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Diane Labrosse and Thomas Maddux, H-Diplo/ISSF Editors

George Fujii, H-Diplo/ISSF Web and Production Editor

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Introduction by Chris Endy, California State University, Los Angeles

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Readers familiar with the work of Frank Ninkovich know to expect big ideas and unexpected juxtapositions. Ninkovich, after all, wrote a history of the domino theory that placed the Cold War concept's origins in the era of Woodrow Wilson.<sup>1</sup> Ninkovich's latest book is no less bold. This time around, Ninkovich argues that the notion of "civilization" represented the late-nineteenth century's equivalent of today's "globalization." He also posits that scholars have overestimated the influence of biological racist thinking in the late nineteenth century. Ninkovich instead calls attention to a cohort of liberal elites in the Gilded Age (circa 1865 to 1890) who held a more optimistic and even egalitarian view of non-white peoples. This liberal view, he argues, helped make possible Americans' more internationalist outlook later in the twentieth century. Not every reviewer in this roundtable fully accepts these claims, but the vitality of the debate underscores how Ninkovich has, once again, assembled creative arguments worth serious attention.

On several important counts, Ninkovich's book earns unanimous praise. All four reviewers accept *Global Dawn's* advice on how historians should think about culture as a causal factor shaping U.S. foreign relations. In the book's stimulating conclusion, titled "Culture as Capability," Ninkovich explains that culture "is not a cause in the commonly understood scientific sense." Instead, culture "is the field of possibility for what can or cannot be done" (330). According to this framework, Americans' cultural beliefs did not cause U.S. imperialism in the Philippines. Those beliefs merely made imperialism conceivable to Americans in 1898. Culture defined the parameters of what was possible, even if it did not determine the choices people made within those cultural boundaries.

Ninkovich's subtle handling of the relationship between culture and foreign policy complements another of the book's highlights: its discussion of late-nineteenth century racial thinking. Reviewer Michael Adas offers particular praise for *Global Dawn's* chapter on the Gilded Age liberals' rejection of rigid racial thinking. Adas finds this chapter "one of the best, succinct discussions I have encountered on the complexities and contradictions of racial attitudes."

Along the way, the reviewers note some blind spots in the book. Readers of this roundtable will find elaboration on each topic in the respective reviews. On the absence of Latin America and of U.S. fiction writing, see Gretchen Murphy. On the lack of attention to gender, working-class internationalism, and economic self-interest, see Naoko Shibusawa. On the importance of racial ideas before the Gilded Age, see Adas. Lastly, on important changes in racial attitudes after the Gilded Age, see Nicole Phelps.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

The heart of Ninkovich's book, however, rests with its big claims, and it is here that the roundtable reviewers focus most of their energy. Taken as a whole, the roundtable discussion involves three broad questions:

### **1. Was "civilization" really the precursor of "globalization"?**

Gilded Age liberals wrote incessantly about civilization. Although the term remains "an exasperatingly inexact concept," Ninkovich finds enough coherence to build an intriguing argument around the word (19). Fueled by changes in communication and transportation, the spread of civilization represented to Gilded Age liberals a process that "was inevitably modernizing nonindustrial societies in a convergent way that would over time reduce differences among formerly incommensurable ways of life" (9). Much like modernization theorists in the 1960s and globalization advocates in recent decades, Ninkovich's liberals saw the world's peoples moving toward a common future defined by the advance of a universal civilization. Then, as now, liberal elites assumed that the world was becoming flat.<sup>2</sup>

Of the four reviewers, Adas is the most critical of Ninkovich's linkage between civilization and globalization. To Adas, civilization in the Gilded Age "usually denoted a hierarchical view... of different human societies" rather than any "cosmopolitan prescription for [humankind's] ultimate unity." In contrast, Gretchen Murphy provides a more enthusiastic endorsement. Writing as an American Studies scholar, Murphy suggests that her field has relied too heavily on the concept of imperialism. Within American Studies, imperialism has become "a sort of all-encompassing motivation underlying American cultural expressions." Murphy thus finds Ninkovich's civilization-globalization link a useful way to move beyond the now-familiar association of civilization with empire. These two views on civilization and globalization are not, of course, mutually exclusive. If we think of globalization as having both hierarchical and cosmopolitan tendencies, then Ninkovich's argument can satisfy both Adas and Murphy.

### **2. Is Ninkovich too kind to Gilded Age liberals?**

A related debate in the roundtable revolves around Ninkovich's depiction of Gilded Age liberals as precursors of more egalitarian and internationalist U.S. foreign policies. Invoking post-colonial studies, Shibusawa counters that many colonial subjects experienced the onset of modernity not as progress but as the rise of "the violence of the state." In this light, inclusion in the modern system of civilization meant for many people new forms of suffering and exploitation. Like Shibusawa, Adas invokes an outsider's perspective to argue for a more critical view of Gilded Age liberals. Adas accepts Ninkovich's emphasis on Gilded Age elites who rejected biological racism and instead embraced a meliorative vision of non-whites' potential for progress and civilization. Yet Adas wonders whether these liberal views "were necessarily harbingers of a more equitable, open, and inclusive international order." As Adas writes, "in the last analysis, it didn't make much difference whether the Lakota Indians were dispossessed and massacred

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005)

as a racially inferior or culturally benighted people....” Phelps’ commentary adds another pessimistic note by asking what would happen to Ninkovich’s narrative if he grappled more directly with eugenics, an illiberal racial idea that flourished as the Gilded Age yielded to the Progressive Era.

### 3. Has the cultural turn prevailed in U.S. foreign relations historiography?

The roundtable’s final big question relates to the entire historiography of U.S. foreign relations. While all four reviewers endorse his conclusion’s “culture as capability” argument, they question his defensive tone and his belief that cultural approaches remain on the margins of U.S. foreign relations history. In his roundtable reply, Ninkovich deems the reviewers’ confidence “flat out wrong” and calls for more efforts to reduce “the traditional realist hostility to culture.” Ninkovich is certainly correct in arguing that many historians could be more precise and systematic in how they link culture to politics. At the same time, Adas’s lengthy footnote listing influential culturally-informed publications gives good reason for culturalists to pause and celebrate their accomplishments. Further evidence of the cultural turn’s success can be seen in the recent winners of book prizes sponsored by the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR). SHAFR’s Robert Ferrell Prize winners include a healthy mix of traditional and culturally-informed books, while the Stuart Bernath Prize, for first-time authors, leans even more toward the cultural side.<sup>3</sup> If culturalists remain “outsiders,” to use Ninkovich’s term, they are not necessarily suffering in the wilderness.

The success of cultural approaches is all the more striking when we turn to the historiography of Gilded Age foreign relations. In his author’s reply, Ninkovich wishes that the H-Diplo editorial staff had selected at least one reviewer from outside the culturalist world. As the H-Diplo editor who generated the list of potential reviewers, I accept, in part, Ninkovich’s critique. Like Ninkovich, I value stimulating exchanges between culturalists and their critics, as when the self-described materialist Robert Buzzanco critiqued a culturalist article by Andrew Rotter in *Diplomatic History*.<sup>4</sup> Ninkovich’s hope for a sparring partner outside the culturalist camp thus carries merit. Yet it is also worth noting that scholars of U.S. international relations writing on the Gilded Age overwhelmingly employ cultural methods or, to a lesser extent, examine economic and technological developments. Very few recent works on the era fit in the “traditional realist” vein.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.shafr.org/members/prizes/>

<sup>4</sup> Andrew J. Rotter, “Christians, Muslims, and Hindus: Religion and U.S.-South Asian Relations, 1947-1954,” *Diplomatic History* 24, No. 4 (Fall 2000): 593-613 [DOI: 10.1111/0145-2096.00238; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0145-2096.00238> ]; Robert Buzzanco, “Commentary: Where’s the Beef? Culture without Power in the Study of U.S. Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 24, No.4 (Fall 2000): 623-32 [DOI: 10.1111/0145-2096.00240; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0145-2096.00240> ].

