lies less with his chapter than the historical work he nicely reviews. In any event, I would have appreciated a bit more analysis based on economic outcomes in *Companion*, because outcomes also explain adaptations to foreign policymaking and vice versa, especially across policy domains. A good example of this can be seen in a question Simon Toner raises at the end of his review of the massive historiography on Vietnam: "What was the impact of the war on the gold crisis, the stagflation of the 1970s, and the decline of the Keynesian consensus?" (878).⁸

In addition, as much as the imperial-cum-cultural framework has decentered diplomatic history's "traditional interest in state actors and high politics" (227), the United States appears safely ensconced at the center of the foreign relations universe. To borrow a metaphor used by Bessner and Logevall: "the United States is the sun that delimits the entire system's structure."⁹ On the surface, *Companion* appears to reject this metaphor (John A. Gronbeck-Tedesco's chapter on U.S. culture and the Cuban Revolution is one of my favorite chapters in this regard). Yet for all the "decentering" that happens within individual chapters, the collective impression tends to confirm the "heliocentric" universe posited by Bessner and Logevall. That is, at times it seems that *Companion* decenters the United States in the same way the egotist stops talking about himself: "But enough about me; now tell me, what do you think of me?"

Undoubtedly, the way the anthology was conceived helps shape this impression; it is, after all, a companion to U.S. foreign policy. The United States could be expected to play a central role in the chapters, for thematic unity if nothing else. My point, though, is that the framework of empire can reduce itself to a debate over how to measure which solar body has how much gravitational pull and in which direction. For Bessner and Logevall the sun always wins and therefore deserves the most analysis. For *Companion*, the planets tell the more interesting story. To give one example, Christy Thornton writes that "it is only relatively recently that [historians] have begun to take seriously the other side of the coin, and to ask how the [Mexican] revolution influenced the world beyond Mexico's borders" (326). From my perspective, both sides fit within the heliocentric metaphor despite the animosity each has for its opponent.

All of which leads to my last two concerns. I blame the dominance of the heliocentric metaphor for leaving out freestanding chapters addressing environmentalism and human rights.

To be clear, many chapters mention both topics, but usually just in passing or as recommendations for future research. For example, in his chapter on oil and foreign policy, Victor McFarland argues that future research should "be particularly interested in climate change and efforts to stop it" (956). Similarly, both Benjamin Coates's chapter on the United States and international law and Andrew Johnstone's chapter on U.S. foreign relations during World War II mention a growing interest in human rights within the historiography. Yet each has a distinct focus. Of course, both environmentalism and human rights both have important historical connections to empire. Still, consider, for example, two important books not mentioned in *Companion*: Richard Grove's *Green Imperialism* or Peder Anker's *Imperial Ecology*.¹⁰ While both books argue that a concern for conservation and the environment emerged within subjugated parts of the British empire, neither fits the "heliocentric" model. As Thomas Robertson writes in an essay from 2008, "[Grove's and Anker's] point is not that environmental awareness came from colonial peoples, but

that the desire to rule colonial peoples led some colonial administrators to new forms of environmental awareness." Environmental awareness, in other words, emerged in part through the interplay of colonizer and colony. "Concern for nature could and often did provide a counter-vision to the imperial enterprise," Robertson concludes, "but it sometimes served as a handmaiden to empire, providing imperial officials with another way to regulate and control far-off lands and peoples."¹¹

Robertson's insights (along with Grove's and Anker's) might fit uncomfortably within a *Companion* that more often follows, for example, Megan Black's chapter on "extractive capitalism." Black writes that the American corporate empire created "calamities" in places "targeted for their minerals . . . a painful process by which national economies and local landscapes become reoriented to the mercurial north star of extraction" (934).

Handbook's chapters often tell similar stories of American global interests encountering local resistance. In other words, a powerful sun affecting resistant planets, where the story follows the vantage of one or another celestial body.