<sup>5</sup> For evidence of the dominance of culturalist studies in U.S. foreign relations scholarship covering the 1865 to 1890 period, see the recent entries in Chapter 9 of Thomas W. Zeiler, ed. *American Foreign Relations since 1600: A Guide to the Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008) [electronic database]. Disclosure: I have edited this chapter of the *Guide* since 2000. See also Jay Sexton, “Toward a Synthesis of U.S. Foreign Relations During the Civil War Era, 1848-77,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 5, No. 3 (Fall

Why do “realists” or traditional diplomatic historians largely ignore the Gilded Age? Some of the reasons are sensible, but others are regrettable. In part, the absence reflects sources. Government archives have probably yielded all the material they ever will for this period, and there is little hope of finding an unexplored diplomatic crisis in the Cleveland administration. Scholars employing a cultural approach might be able to develop new interpretations from familiar sources, but a traditional narrative-driven diplomatic historian is better off heading to Yorba Linda, California, for a first crack at new documents from Nixon and Kissinger. That’s the sensible side. The regrettable reason reflects a misguided perception that the Gilded Age’s strategic and economic issues have little relevance for U.S. foreign policy today. But consider the parallels. Gilded Age Americans lived in a debtor nation. Like today, economic growth depended on capital imported from foreign powers.<sup>6</sup> Then too, new technology seemed to shrink time and space.<sup>7</sup> Americans in the late nineteenth century even worried over potential “terrorist sympathizers” among recent immigrants.<sup>8</sup> These Gilded Age challenges might never capture as much scholarly attention as recent Cold War crises do, but they offer enough substantial issues to warrant more attention than they currently receive from traditional diplomatic historians.

In a way, Ninkovich’s book contributes to this neglect. *Global Dawn*’s argument about Gilded Age liberals emphasizes their impact on the twentieth century, but the book says relatively little about U.S. foreign policy during the Gilded Age itself. This is a lost opportunity, especially given some intriguing parallels between Ninkovich’s liberal thinkers and Gilded Age policymaking. Jay Sexton, one of the few scholars conducting detailed research on the era’s diplomacy, recently showed in *Diplomatic History* how two-term secretary of state Hamilton Fish deployed multilateralism and legalism to manage a crisis created by a rebellion against Spanish rule in Cuba.<sup>9</sup> Despite Fish’s flirtation with liberal internationalism, neither the diplomacy of Fish nor the scholarship of Sexton appears in *Global Dawn*.

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2004): 50-73 [DOI: 10.1080/1466465042000302764; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1466465042000302764>]. Sexton’s survey highlights the role of race and the importance of transnational flows of capital and labor.

<sup>6</sup> Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Dwayne R. Winseck and Robert M. Pike, *Communication and Empire: Media, Markets, and Globalization, 1860-1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); David Paull Nickles, *Under the Wire: How the Telegraph Changed Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan W. Gantt, “Irish-American Terrorism and Anglo-American Relations, 1881-1885,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 5 (October 2006): 325-57.

<sup>9</sup> Jay Sexton, “The United States, the Cuban Rebellion, and the Multilateral Initiative of 1875,” *Diplomatic History* 30, No. 3 (June 2006): 335-65 [DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7709.2006.00559.x; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2006.00559.x>].

In his defense, Ninkovich did not intend to write a book on Gilded Age diplomacy. Moreover, *Global Dawn's* intellectual history should provide encouragement for others to join Sexton in exploring the diplomacy of the era. When we view the Gilded Age in terms of globalization, as Ninkovich does, that long-ago period does not seem so distant after all.

**Frank Niniovich** received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1978 and has been teaching at St. John's since 1980. He is the author of *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981; paperback edition Imprint Publications, 1995); *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question Since 1945* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988; revised and updated edition, 1994); *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); *U.S. Information Policy and Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1995); *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); *The United States and Imperialism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001); and, most recently, *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865-1900* (Harvard University Press, 2009). He is co-editor with Liping Bu of *The Cultural Turn: Essays in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 2001) and co-editor of a forthcoming volume of essays, *Global America*. At the moment, he is working on a history of American exceptionalism in foreign affairs.

**Christopher Endy** is associate professor of history at California State University, Los Angeles, and is the author of *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill, 2004). He is now writing a book on the global politics of multinational corporations and business ethics since the late 19th century

**Michael Adas** is the Abraham E. Voorhees Professor and Board of Governors Chair at Rutgers University. Over the past two decades his teaching, research and writing have been centered on the impact of Western science and technology on European and American colonization and post-colonial interventions in Asia and Africa. His recent books include *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) and *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). He is currently working on a comparative study of the impact of the British experience of combat in World War 1 and the American GIs' ordeal in Vietnam on the subsequent decline of each of the global hegemon.

**Gretchen Murphy** is Associate Professor of English and Women and Gender Studies at University of Texas-Austin. She is author of *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Duke University Press, 2005) and *Shadowing the White Man's Burden: US Imperialism and the Problem of the Color Line* (New York University Press, 2010).

**Nicole M. Phelps** is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Vermont. She received her B.A. in International Affairs from The George Washington University in 2000



and her Ph.D. in History from the University of Minnesota in 2008. Her dissertation, "Sovereignty, Citizenship, and the New Liberal Order: US-Habsburg Relations and the Transformation of International Politics, 1880-1924," won the Austrian Cultural Forum Dissertation Prize and received an honorable mention for SHAFR's Unterberger Dissertation Prize. Her research interests in diplomatic history include U.S.-European relations, diplomatic social and ceremonial activity, and consular services.

**Naoko Shibusawa** is interested in how commonplace ideas in American culture have supported U.S. policy and how nonstate actors have reproduced and reinforced state goals. She received a B.A. in History from the University of California at Berkeley and her graduate training from Northwestern University. She taught at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa for four years before joining Brown's History Department in 2004. She is the author of *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Harvard, 2006, pbk. 2010), and is currently working on *Seduced by the East: The Treason Trial of John David Provoost*, which is under contract with the University of North Carolina Press.

The basic premise of Frank Ninkovich's wide-ranging and thoughtful *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865-1890* is both sound and significant. Drawing mainly on mainstream publications, such as magazines like *Harper's*, *Appleton's*, *The Atlantic* and above all *The Nation*, he seeks to demonstrate that American upper and middle class intellectuals – from influential academics to journalistic social commentators – were far more conversant and seriously engaged with international issues than most historians have hitherto assumed. In a move that has become increasingly familiar, Ninkovich problematizes the longstanding assumption that the decades from the end of the Civil War to the early 1890s were an era of isolationism and national fixation on domestic issues. He argues convincingly that these trends were admittedly ascendant in the military and political spheres, but that in commerce, intellectual discourse, and cultural predilections, American society, and especially its elites, were considerably more outward looking and acutely conscious of the future potential of their rapidly industrializing republic to significantly shape the future trajectory of human history worldwide. He seeks to demonstrate through a well-documented exploration of the many facets of what he terms 'liberal internationalism' that these concerns were a major focus of American intellectual exchange and often fierce debate in these critical decades of transition from a predominantly rural-agrarian to an industrial-urban society.

Ninkovich includes a broad range of concerns and issues under the rubric of liberal internationalism, including the promotion of free trade and international patents, the transformative effects of new technologies, debates over the divisions within and potential of different peoples and societies for "improvement," and the prospects for a unified and peaceful world order. In part due to the nature of his contemporary journalistic sources, coverage of different aspects of international relations and varied geographical regions and culture areas is uneven and at times disconcertingly brief. His thematic approach results in a good deal of repetition, particularly across the several chapters which deal with views on the European metropolises, including Russia, and colonized areas, particularly East Asia and the Middle East. The most fully developed and engaging chapters are those dealing with the transformative effects of technology and especially the pivotal chapter on "The One and the Many: Race, Culture and Civilization." The latter is one of the best, succinct discussions I have encountered on the complexities and contradictions of racial attitudes and their repercussions in late-nineteenth century America.

The chapters on technological transfers and racist controversies are also the ones that most fully treat the discourses on international issues of the last decades of the nineteenth century as cultural history as it has come to be understood in the broader discipline in the post-World War II era. Though the study is devoted to intellectual attitudes, opinions, and controversies, which are clearly cultural phenomena, Ninkovich has taken what is for the most part a rather traditional history of ideas approach. This renders somewhat puzzling his concern, which is reiterated throughout the book, for recognition by those who study international relations of the importance of cultural influences in shaping the ideological underpinnings, assumptions, and personal mindsets of American policymakers. And this



bewilderment is amplified when one considers the range and quantity of articles and books that have appeared in recent decades on the cultural dimensions of the conduct of foreign affairs. This substantial corpus of works prompts one to wonder if Ninkovich's extensive ruminations concerning the failure of scholars of diplomatic history to take seriously cultural contexts and causal connections to policies and initiatives in international relations are at best misdirected, at worst angst summoned by questions and methods that have been resolved by the innovative directions that the study of foreign affairs has taken. This is also apparent because many of the books and articles that deal in depth with the cultural dimensions of the nature and impetus for America's growing involvement overseas have focused on the same post-Civil War era as *False Dawn*. From familiar themes like racism and religious proselytization to once-neglected factors, such as commercialization, technological innovation, tourism and gender anxieties, the importance of cultural influences as a causal factors or underlying conditions – variable by time, issues, and nature of the cross-cultural exchanges in question – has for some decades been a major force in reshaping the sub-field of diplomatic history in America as well as western Europe, Japan, and increasingly for many scholars in the former Soviet bloc and the postcolonial world.<sup>1</sup>

The chapters dealing with race and culture are particularly noteworthy for Ninkovich's emphasis on the frequency of contemporary challenges to scientific proofs of racial superiority and inferiority. Equally impressive are his succinct exposés of the shabbiness of the alleged scientific procedures (skull measurements, observations on the degenerative effects of miscegenation) that were used to provide the empirical basis for the racial hierarchies of humankind that were so popular in the United States – and Europe – from the late-eighteenth century through the First World War. He rightly stresses the preference of many observers for environmental factors as the determinants of human attributes and cultural achievements. But he fails to note that the embrace of environmental explanations in seeking to explain the causes of human difference was largely a reassertion of views that predominated through the early decades of Western expansionism and well into the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, Ninkovich's is correct in asserting that these counters to racist thinking have been downplayed or largely ignored by many contemporary historians and social commentators who have depicted the era as one in which racism was pervasive

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<sup>1</sup> See for some of the more prominent examples published over the past three decades, Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansionism, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in the Late Jacksonian Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); David McBride, *Missions for Science: U.S. Technology and Medicine in America's African World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish American and Philippine Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States & the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Christine Skiowt, *The Purpose of Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Cuba and Hawai'i* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

at the level of popular culture, law and government policy, and largely unchallenged in intellectual discourse. Less novel is his observation that travelers, ambassadors, missionaries, and other Americans who actually spent time in overseas locales tended to be less censorious in their views of non-Western peoples and cultures than those living, working, and sending their children to school with them at home (pp. 196-7).

Although Ninkovich is right to stress the ameliorating influences of writers who challenged racist thinking, his conviction that those who championed culture and nurture over biological difference and innate attributes were necessarily harbingers of a more equitable, open, and inclusive international order is, I believe, overly sanguine. The valorization of cultural norms left open the potential to intensify chauvinistic and ethnocentric biases that would ultimately prove as pernicious, and perhaps even more lethal, than racial prejudice. This was especially evident when they were linked to a deeply-embedded nationalist teleology, such as that which informed the thinking of many of the American pundits he discusses. Their confidence that the socio-economic systems and political institutions developed in the United States offered the best possible models for the rest of humankind to emulate and were essential components of a universally valid historical trajectory to modernity provided ideological validation for early twentieth-century colonial projects and developmentalist initiatives well into the twenty-first century. More ominously, they were (often implicitly) deployed to justify American military interventions in nations as disparate as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and Iraq. As Ninkovich demonstrates, even what were in many ways more advanced societies, such as Wilhelmine Germany, failed to meet the standards of democratization or international cooperation that the liberal internationalists believed the United States had set for the rest of the world. In the last analysis, it didn't make much difference whether the Lakota Indians were dispossessed and massacred as a racially inferior or culturally benighted people or whether hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese soldiers and civilians were killed and maimed because they were 'gooks' or because they came to be seen as obstacles to W.W. Rostow's modernizing designs for the postcolonial world. For those who embraced them, the converging teleologies of the Christian dispensation, never-ending progress through technological innovation, and the Enlightenment Project of the early modern West were unfolding in predetermined --hence inevitable -- ways, and could not be denied.

Another of Ninkovich's conceptual moves that gives cause for concern is his equation of civilization with globalization. None of the liberal intellectuals use the latter term, which he would presumably readily acknowledge is anachronistic for the post-bellum decades. He is also aware that 'civilization' had highly variable meanings in this era, but it usually denoted a hierarchical view of the levels of material, intellectual, and spiritual development attained by and the future potential of different human societies. The term, as Ninkovich admits, was very often highly racially charged. Human societies were ranked from Aryans or Anglo-Saxons at the apex to "Hottentots" and Australian aborigines at the lowest levels of human 'progress,' as measured by standards set by the superior races that had forged the prosperous and powerful nation-empires of western Europe and the United States. Thus, as deployed by innumerable social commentators and historians throughout the nineteenth-century, 'civilization' was an ethnocentric marker of deep divisions among humankind rather than a cosmopolitan prescription for their ultimate unity.

Despite Ninkovich's frank admission that it is difficult to demonstrate the actual influence on contemporary policymaking exerted by liberal internationalist thinkers, his assertion that their views and prognostications shaped American thinking on the nation's role in the increasingly connected world order of the twentieth century is persuasive, though not fully explored. He points out, for example, that the arguments of anti-racist thinkers need to be taken into account if we are to understand the origins of the civil rights movement, but he does not make explicit connections between the two. The claims he makes for this very forward looking side of the discourses he seeks to bring into the mainstream of our thinking about American foreign relations would certainly find resonance in the convictions and policies of the Progressive colonial administrators, both Republican and Democrat, who fashioned American approaches to governing the Philippines in the first decades of the twentieth century. The confidence of a succession of early twentieth-century proconsuls, which included William Howard Taft, that technology and education were the keys to the social and economic development of the islands, and that they could in the foreseeable future turn political control over to the *ilustrado* elite owed much to their ability to transcend the racist strictures so apparent in the brutal repression of the Filipino insurrection and much of the United States itself at the time. Similar connections could be traced to the initiatives funded by private American foundations to eradicate disease and improve hygiene in the Caribbean in the same decades, and even more prominently in the 1920s and 1930s. Links to cold war developmentalism and modernization projects have already been suggested. The much greater power and global influence America could project in these later phases of its rise to global hegemony make for significant differences in the ways in which the visions and policy pronouncements of the liberal internationalists of late-nineteenth century informed, at least indirectly, variants of modernization ideology and U.S. interventionism in the post-1945, postcolonial world. But Ninkovich is surely correct in assuming that the legacy of the neglected, often forgotten, social commentators he gives voice in *Global Dawn* was far more pervasive and enduring than historians of foreign relations have assumed.