If we hope to understand something like global environmentalism, we probably need a different metaphor. What if we thought of empire as a discourse of knowledge/power expanding outward from a metropole (as Michel Foucault might see it)? As it encounters (and attempts to dominate) pre-existing indigenous discourses on the "periphery," we should not be surprised to find pidgin discourses emerging at interstices of the converging discourses. Environmentalism might be one such pidgin discourse, an example of what happens when power and resistance combine to create something unforeseen by either. Eventually, it became its own discourse of power/knowledge, a discourse with a history that ought to have its own chapter in *Companion*.¹²

Finally, *Companion* does not include, surprisingly, a freestanding chapter on human rights. Mark Bradley gave voice to the thoughts of many scholars when he observed in 2014 that "once at the margins, human rights and its historiography are at the intellectual vanguard of international and diplomatic history."¹³ Here again, an omission may be simply that. But again, it feels that perhaps human rights ended up on the chopping block because thematically it also employs the kind of "pidgin discourse" that fits uncomfortably within the "heliocentric" metaphor more common to *Companion*. To return to Mark Bradley, the embrace of a human rights framework "also involves a willingness to look beyond still prevailing notions of American exceptionalism to recognize the ways in which the lexicon of human rights was constituted in transnational space."¹⁴ To my mind, his "transnational space" and my "interstices with overlapping discourses" amount to roughly the same thing (although, in fairness, his is the less jargonistic term).

Having said all that, let me conclude with a huge caveat: please take all of the above with a grain of salt. I have tried to bring thematic order to a massive anthology against the advice of the anthology's own editor. There are plenty of exceptions to the general claims I have made, and since I do not know how the anthology came to be, I am only speculating on why some parts were included or left out. Indeed, despite the fact that I tried to mention as many different chapters as possible, only a fraction of the fifty-two entries appear in this review. More to the point, for nearly every question put to it, the newest Wiley-Blackwell *Companion to U.S. Foreign Policy* will provide a good answer. On the whole it is a massive undertaking that I enjoyed reading and learning from.

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Notes:

1. Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley, 2002); C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (Dec. 2006), 1441–64; Thomas W. Zeiler, Frederik Logevall, Mario Del Pero, Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, and Kristin Hoganson, "Diplomatic History Today: A Roundtable," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (Mar. 2009).
2. Thomas Zeiler, "The Diplomatic History Bandwagon: A State of the Field" *Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (Mar. 2009), 1053–1073; Robert J. McMahon, "Diplomatic History and Policy History: Finding Common Ground," *Journal of Policy History* 17, 1 (2005).
3. See, for example, Lori Clune's chapter on propaganda during the Cold War, Andrew c. McKeivitt's chapter on U.S.—Japan Relations since the occupation, Jonathan Hunt's chapter on the way nuclear weapons shaped policy during the Cold War, and Philip E. Muehlenbeck's chapter on U.S.—Sub-Saharan policy during the Cold War. In these chapters the Cold War serves largely as a given that helps periodize and frame the topic.
4. Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, "Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2020), 40.
5. This is admittedly a rough fit, because the chapters tend to be historiographic and comprehensive, so (again) my categorization is a bit fuzzy. For the quote see Bessner and Logevall, 41.
6. For a larger discussion of what the right balance should be, see H-Diplo Roundtable XXI-42 on Bessner and Logevall, "Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations." May 25, 2020, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/6165504/h-diplo-roundtable-xxi-42-bessner-and-logevall-%E2%80%99Ccentering>.
7. By my count (and with the acknowledgment that my criteria are a bit fuzzy), six chapters focus almost entirely on U.S. relations with Asia or an Asian country; six on Latin America; four on the Middle East. Several chapters take up topics related to Africa, although only one focuses exclusively on U.S.-African relationships. As for American Indians, in her chapter "Toward a 'New Indian History' of Foreign Relations," Elspeth Martini notes that "nineteenth-century U.S.—American Indian diplomacy is not in itself a recognizable field of historical study" (114), and she calls for the situation to change.
8. For my own answer to the question of how foreign policy affected the end of the gold standard and contributed to stagflation, see *Sovereign Soldiers: How the U.S. Military Transformed the Global Economy After World War II* (Philadelphia, PA, 2018).
9. Bessner and Logevall, 40.
10. Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Islands, Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge, UK, 2003); Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895–1945* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).
11. Thomas Robertson, "'This is the American Earth': American Empire, the Cold War, and American Environmentalism," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 4 (Sept. 2008), 563.
12. In fairness, several chapters move in the direction of this metaphor, although none as fully as I would have recommended for a chapter on environmentalism. Brandon Byrd's chapter on black internationalism and Paul Rubinson's chapter on nuclear disarmament, along with Theresa Keeley's chapter on transnational activism between the United States and Central America in the 1980s, serve as examples.
13. Mark Bradley, "American Vernaculars: The United States and the Global Human Rights Imagination," *Diplomatic History* 38, no.1 (2014), 3.
14. Bradley, 5.