Review by Gretchen Murphy, University of Texas

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As a scholar trained in cultural studies and literary interpretation, I appreciate Frank Ninkovich's efforts in *Global Dawn* to champion culture as a causal force in the emergence of American internationalism. However, because his case is so pointedly addressed to diplomatic historians who admire and emulate hard science, at times I did question the book's pay-off for someone like me, who not only already values cultural history, but goes much further down the rabbit hole into Foucauldian historicism and American Studies. But despite (or, perhaps, *because* of) my different angle of approach, I found in *Global Dawn* important insights about both the history of American global thought and the methodological and interdisciplinary problems of joining cultural and political history.

*Global Dawn's* most arresting feature is its analytic vocabulary and framework. The fact that liberal Americans in elite journals expressed interest in the rest of the world will be old news to anyone who has studied print culture during this period. But this observation seems transformed into a new insight by Ninkovich, who shows how these early writings resemble late-twentieth-century discussions of globalization. Through this interpretation, we learn that authors employed the familiar language of 'civilization' in order to discuss such contemporary phenomena as "negative systems effects produced by global networks" (30) or the "economic race to the bottom" (31). Ninkovich marshals so much evidence to support this interpretation that what might seem like trendy presentism turns into a convincing conclusion: however marginalized and ineffectual during their own politically isolationist period, these early discussions of global interconnection laid the foundation for later internationalist foreign policy.

By translating the discourse of 'civilization' into that of 'globalization,' rather than that of 'empire,' Ninkovich offers what could be a corrective to the homogenizing approach seen in recent American Studies scholarship. Following Amy Kaplan's landmark 1993 call for cultural analyses of U.S. empire, American Studies scholars have downplayed differences between economic, cultural and administrative forms of imperialism for the purpose of unmasking 'empire' as a sort of all-encompassing motivation underlying American cultural expressions.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, even the choice to label certain forms of cultural borrowing 'cultural imperialism' can have the effect of rendering cultures as static and isolated rather than dynamic and interconnected. Ninkovich sorts out these strands of thought about global influence to emphasize an important opposition. Far more powerful than calls for political and administrative domination, Ninkovich argues, were expressions of faith in the transformative power of cultural influence travelling through circuits of markets and technological innovation. This element of his argument is so central to the book's argument that Ninkovich even steps outside his magazine archive to show that some of the texts that we have come to identify as early calls for 'empire' (such as Josiah Strong's *Our Country*<sup>2</sup>) in fact promoted processes of "global acculturation"

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<sup>1</sup> Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 3-21.

<sup>2</sup> Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*. (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1885).

(261), not empire by force. By disambiguating the various strands of influence that other scholars have bound together in studies of formal and informal U.S. empire, Ninkovich encourages a more sympathetic view of these liberal writers' global visions.

While *Global Dawn* does not overlook the racist and imperialist implications of these 'civilizationist' writings, it does pointedly highlight their progressive tendencies. These writers imagined a world ruled not by social Darwinism and unbridgeable biological differences, but by inevitable forces of creative destruction pulling cultures together into a homogenizing, unified whole. However, despite the book's provocative angle of analysis and recuperative argument, the chapters on race and empire retread a lot of familiar ground. Ninkovich presents abundant evidence in the form of quotations, neatly sorted into discrete topics under discussion: Americans' opinions on the ultimate potential for 'civilization' (interpreted as global acculturation) in Russia, Japan, and India, or, within the bounds of the United States, for African-, Native- and Asian-Americans. (Oddly, considering their importance in the period's conception of global influence and empire, Ninkovich gives Latin America and Mexican-Americans little attention). The effect of all this quotation can be plodding, especially when one already knows that Americans held a lot of contradictory ideas about which groups could be 'civilized' and how to steward those who passed muster toward the distant reward of cultural assimilation. Perhaps Ninkovich's intended audience does tend to view the culture of the period as domestically absorbed and single-mindedly ruled by ideologies of unbridgeable racial difference, but to me this sounded a bit like a straw man. Certainly those following a Foucauldian model of historicism – or those merely accustomed to making sense of profusion of opinion one finds in the era's magazines -- are already alert to the competing, contradictory discourses of race and empire.

Where Ninkovich intends to go beyond Foucauldian historicism, however, is in being specific about causality. How exactly did these minority viewpoints lay the foundation for more internationalist policies down the road? Filling in the missing link that shows how we get from point A to point B, from cultural expression to diplomatic decision, is still a matter of inference and faith, however. Ultimately, it just makes sense that "culture is not a cause in the commonly understood scientific sense," but rather something that sets a "field of possibility for what can and cannot be done" (330). Ninkovich uses the metaphor of vegetable growth to illustrate this point: it is not that internationalism had cultural *roots*, but that culture provided the kind of soil in which certain actions could or could not germinate.

I agree with this explanation of why culture provides an indispensable context for causal accounts, but my interests lie in pushing the claim further still. Ninkovich begins the book by explaining that anthropological modes of studying culture offered little to his methodology. Apparently, borrowing from more humanistic fields of cultural study appeared so obviously infelicitous that their rejection needed no explanation. Considering his audience and purpose I cannot fault him for this, and yet reading this book I wondered what would be different if the author had not excluded an entire category of cultural evidence from his archive: the short fiction and poetry that fill the pages of most the periodicals he studies. What kinds of narratives about the United States' place in the world were these authors and readers imagining, and to what extent are fantasy, imagination, and narrative important – perhaps crucial -- in limiting or expanding the field of the possible? What is it that actually tempers the 'soil,' and to what extent

is narrative and imagination an necessary part of the process? One does not have to venture far into the confines of an English department to encounter the idea that the stories a culture tells exert a powerful force on what it can envision (see, for example, *New York Times* film critics Manohla Dargis and A.O. Scott on how TV and film dramas that cast the role of the president as an African American man expanded the field of possibility for what voters could imagine, conditioning the cultural soil for President Barak Obama's election without directly *causing* it.<sup>3</sup>) If readers are willing to go as far as Ninkovich wants to take them, perhaps he has also prepared the academic soil for imagining number of other possible conjunctions of culture and state politics. Transatlantic themes are major feature in realist writing, the literary mode fostered at elite publications like the *Atlantic Monthly*. How essential were the identifications and emotional investments solicited by these forms to reimagining what is possible or desirable for America abroad? Do these genres lag behind the more literal accounts of legal, technological and political change that Ninkovich selects, or do they look ahead? Seemingly without trying, Ninkovich has opened up new ground for a more interdisciplinary approach to his subject.

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<sup>3</sup> Manohla Dargis and A. O. Scott, "How the Movies Made a President", January 16, 2009, *New York Times* <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/18/movies/18darg.html>



In the introduction and conclusion to *Global Dawn*, Frank Ninkovich stresses the methodological contribution he hopes to make via the book, namely, that students of foreign relations should embrace cultural approaches to their topic. He points out that many foreign relations scholars dismiss culture because it has not been successfully linked to “power and causality” (4). Ninkovich makes a case for the relationship of culture to causality, arguing that culture forms the field in which foreign policy actors make decisions. Culture is what puts certain options on the table and takes others away, and it is what explains decisions that are seemingly irrational from the perspective of objective self-interest. Ninkovich’s argument for culture is succinct, clear, and convincing. Readers who shy away from theory and jargon have nothing to fear and much to gain from Ninkovich’s account.

The body of the book focuses on a particular cultural argument: In liberal journals such as *The Nation* and *The Century* that circulated in the United States between 1865 and 1890, we can see the origins of the internationalist foreign policies that became the norm from the mid twentieth century. Without the ideas in these journals—without the culture they created—subsequent policies would not have been possible, according to Ninkovich. *Global Dawn* provides a survey of the topics and arguments related to international politics and the wider world that featured in Gilded Age liberal journals. Ninkovich takes us through what liberal authors had to say about the countries of the world (especially the countries of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East), as well as their efforts to grapple with concepts such as civilization, imperialism, and the balance of power.