Review of Christopher R. W. Dietrich, ed., *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations: Colonial Era to the Present*

Lauren F. Turek

Our field has been fortunate when it comes to its historiographical and methodological surveys. Whether in the form of Alexander DeConde's 1976 "American Diplomatic History in Transformation" pamphlet or the stalwart (and regularly updated) volumes that Michael Hogan, Thomas Paterson, and Frank

Costigliola have edited at various points since the early 1990s, these essential essays and essay collections have not simply provided a snapshot of our field at a moment in time, they have also asked probing questions about the field's future, inspired exciting new generations of foreign relations scholarship, and trained countless graduate students in the varied methodological approaches to U.S. foreign relations history.¹

The two-volume set that Christopher Dietrich has edited, *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations: Colonial Era to the Present*, is a valuable contribution to this body of literature. Dietrich notes that he has brought together "a new generation of scholars" to reflect on a range of significant questions that foreign relations scholars have pursued in their efforts to understand the evolving role of the United States in the world since the eighteenth century (xi).

Each essayist sets about to accomplish this task by weaving the most recent scholarship into a concise historical overview of their area of focus that takes account of exciting new methods, diverse voices, and important contributions from other subfields. According to Dietrich, by taking this approach, he and the contributors hope to "remind us how the nation's interactions at home and abroad have shaped not just the practice of American power but the ways it has been understood over time: how people work out what values and interests drive U.S. foreign relations, what consequences derive from the practice of American power, what it means to be American" (xiii). Thanks to the thematic diversity and scope of the volumes, they are by and large successful in achieving this lofty objective.

Reviewing any edited volume presents challenges. Although *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations* avoids many of the potential pitfalls of edited volumes in that it is cohesive, focused, and well-balanced in terms of content and quality of contributions, it still comprises fifty-two chapters and spans 1175 pages. Rather than attempting to provide a summative evaluation of so many essays, I have instead opted to highlight a few entries from each volume that speak to the stated goals of the collection and epitomize the breadth, depth, and style of the essays as a whole. I will then reflect on the overall value that the volume provides to scholars as well as to students.

On a general note, the essays in the first volume cover a range of topics (including empire, law, industrialization, policing, war, and diplomacy with indigenous groups) that span the period from 1763 through 1965, with most focusing on the late eighteenth through the nineteenth century. The second volume attends to the twentieth century, and the topics reflect the increasingly active role the United States played in the world during that time, with chapters on nuclear policy, U.S. relations with countries in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and Asia, drug policy, and the like.

A number of these essays throughout both volumes prove very effective in teasing out how U.S. core values and interests emerged, evolved, and influenced U.S. interactions abroad. For example, Emily Conroy-Krutz's "The Early Republic in a World of Empire, 1787–1848" challenges readers to think seriously about these dynamics when considering the U.S. relationship with imperialism and colonialism in the years after the Revolution. Drawing on scholarship from Peter Onuf, Bethel Saler, and Julian Go, among others, she notes that "America emerged from its war against empire as a postcolonial nation with imperial ambitions of its own" (26).

Conroy-Krutz also offers a lucid explanation of how "imperial concepts" provided early U.S. citizens with a framework for understanding the nascent nation's role in the world and envisioning how that role might grow in the future (27). In addition, she sheds light on the contested and varied definitions of empire in circulation in the years surrounding the Revolution and makes it clear that even

as many Americans sought to differentiate their aims and inclinations from those of the British empire, concepts like Jefferson's "Empire of Liberty," to say nothing of expansionism and Manifest Destiny, still reflected "an imperial vision of republicanism, reminding people that nation and empire were not incompatible, binary terms, but rather deeply linked concepts" (30). Her discussions of settler colonialism and Indian removal within the American continent, the American Colonization Society and Liberia, and U.S. Christian missionaries as part of a larger imperial project all reinforce her contention that during the period from the Revolution through the Mexican-American War, "Americans from a wide range of backgrounds had thought about empire in new ways, rejecting the oppressive form that they felt the British Empire had come to take in the 1760s and 1770s, but imagining possibilities for new forms of imperialism" (41).

Similarly illuminating and thoughtfully conceived chapters from Anelise Hanson ShROUT (on philanthropy in the Early Republic), Sarah Steinbock-Pratt (on the culture of U.S. empire in the late nineteenth century), Andre Fleche (on ideology and conceptions of the national interest during the Civil War, as well as the links between the war and the development of U.S. imperialism, nationalism, and capitalism), Brandon Byrd (on how Black internationalists confronted racism, imperialism, and racial capitalism), and Theresa Keeley (on the response of religious and human rights activists to the Reagan administration's interventions in Central America) draw readers' attention to the significance of contests over U.S. values and interests in U.S. foreign relations, as well as to the extensive scholarship on these topics.

Reflections on the consequences of American power over time also abound throughout the collection. Indeed, this dynamic is certainly at the center of Elspeth Martini's chapter, "Toward a 'New Indian History' of Foreign Relations: U.S.-American Indian Diplomacy from Greenville to Wounded Knee, 1795–1890." Martini emphasizes the power imbalance inherent in U.S. negotiations with indigenous groups, noting that although "treaties involved at least the nominal recognition on the part of U.S. officials and Indian leaders of the other's status as representatives of sovereign polities," the U.S. commitment to expansionist imperialism and settler colonialism meant that most U.S.-American Indian diplomacy "took place in the shadow of violence and coercion" (114).

Asserting that it is still somewhat rare for diplomatic and political historians to write on U.S.-American Indian relations, and rare for borderlands or Native American scholars to frame their work in terms of U.S. foreign relations, Martini makes the case that it is worth bringing these disparate fields together. She has helpfully divided her chapter into three sections that demonstrate the points of connection between these areas of scholarly focus. Her first section explores how U.S.-Indian diplomacy fits into a larger history of U.S. imperialism. She follows this with a section on how the methodological innovations in Native American and borderlands history "orient us to the actual, on-the-ground realities of politics and diplomacy in particular territories and regions," and she ends with a final section on how legal scholarship, histories of settler colonialism, and work from indigenous scholars can help us appreciate the indigenous experiences, the "interplay of law and power," and the role of imperial processes in treaty negotiations (121, 131).

Taken as a whole, Martini's historiographical overview reveals that, despite our assumptions that the story of nineteenth-century U.S.-American Indian diplomacy is

one of "declining Indian power, in which U.S. officials . . . end up having the power simply to dictate their demands to Indian polities," by blending old and new scholarship we can better grasp "what sovereign Indian polities signed away" in treaty negotiations with the United States, as well as "what they did not" (135).

Much like Martini, who urges us to consider indigenous agency while exploring the consequences of U.S. power in U.S.-indigenous relations, Christy Thornton pushes us to think beyond traditional histories of the Mexican Revolution that put "a powerful United States" and Europe at the center of an effort to influence "a weak, poor, and unstable Mexico" (326). Indeed, she reminds us of key literature that reflects on how cultural influence and intellectual currents emanating from the Revolution ran northward as well. Her chapter, "Responding to a Revolution: The 'Mexican Question' in the United States," like J.C. McKercher's "Chrysalis of Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Retreat from Isolationism, 1919–1941," Stephen Macekura's "Remaking the World: The United States and International Development, 1898–2015," Andrew Friedman's "U.S. Power in a Material World," and Lori Clune's "Waging War with Words, 1945–1963," provides a nuanced exploration of U.S. power in the world, including its limits, reception, and unintended outcomes.

As might be expected, many of the chapters that address historical questions about how the United States has projected its power, values, and interests also reflect in some way on how U.S. foreign relations have shaped and changed American identity. Sarah Ellen Graham's chapter, "Propaganda in the Best Sense of the Word? Public Diplomacy and U.S. Diplomatic History Since World War I," opens with a brief history of foreign efforts to manipulate the U.S. public (and the public's conflicted reactions to U.S. efforts to influence foreign audiences) as a means to evaluate the relationship between democracy, propaganda, and American identity. She considers post-World War I public debate about foreign and domestic propaganda, exploring the concerns that many progressive and liberal Americans evinced about the potential that agencies such as the Committee on Public Information had "to aggregate power to government" at the expense of cherished civil liberties (683).