In his introduction, Ninkovich states that determining what made it into the book was a challenging task and that many things were left out (13-14). I certainly do not envy him the daunting task of interpreting this large, rich, and diverse source base in a single book. Just one essay from one of these journals could yield at least a scholarly article, if not a book, if fully analyzed; for *Global Dawn*, Ninkovich sorted through hundreds of essays. The result is a book that focuses more on what the authors wrote, rather than why they wrote it. That may leave some readers wanting something more—or something different—from the book. For example, I wanted to know more about where the authors’ information about other places and international developments was coming from; in particular, I wondered about the role of European journalists in all of this, since American newspapers of the period often re-printed European—and especially British—news stories and editorials. I also wondered about how the development of Unitarian religious beliefs and secular worldviews among the journals’ contributors shaped their assessments of Christianity’s efficacy as an agent of progress.

Delving into those issues would require engagement with secondary literature, and direct evidence of that engagement is lacking in *Global Dawn*. In leveling this charge, I want to be clear that I recognize the existence of forces beyond the author’s control that are likely relevant here. The notes in the book are extremely problematic, and the publisher—and the publishing industry more broadly—has a major role to play in this situation. The

endnotes in the book take up almost one hundred pages, and yet they are difficult to use and, I presume, incomplete. Each paragraph of the text has a single note, but the density of quotation means that there could easily be a half-dozen or more primary sources listed in the note with no clear indication of which source goes with which quotation or idea. I looked at the notes quite a bit because I wanted to get more of a sense of change over time than the narrative provided, and I was often stymied. As I imagine the process of producing this book, I can hear the editor insisting on a particular number of words for the book as a whole, the production staff chafing at how many notes this book would really need, and, of course, the standard publishing arguments favoring endnotes over footnotes and why a book doesn't need notes *and* a bibliography. Faced with all of that, I understand the choices Ninkovich made, and I probably would have made the same decisions. These problems with the apparatus hurt the scholarly value of the book, though, and that's a shame.

The problem of the relative absence of citations from secondary literature is most acute in chapters 5 and 6, which deal with race. Ninkovich frames his discussion of race as "sail[ing] against the prevailing winds of historical interpretation" (11), and he repeats the idea that he is countering existing scholarship several times in the two chapters. There is very little in the notes that indicates the source of those prevailing winds, however. It appears that Ninkovich is arguing against something like the idea that 'all late nineteenth-century Americans were racists' (see especially pp. 11 and 168). Ninkovich points to the content of the liberal journals to produce the counterargument that these authors advocated human equality and rejected 'scientific' claims that promoted racism. It is difficult to assess how Ninkovich's argument meshes with existing historical scholarship, and I think a significant number of readers will take issue with much of what he has to say about American racial politics.

While there is much to pull apart in a sentence like 'all late nineteenth-century Americans were racists,' let me focus on just one element: the late nineteenth century. Scholars who study the Gilded Age and Progressive Era repeatedly have arguments about periodization and whether or not the age and the era are really two separate things. For some issues, such as the expansion of the federal government, lumping the two works better. For others, splitting is important, and Ninkovich's discussion of race highlights that fact. *Global Dawn* covers the Gilded Age, which here is defined as the period from 1865 to 1890. Ninkovich is right to say that most liberal journal contributors of this period questioned 'scientific' claims to racial difference and continued to stress human equality (ch. 5-6, esp. p. 139): these are people who grew up with abolitionists and their rhetoric of equality and who associated 'scientific' claims with Southern justifications of slavery. They were also typically from the Northeast, and they wrote in a period before significant Chinese migration to the area produced a local understanding of the "Yellow Peril," which they had previously dismissed as a contemptible Western folly. This was the period of Reconstruction and its immediate aftermath—before the introduction of statutory Jim Crow. The Progressive Era—let's say that's from the 1890s through the 1920s—was a different time when it comes to ideas and policies about race. A generation of Gilded Age liberals gave way to a generation of Progressive Era reformers who gave more weight to the idea that culture is carried in the physical body and is therefore less susceptible, if not fully immune, to change. To say that all Progressive Era Americans were racist again goes

too far, but it was definitely a harsher world than the Gilded Age. Lumping the Gilded Age and Progressive Era together into “the late nineteenth century” does not do justice to some very important changes in terms of racial politics and racist thinking.

My sense is that Ninkovich knows a great deal more about his primary sources and their context than what is presented in the book. The liberal journals of the time are a rich and challenging source base, and Ninkovich’s efforts to wade through them and make sense of them are admirable. The key lesson of the book—that culture shapes the field of options available to foreign policymakers—is an excellent one.

**A**s a cultural historian, I am utterly persuaded by Frank Ninkovich's primary thesis in *Global Dawn* that the cultural foundations of twentieth-century U.S. globalism can be clearly discerned during the Gilded Age. I agree with him that culture did and does constitute a causal element in policy "if we are willing to reconsider what we commonly understand by causality" (p. 7). In other words, if we can accept a more diffuse definition of causality, one that does not require the proverbial smoking gun as evidentiary proof, and if we understand that culture cannot be neatly packed into a scientific formula or model, we can see that culture helped shape policies along with a number of other explanatory factors. Although historians tend to be more comfortable with the indeterminate and with multi-causal explanations, cultural historians of foreign relations still feel compelled to point out to others in our subfield that culture itself was not a causal factor, but worked in tandem with economic, political, and other factors. Perhaps any remnant resistance to culture as having any explanatory power in policymaking is due to the fact that among the historical subfields, ours is one of the closest to political science. Political scientists tend to be less willing to work with amorphous concepts like culture, unless in a purely utilitarian--and I would add reductive--way such as in Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power."<sup>1</sup> Their task is to describe behavior and make generalizable statements that can be applied to a range of events across time and space; in contrast, we historians are interested in rendering an accurate portrayal of the past to the best of our abilities, and we tend to shy away from prescriptive statements.<sup>2</sup>

So, what then is "culture"? Coming to a universally accepted definition of this term seems near impossible. Ninkovich, for instance, sees "anthropological meaning(s) of culture" to be so varied as to lack any utility for historians of foreign relations (pp. 1-2). Yet it is not only the anthropologists who disagree on the definition of culture, but also those of us who self-identify as cultural historians.<sup>3</sup> We cannot agree on a singular definition, either. But that should be no reason to invalidate the study of culture if we see ourselves as humanists rather than scientists. With this more humanistic approach to history, Ninkovich relies on his close textual readings of the printed public discourse of 19th century American liberal elites to provide a rich, detailed portrait of their culture or zeitgeist. By showing their ideas, musings, and beliefs about America's place in the larger world, Ninkovich seeks to demonstrate how Cold War notions about modernization had their precedent in the supposed isolationist era of the Gilded Age. He places the "origins of modern American

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph S Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, "International History: Why Historians Do It Differently Than Political Scientists" in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 403-16.

<sup>3</sup> James W. Cook and Lawrence B. Glickman, "Twelve Propositions for a History of U.S. Cultural History" in James W. Cook, Lawrence B. Glickman, and Michael O'Malley, eds., *The Cultural Turn in U. S. History: Past, Present, and Future* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2008), 3-57.

internationalism” during this time, characterizing it as the “years of cultural preparation in which a liberal elite received a broad grounding in the study of international relations in a rapidly globalizing world” (p. 327). I read this ambitious book also as an attempt to provide a corrective to our field’s over-emphasis on the twentieth century --particularly from World War II onwards, when the United States emerged as a global hegemonic power. I welcome and applaud works like *Global Dawn* that seek to provide greater chronological depth.

Ninkovich, however, does have a more specific purpose for examining the nineteenth-century cultural precedents of U.S. internationalism. He believes that they “offer deeper insights into the history of the U.S. foreign relations than accounts that seek to portray that history as a tale of commercial acquisitiveness and empire or, alternatively, a story of exceptionalism run amok” (p. 5). To be sure, the views of nineteenth-century liberal elites can give us *more* or additional insights, but are these necessarily *better* than the other interpretations?