Turning to the Cold War, Graham notes that the threat of communism changed the calculus somewhat, though it did not completely erase this sense that government propaganda ran contrary to democratic principles. Yet even if these concerns about propaganda reflected certain ideas about what it meant to be an American or to live in a democratic polity, the propaganda that the United States produced also conveyed and encapsulated policymakers' perceptions of American identity and the American way of life. Graham references works from Robert Ivie, David Campbell, and Roxanne Doty that reveal that "Cold War American public diplomacy had an obvious dependence on the discursive construction of a shared conception of 'America' as an exceptional superpower in contrast to less worthy or hostile 'Other/s'. . . . Public diplomacy is therefore a fruitful area in which to uncover how American self-representations and 'interpretive dispositions . . . create[d] certain possibilities' for policy choice while 'precluding others'" (683).

Further, public diplomacy and propaganda changed aspects of U.S. politics and culture. Graham cites the expansions of executive authority under Truman and Eisenhower as examples. Her survey of the literature on Cold War public diplomacy points to a range of studies that have explored how "official self-representations" of

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the United States and its values contributed to “the making of U.S. foreign policy” (685). This chapter thus provides a rich overview of the literature on propaganda and public diplomacy in the early twentieth century, while neatly linking identity, values, and power. Like other chapters in the volume, it also concludes with suggestions for future research.

I should note that there are a number of chapters in the volumes that address other aspects of identity and U.S. foreign relations. Among them are Sarah Steinbock-Pratt’s “New Frontiers beyond the Seas: The Culture of American Empire and Expansion at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” and Meredith Oyen’s “Migrants and Transnational Networks in Sino-American Relations in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.”

As should be evident from this brief sampling, *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations: Colonial Era to the Present* is exceptionally broad in its coverage. This is not to say that it covers everything; no collection reasonably could, and this one does emphasize certain countries, themes, and concepts more than others. Still, it does achieve its stated objectives of appraising the history and historiography of U.S. power, values, and identity as they relate to the U.S. role in the world.

Although some chapters provide mostly straightforward historiographies, the most effective and engaging contributions offer interpretive overviews of their topics as well. While chapters from these volumes will likely be most beneficial to scholars and graduate students, particularly those just starting out on a topic and in need of a cogent “state of the field” to get their bearings, the chapters that move beyond basic historiographical survey may also have utility in the (advanced) undergraduate classroom. I assigned Philip Muehlenbeck’s chapter, “The Cold War in Sub-Saharan Africa,” to my U.S. Foreign Relations class during the Fall 2020 semester in large part because it was a detailed yet accessible and concise survey of the topic, perfect for undergraduates with little exposure to the history of modern U.S. relations with the continent. Not all chapters will work for this purpose, of course, but the accessible style of most of the chapters does allow for this possibility. On the whole, then, this is a welcome and versatile collection.

Note:

1. To cite just a few of the most recent editions of these key volumes, I am referencing here Michael J. Hogan, ed., *Paths to Power: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations to 1941* (Cambridge, UK, 2000); Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *America in the World: The Historiography of American Foreign Relations since 1941*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK, 2013); Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, UK, 2016) (with Thomas G. Paterson as co-editor in earlier editions); Alexander DeConde, *American Diplomatic History in Transformation* (Washington, DC, American Historical Association, 1976). Others of note (and this is certainly not an exhaustive list) include Walter LaFeber, *Liberty and Power: U.S. Diplomatic History, 1750–1945*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC, American Historical Association, 1997); Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ, 2006); and James G. Morgan, *Into New Territory: American Historians and the Concept of U.S. Imperialism* (Madison, WI, 2014).

The Benefits of Pluralism in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations

Christopher Dietrich

In his field-capturing article in the *Journal of American History* a decade ago, Tom Zeiler declared that “an era of innovation among historians of American foreign relations is upon us.”¹ In the same special issue, Kristin

Hoganson noted that while changes in the discipline often originated from outside it, “the field is welcoming new approaches, topics, and archival bases, and the transnational turn is making U.S. foreign relations scholarship ever more relevant to the discipline as a whole.” Since then, historians of U.S. foreign relations have largely celebrated the expansion of depth and breadth in the field, which Hoganson described as “the fact that power has operated in different registers.”²

This establishment of a more plural field in the 1990s and after, now a consensus, has sparked new debates. Most recently, Fred Logevall and Daniel Bessner have decried the international and transnational turns in *The Texas National Security Review*, for potentially leading historians down an anti-statist path that tends to “deemphasize unduly subjects that traditionally stood at the center of the historiography of U.S. foreign relations: policymaking and its relationship to the projection of power.” They eloquently recount an important story of institutional growth in the 1990s and after. They point out excellent work in international and transnational history, and note the appeals of each. In their case study of the historiography of the Vietnam War, they agree that new studies of North and South Vietnam paint a more well-rounded picture of the conflict. “Something important, though, was lost” in the international and the transnational turns, they lament. Finally, Bessner and Logevall make a compelling argument for future directions for the field: the rise of U.S. “hyperpower,” bipartisan consensus, the evolution of the national security state, the impact of domestic politics, and elite-centered military history. They fear that the international and transnational consensus marginalizes these lines of inquiry. This is too bad, they say, because historians have just begun to understand the political, cultural, economic, and ideological factors that led the United States to wage constant war since World War II. To do so requires an “America-centric” approach.³

I agree with the benefits of such studies and my current work looks in part at the place of oil in national security and military strategy. As I understand the article, though, its deepest concern is about the diffusion of agency in the field. I am less concerned. To edit the Wiley-Blackwell *Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations* was to understand the benefits of a big-tent understanding of the history of U.S. foreign relations. The editing process also made it clear that so-called “new approaches,” which have really been a part of the history of U.S. foreign relations for decades, don’t take away from the traditional state-based emphasis on questions of power. Rather, they add to it, whether through the often-domestic questions posed by critical race and gender theory, through the new perspectives offered by multi-archival transnational or international history, or through other emphases. Such distinct approaches need not be at odds with each other. In fact, if the essays in this volume are any indication, cross-pollination further invigorates all of our work.

It really is a tough job to review a volume meant to be read in parts, so I deeply appreciate the time and thought that Lauren Turek and Grant Madsen have put into their reviews. Their discussions of the Cold War, empire and decolonization, democracy, cultural influence and propaganda, economics, the environment, human rights, intellectual and ideological currents, national identity, and other topics are shrewd. So are their analyses about the core values and interests of U.S. foreign relations and the consequences of American power.

Following the lead of specific chapters, Turek and Madsen skillfully address how different sub-literatures point towards deeper changes in the field and in U.S. history more broadly, including its growing diversity and the emergence of new subfields and lines of inquiry. They ask what is lost and what is gained in the emphasis

on new approaches. They capture the intent and limits of the project better than I can. Therefore, in lieu of a direct response, I will briefly discuss the history of the volume before returning to the crucial argument for pluralism.

When Peter Coveney approached me about editing a Wiley-Blackwell *Companion* on U.S. secretaries of state in February 2015, I asked if I could put together a more thorough update to Robert Schulzinger's now-classic volume in the same series.⁴ That volume was published almost twenty years ago, which is eons in historiographical terms. The proposal I sent in soon afterward envisioned a sixty-seven-chapter division of the history of U.S. foreign relations into three volumes: the colonial era to 1877, 1877 to 1945, and 1945 to the present. It closely followed Coveney's original intent, with a laser-like focus on chronology and the major issues faced by policymakers and other elites. Stand-in titles included "The Foreign Policy of the Federalists," "The End of the Frontier," "NSC-68 and the Korean War," "Human Rights and the Carter Administration," and my personal favorite, "Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright, and the Limits of Globalization."

Enter peer review, which was immensely helpful. The reviewers pressed me to move away from an authoritative guide to the foreign policies of specific presidential administrations toward a more ambitious and representative project that would capture the essential trends that shaped and continue to shape the history of U.S. foreign relations. The study of diplomats and other actors in foreign relations should be mutually reinforcing anyway, each said in their own way.

Equally important, the reviewers implicitly suggested that such a large project is inherently anti-territorial. Large projects like this one, more than anything, are about creating living space for respected scholars to explain their own understanding of major themes and topics, as they relate to newer questions and the traditional ones about the causes, motives, and consequences of major foreign relations decisions. The reviewers thus reaffirmed the general practice—the productive tension—in our field: to include the international, transnational, and cultural turns without losing focus on the state.