One point of difference may lie in what we believe is important to study in the history of U.S. foreign relations. Should our focus be on the makers of U.S. policy, or should we also pay attention to those on the receiving end of U.S. policy? Although Ninkovich does not wholly neglect those on the receiving end, his study revolves around those views that come to dominate twentieth-century policymaking. He is invested in showing the great promises of their liberal thinking--their optimism about all the world’s peoples moving towards an enlightened modernity where an individual would be limited only by his ability and effort. (The gendered pronoun is intentional since Ninkovich purposefully omitted an analysis of gender--a missed opportunity especially given the role of both race and gender in civilization discourses.<sup>4</sup>) He is therefore less critical and leaves under-analyzed, in my opinion, the assertions of nineteenth-century liberal elites. As he shows us, they spoke of an increasing inter-connected world as an unprecedented phenomenon much as today’s pundits speak of globalization. But while we acknowledge the greater exponential jump and profound advancements in communication and transportation technology of the nineteenth century, we should be careful not to leave their impressions without critical analysis lest their impression be taken as accurate history. The nineteenth-century observers that Ninkovich quotes did not seem to acknowledge or to know the extent of America’s participation in the global economy since its colonial days. Were they aware that this included trade in goods from South Asia and China that came through the Atlantic slave trade?<sup>5</sup> It seems not. That nineteenth-century observers knew as little history as their late twentieth and early twenty-first century counterparts is surely another similarity.

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<sup>4</sup> See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Sucheta Mazumdar, “The Other Side of the Triangular Trade,” paper given at “The Asia-Pacific in Making of America: Towards a Global History,” a symposium held at Brown University, 27 September 2010.

Moreover, this tight focus on the liberal elite discourse may be distorting without greater contextualization. Ninkovich appears to be presuming the “hostility of the masses” to an international outlook (p. 328), but I was left wondering about working-class Americans such as Irish immigrants who were keenly attuned to the plight of their brethren who lived under colonial rule. Or the working Americans, laborers and farmers alike, who embraced “Cuba Libre” due to sense of empathy that they felt with the oppressed.<sup>6</sup> The ‘masses’ were not bereft of an international outlook, but theirs carried a differing political valence from the liberal elites. Also naturalized in Ninkovich’s narrative are elite Americans’ Eurocentric worldviews. That the primary sources yielded the richest discussion on England and France must surely have something to do with the fact that these two nations have had the greatest impact on American political and economic life since colonial times. This north Atlantic prioritization continued, of course, well into the twentieth century, but the U.S. orientation towards Asia came with its increased economic importance. Likewise, it seems important to contextualize, the debates about tariffs that Ninkovich discusses (pp. 59-72). Free trade made much more sense towards the end of the nineteenth century when the United States was emerging as a global economic powerhouse, than during the early republic when Hamilton strove to protect the ‘infant’ American industries. Still, free trade had its detractors in the latter period. That the usually liberal-minded Carnegie opposed free trade in 1890 (pp. 67-68) can be more fully grasped if we remember that tariffs during the 1870s allowed his new steel company to thrive against larger, established British steel companies.

Perhaps showing the distorted worldview of nineteenth-century liberals was Ninkovich’s purpose all along: to understand that the received cultural knowledge of this earlier period can go far to explain the shortcomings of Cold War modernization theorists. To criticize either set of liberals simply as hypocrites or liars would, I agree, be reductive. It is more important to explain how the liberal blinders shaped policies, many with disastrous effects. One nineteenth-century analog would be the Dawes Act. This project of modernity to assimilate Native Americans by making them into individual landholding farmers ended up, as Ninkovich notes, as a “land grab” for whites (p. 195). Underlying the projects of modernity were: 1) the presumption of a universal model (that might be tweaked to fit local conditions) would lead to wealth and fulfillment; and 2) the hardened conviction that the modernizers knew what was best for their subjects better than the subject themselves because the modernizers meant well, were smarter, could see conditions more clearly and dispassionately, and in the end, had the wherewithal and power put to their plan into action. To many postcolonial scholars the term ‘modernity’ symbolizes ‘the violence of the state.’ This is hardly how most Americans, academic or non-academic, think of “modernity,” and this is why we can see the liberal blinders still at work today. I suspect this also explains my discomfort with Ninkovich’s assertion that ‘civilization’ in the latter half of the nineteenth century is congruent to today’s notion of ‘globalization.’ It is the accent on the optimistic side of the tale.

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<sup>6</sup> Kevin Hoskins, “The Wages of Empire: Working-Class Americans, ‘Cuba Libre,’ and U.S. Imperialism” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, forthcoming).



To be wary of the optimism is not to deny that these liberal ideas about the potential for human happiness were genuinely felt beliefs. Indeed they were felt not only among the liberal elites but also among many others seeking freedom. This is where I believe Ninkovich misreads Said's *Orientalism*, a misinterpretation that influences his seventh chapter, "Beyond Orientalism," and eighth chapter, "Empire and Civilization." Ninkovich points out that Said had "nary a word to say about the potential for equality in Western views" (p. 397, fn. 62). Yet he misses Said's fundamental purpose, which was to argue that non-western others had a right to see the promises of western modernity fulfilled. Said was motivated not by an anti-modernist rejection of rationalism and democratic institutions, but by the failure of powerful nations to guarantee these benefits to the colonized or decolonized and, even worse, intentionally thwart their ability to achieve them. Said thus did not deny the "potential for equality" in western culture, but wanted to raise awareness that despite the sincere good intentions, this promise had been a cruel lie to many in the global south.<sup>7</sup>

As is perhaps evident by now, my disagreement with Ninkovich seems to stem from our differing approaches to the study of imperialism. Ninkovich's stance about imperialism is clear from his previous works, especially in *The United States and Imperialism* (2001).<sup>8</sup> Trying to forge the middle ground between those who deny U.S. imperialism and others who condemn it, he sought to provide a fuller, more accurate picture by considering imperialism's benefits to those under its subjugation. Fair enough: I am sympathetic to this goal. But while Ninkovich wisely rejects objectivity, he nonetheless states that he tried to be "impartial as possible by adhering to the rules of evidence and by being fair to my historical subjects."<sup>9</sup> I believe that this goal of impartiality is as elusive and as limiting as is objectivism. Of course, we historians must adhere to rules of evidence and strive to be fair to our historical subjects; these are our basic responsibilities. But I believe that a presumption of impartiality allows statements such as: "Racism, though still present, had been thoroughly delegitimized . . ." (p. 325). By 1900? Perhaps this was poor phrasing on Ninkovich's part, or a throwaway line, but it still came as a breathtaking assertion to me, someone who grew up in one of two nonwhite families in a Houston suburb only a few short years after racial covenants had been declared illegal. I hope my fellow historians can understand that some of us do not have the luxury of believing such "impartiality" exists. We strive for fairness and even empathy, but we are aware of how our life experiences shape our epistemologies. Perhaps my point here is similar to Ninkovich's point about needing to understand the worldviews of the policymakers, and to see how their viewpoints extended outward from their inner perspectives. How we historians write and interpret the past also comes forth from within.

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<sup>7</sup> Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage, 1996). Said tried to address some of the misconceptions and complaints about *Orientalism* in *Culture and Imperialism*. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Frank Ninkovich, *The United States and Imperialism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. Ninkovich discusses the perils of objectivism in historical studies in *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4-5.