As I considered the peer reviews, I also reached out to historians who had edited other volumes in the series. They were supportive but warned me of the endurance such an immense project would require. "It's good that you're starting this while you're still young," one said. To ward off premature aging, perhaps the only inevitability historians will admit, I landed on the basic strategy of trusting my peers' expertise and goodwill. I wrote to scholars, many of whom I knew and many of whom I didn't, explaining the project and asking if they would be interested in writing an essay. Most said yes, and those who didn't enthusiastically recommended colleagues. As expected, things changed quite a bit once specific conversations with authors commenced. We ended up with a two-volume history with fifty-two chapters. Blessedly, none of the original chapter titles made the cut.

As Turek and Madsen note, each author provides an introduction into the major narratives, themes, and problems they see in their particular slice of history. Most discuss interdisciplinary connections that are important to their subfield. Each also concludes with suggestions for further research and fruitful lines of future inquiry. (In many chapters, both before the twentieth century and after, the suggestions complement those of Logevall and Bessner.) Apart from having to meet these requirements, the authors enjoyed great leeway.

The intended audience for the *Companion* is clear. At any number of institutions of higher learning across the United States, there are professors who have to teach topics that lie well outside of their expertise. There are graduate and advanced undergraduate students who need to create

bibliographies and comprehensive exam lists or who are simply looking for a topic. There are high school teachers with precocious students who express interest in a subject that gets a line, if that, in the Advanced Placement curricula for U.S. or World History. There are bibliophiles and history lovers who peruse library reference sections and would like to know what to read next. For these audiences, the *Companion to U.S. Foreign Relations* will, I hope, serve as a useful reference and complement the important work of the *SHAFR Guide* and other reference works on the history of U.S. foreign relations.

I want to emphasize that the purpose of the volume is not to throw down a generational gauntlet, as I unwittingly did in the preface to the *Companion*. It is rather to argue for the benefits of a constantly expanding conception of the field (as the title of the preface, "Many Histories," was meant to indicate). That conception doesn't only have to move forward. In fact, it is encouraging to see how far back most of the authors reach in the historiography. I am pleased with the generally shared belief that historical scholarship is a collective project built over generations. To return to historiography the way the authors of this volume do is also a reminder that the field has been pluralist for a long time.

It is true that there are certain drawbacks to an approach that celebrates, or critics might say fetishizes, pluralism. When we cut through the verbiage and get at the root of things, the questions are simple: Are power and diplomacy not at the core of the field? How can one marshal evidence in support of an argument about causality and change if all evidence is treated as equally important? Is it not irresponsible to say, "Oh, all history is interpretation"? Don't we have the duty as historians to present the interpretation that most closely approximates what we think is the truth about the past?

Of course we do. And we do it better because the field is a rich one, replete with talented historians who dig into complexity and multicausality and thus prevent themselves from sliding down an imagined slippery slope of relativity. We explain context. We measure change and continuity. We take contingency into account. We embrace complexity. In doing so, we collectively reveal that there are indeed many useful frameworks for understanding the history of the foreign relations of the United States.⁵

Reasonable people can and should disagree about emphasis and interpretation in their field of expertise and in the field at large. All of this is to say that mastery over our chosen topics isn't what is at stake here. The most basic question in our field is whether or not the history of U.S. foreign relations is spacious enough to continue to welcome methodologies or foci that present different ways of understanding important events and stories. I believe it is, and I have great enthusiasm about the future of the field.

Notes:

1. Thomas W. Zeiler, "The Diplomatic History Bandwagon: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (March 2009): 1053.
2. Kristin Hoganson, "Hop off the Bandwagon! It's a Mass Movement, Not a Parade," *Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (March 2009): 1087, 1090.
3. Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall, "Recentring the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations," *Texas National Security Review* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 40, 43, 47, 53, 54.
4. Robert D. Schulzinger, ed., *A Companion to American Foreign Relations* (Hoboken, NJ, 2003).
5. Indeed, an examination of series dedicated to the field at major academic presses reveal the dynamism of a concatenation of state-centric and other approaches.