Author's Response by Frank Niniovich, St. John's University

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Historians, like writers in other genres, often compare the writing of a book to having a child. What is left out in this timeworn analogy is that many of them then go on to abandon their progeny. Alas, over the years I have come to realize that I must be counted among this group. One simply moves on, looking back only occasionally, with pride or disappointment as the case may be, but with a growing sense of distance and next to no engagement. Given my penchant for serial desertion, I was tempted at first to thank the readers for their critiques and to leave it at that. Besides, the professional ethic in which I was raised demanded that one absorb criticisms without public complaint. Apart from being bad form, responses in the form of outraged letters to the editor had practical consequences: If the criticism didn't damage your career, the bad odor produced by an intemperate response certainly would. Nevertheless, since forums like H-Diplo are increasingly making possible a dialogue between readers and authors, this taboo no longer seems to hold. Thus, I will try to reply with as much good grace as I can muster, for I well understand that every book has its shortcomings. But before I start, as a scholar recently retired from teaching whose best days are behind him, I was impressed by the intelligence and sophistication of the younger scholars who grappled with *Global Dawn*. I also very much appreciate the acute comments of Michael Adas, whose impressive body of work I respect and admire.

First, some admissions of guilt. I acknowledge that many of the criticisms are on the mark. Some of them I had anticipated when I wrote the book, some I had not. Among the more obvious reasons for complaint are the absence of a bibliography and reference to a sizeable secondary literature noted by Nicole Phelps. Some of the responsibility for this omission rests with the publisher, but this offers a too-convenient explanation for a decision that I would have taken regardless. Though I did make reference to secondary literature where I thought it would be helpful, for me, the inclusion of notes is primarily a way of keeping the writer honest. My justification, idiosyncratic though it may be, is rooted in a long-held conviction that historiography can be as much a swamp as a secure foundation for future construction. The deference paid to historiography is a form of methodological collectivism in which the totality should be the summary of a field's knowledge, but the unfortunate fact is that much if not most of the history in any given field is bad or mediocre, not to mention unintegrated, and can be more of a hindrance than a help. With more than one historian having waded into the swamp and never been heard from again, sometimes the best thing to do is to go around it. In any case, the act of historical writing, although it takes place within a community of discourse, remains in certain basic respects profoundly individual.

Before getting on to the central theme of my remarks, I want to address some issues, far from minor in themselves, that I do not consider to be central to *Global Dawn*. With regard to the value of looking at more literary sources, a point stressed by Gretchen Murphy, I could not agree more, though there are some interesting arguments to be made on both sides of this issue. I have, in fact, recently argued that anti-imperialism can profitably be explored through literary sources. On the need to look at the views of those who were the objects of American perceptions, I heartily concur. But here the best was the enemy of the

good, though I usually prefer to reverse that formulation. On the role of the masses, I agree with Naoko Shibusawa's point that farmers and laborers could and did take an interest in specific issues, such as Ireland and Cuba. That is true, as far as it goes, but single-issue concerns are miles removed from having an internationalist outlook. Internationalism is an ideology, a complex abstract construct, whereas the kinds of attitudes that Shibusawa mentions are more in the nature of reflexive emotional attachments. That the views were Eurocentric, too, I acknowledge in the text, but what else would one expect? The empirical purpose of the book - and in its narrowest sense it can be seen as simply an empirical exercise - was to describe how places and events far outside transatlantic boundaries were perceived as part of a complex global whole. On Adas's contention that civilization was "an ethnocentric marker of deep divisions among humankind rather than a cosmopolitan prescription for their ultimate unity," instead of putting the matter in such an either/or fashion, my view is that it was both.

As for my failure to discuss gender, Shibusawa scolds me for "a missed opportunity." I plead guilty with an explanation. On the whole I am quite receptive to the inclusion of gender in history, but less so about the universal utility of gendered modes of analysis. Sometimes they are helpful, and sometimes they aren't. For my purposes, I concluded that it was best to leave gender out. As an *obiter dictum*, I would add, too, that the ritualistic invocation of gender can become a mindless mantra. At worst, this form of scholarly tribute can become the equivalent of medieval tolls whose chief effect is to bog down the trade in ideas.

Now for the nitty-gritty. On the crucial issue of my discussion of race and culture, to which the readers were more or less sympathetic, I fear that my point was only partially understood: the discussion in the text was mostly about science and the absence of what Thomas Kuhn called a paradigm. The existence of a scientific consensus, of course, by no means dictates that society will bow to scientific opinion, as the widespread popular denial of global warming and Darwinian biology in our time clearly demonstrates. Nevertheless, the absence of a scientific paradigm allowed the discussion of race to remain open. And even as the racial political climate hardened - and here I take Phelps's point that racism in many ways hardened after 1890 during the Progressive era - the flowering of anthropology and the continuation of research left open a space in which opinion could eventually develop in the direction of delegitimization of racism. Shibusawa takes issue with my assertion that racism has been delegitimized, but I will stand by my statement. Obviously, delegitimization did not necessarily bring with it the end of racism, but it is clear that there has been significant progress on race, and we have to ask ourselves what made that progress possible. Michael Adas, who got the point about how race was being redefined in a new cultural idiom, argues that defining differences in cultural terms did not necessarily produce more benign views of others or less hateful behaviors, but this is not something that I would disagree with. Indeed, I took care to point out the fungibility of race and culture in the text while trying to note some crucial differences between the two (p. 165).

With regard to Edward Said and his influential critique of orientalism, I am not the first to take issue with his framework (Gretchen Murphy's admission of going down the Foucauldian "rabbit hole" of cultural studies was not perhaps the most felicitous admission,

but I give her credit for having a sharp eye in noticing that I stepped out of my archive to discuss Josiah Strong's views). My comments on Said, which I nearly decided to leave out of the manuscript, were intended to point out that his description of the stereotyping practices of western "orientalism" itself created a stereotype of western scholarship that obscured its vital role in creating a more accurate knowledge of the Islamic world. If we are to take seriously the views of someone like Hans-Georg Gadamer, who worked in the same Heideggerian tradition as Foucault, this is the way that knowledge is inescapably generated: We start with prejudices and then work our way out of them, the chief point being that without prejudices we cannot get started in the first place. I am willing to admit that Said's views can be seen as a criticism of the west for its failure to live up to its own values, but that is not the same thing as his indictment of western scholarship. To blame western scholarship for the west's political failings is too reductionist an approach to be seriously entertained, nor, for that matter, can all the Islamic world's problems be dumped on the doorstep of western politics. What was not mentioned in the critiques, however, was my chief point: that Said cast his orientalist net too narrowly. Had he looked farther afield, to perceptions of India, Japan, and China, for example, he would have found substantial differences in how the oriental residents of those lands were perceived vis-à-vis the peoples of the Islamic world. Moreover, the reasons for their being viewed much more favorably had more to do with culture and religion than with race.

There is a deeper problem here that has to do with an ambivalence about culture among those who deal with culture studies – a less generous term would be 'split personality.' It is a cliché by now to note that cultural studies see discourses as fields of contestation. Analytically, one can see the reason for this, for the object is to deconstruct culture, to problematize and denaturalize it. But this desire to highlight the openness and arbitrariness of culture coexists uneasily with a desire to attribute to it a powerful coercive force. Culture normalizes. Because it makes us behave in certain ways without thinking about them, it is very compelling, and I think this is one of the chief attractions of Foucault's notion of power. Foucault's "most original contribution," according to Dreyfus and Rabinow, is to show through various examples "how our culture attempts to normalize individuals through increasingly rationalized means, by turning them into meaningful subjects and docile objects."<sup>1</sup> The problem for Foucault was precisely normalization, the kind of condition in which people are prevented from thinking, feeling, and behaving in certain ways and, conversely, impelled to engage in behaviors that they take for granted.

Foucault's concern is not with state power, but power in its everyday form, power that ultimately resides within us and is capable of replicating its forms. Foucault's ideas of power have become meat and drink for a segment of the historical community that engages in cultural history, which, in its critical mode, attempts to problematize and denaturalize cultural power in the conviction that we are stuck in objectionable cultural patterns of repetition. These are some of the aspects of culture that I discuss in my conclusion. Unfortunately, in dealing with matters of foreign policy outside the diffuse realm of culture,

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<sup>1</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. xxxvii.

whose importance I will discuss below, I would submit that Foucauldian ideas are of little help. The “Foucauldian model of historicism” is unrealistic; its notions of micro-power and governmentality and its reductionist dismissal of the role and influence of the state, for reasons that I shall discuss below, are too simple and too limited in scope.

Quite apart from its effect on foreign policy, the causal potency of culture is highly questionable. A good example of the belief in the potency of culture comes across in Adas’s point about the existence of “a deeply embedded nationalist teleology... For those who embraced them, the converging teleologies of the Christian dispensation, never-ending progress through technological innovation, and the Enlightenment Project of the early modern West were unfolding in predetermined --hence inevitable – ways, and could not be denied.” This teleology, I would argue, has existed more in the minds of American historians than among policy elites. These kinds of assertions about cultural impulses are, moreover, ahistorical and even antihistorical because they are blind to the fields of possibility that emerge as culture unfolds in a creative and non-teleological manner. As noted by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Certain notions cannot be attained except by a series of successive steps and by a sedimentation of meaning which makes it impossible for the new sense to appear before its time and apart from certain factual conditions.”<sup>2</sup> That it is possible to lose sight of this point is richly ironic, for this insight, which sees culture as first and foremost a human creation than as something that creates humans, is central to a philosophical tradition that is in no small measure responsible for modern cultural studies.

There is another problem raised by such assertions about culture that goes beyond Adas’s belief in a cultural version of original sin and my rejection of that notion. That problem is brought to the forefront by international history, which makes plain that many other peoples and nations feel themselves to be under the special dispensation of Providence. Given the long list that could be drawn up of such exceptionalisms, the only possible explanation for how the United States has achieved its status as a global hegemon is that it possesses exceptional size and greater resources – which is what power theorists have been arguing for millennia. Looked at in this way, culture is best dropped from the equation. But all this is the subject of a book on American exceptionalism on which I am now at work. It is a complicated business, and my remarks here can only suggest my general position.

One of the purposes of *Global Dawn* was to suggest that the emergence of globalization threw a monkey wrench into American notions of progress by making plain American inferiority in a large number of areas. Another thread implied that the emergence of an international society that was the product of wholly unanticipated international social forces beyond anyone’s ability to control – a relatively new conception of how the world worked – placed limits on America’s ability to shape the future. If anything, this new awareness pointed in the more modest direction of international cooperation than the

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<sup>2</sup>, “Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man,” in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, James M. Edie (ed.), *The Primacy of Perception: and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 89.



lusting for the sort of imperial hegemony that Adas seems to think has been indelibly inscribed in American hearts. To put it counterfactually: in the absence of the world crisis of the 1930s, American foreign relations would have been far more modest, continuing down the path of international cooperation that had been marked out since the end of the nineteenth century. In other words, Manifest Destiny was far from manifest.

My biggest gripe comes from the decision made by the editors of H-Diplo not to include members of the historical community who have little use for culture. Instead of preaching to the choir, I had hoped, and still hope, to get those who currently don't give a fig about culture to take it more seriously. Adas is surprised by my defensiveness about the standing of culture in the field of foreign relations. He says that "the importance of cultural influences as a causal factors or underlying conditions – variable by time, issues, and nature of the cross-cultural exchanges in question – has for some decades been a major force in reshaping the sub-field of diplomatic history in America as well as western Europe, Japan, and increasingly for many scholars in the former Soviet bloc and the postcolonial world." On this matter, I would assert that Adas is flat out wrong. The fact that a growing number of scholars have written about culture does not mean that culture has been accepted; and even if it were accepted, that would not mean that it has led us any closer to a coherent explanation of international relations. Rather, I would suggest that the proliferation of writing on cultural themes has contributed to further disciplinary fragmentation in a field never known for its ability to generate a consensus.

Culture is good at expanding our sense of what was possible – but it is terrible in explaining the how and the why of historical developments, and I thought I made this clear in my pluralist conclusion. I would hope that explaining why things happened in the way that they did continues to be of interest to historians, and I hoped that *Global Dawn* would show how culture could offer indispensable if limited assistance in this regard. Many more traditionally-minded diplomatic historians would say that it doesn't even do that. The traditional realist hostility to culture is well-known and Shibusawa is quite right to point out that ostensibly friendly conceptions like Joseph Nye's "soft power" are in fact reductive. The same holds true of I.R. theory, for which culture is largely irrelevant.

Nevertheless, however unfair it may be, it seems to me that the burden of making a persuasive case lies with those on the cultural side, who happen to be the outsiders. Unfortunately, one of the more striking absences in the cultural approach has been a lack of interest in attempting to unite cultural studies with traditional political studies, to join together culture and power, in Akira Iriye's idiom. Until culture and power are somehow integrated conceptually and practically, as they are in real life, there will remain two cultures in the history of foreign relations. Part of this lack of interest in politics is normative, the result of a recoil from the "violence of the state" as Shibusawa puts it. But more important, in my estimation, is that cultural studies proceeded from an intellectual tradition that emerged in the nineteenth century that overturned the age-old conceptual priority that had been assigned to politics. As a result of this conceptual revolution, history henceforth was understood to proceed from the bottom up.



This grates against my personal *wissenschaftlich* approach to knowledge in which very different kinds of disciplines can profitably coexist and interact. The demonstrable lack of concern among those who do cultural studies with the large body of activity undertaken by the state is unfortunate because it grossly undervalues the importance of the state and of the political realm. State action hardly explains everything, to be sure. And state violence is certainly there, but to see the state solely in negative terms is a blinkered way of looking at the place of politics in human affairs. In classical Aristotelian terms, the state was what made us human and capable of aspiring to excellence. In Machiavelli's version, the ruthless prince is the guarantor of the good life. In Hobbesian terms, the state was the guarantor of peace and stability that made possible the humdrum, non-violent pursuits of bourgeois life. In Rousseau's compact, the individual gives up his freedom to the legislative general will in order to be free. In modern national terms, the state makes possible a national and even international identity that transcends the parochial concerns of family and tribe. Beyond being simply a "power container," in Anthony Giddens's well-known formulation, the state is indispensable to the formation and unfolding of modern culture. One need not be a follower of Hegel and his belief that states are the principal historical actors to acknowledge that politics matters in some fundamental ways.

The chief purpose of writing the book was to suggest that the cultural and the political could be linked in ways acceptable to both sides. One sometimes gets the impression that if the field were left solely to cultural studies, events like diplomacy, world wars, Hitler and Nazism, totalitarianism, the cold war, the Marshall Plan, and political and economic liberty would not be addressed at all, and that we would be left instead with studies of transnational events that take place solely at the level of civil society. The only exception would be empire, which, because of its emphasis on hierarchy, would enter the picture as the only form of state action worth talking about. But to slight international politics is to leave out those political developments that have been conducive to human emancipation, for decision-making and action within the state structure has also been responsible for things like international law and human rights and, I would submit, has been vital to creating and sustaining the culture in which criticism of empire now flourishes. In other words, language and culture, though crucial in many respects, should not have the field to themselves in the study of foreign relations. They need to be considered in relation to ideology, decision-making, personality, structural causes of all sorts, contingency, creativity, and as I tried to argue in my closing paragraphs, this requires on the part of the historian a willingness to accept the complexity of a world that can never be captured in its richness and depth by historical methods, however sophisticated.

These grouchy remarks may sound odd coming from one who set out to defend culture, but if the reviews had included scholars from the mainstream traditions of writing about foreign relations, whom I have already criticized ad nauseam in the past, I would have even been harder on them. I don't believe that I am slighting culture in my critical remarks, for I would say the same of any approach that singles out and elevates one factor above all others. I am caught in the middle, here, I realize, and I am painfully aware of my inability thus far to convince large numbers of readers. But that won't stop me from trying.

Time to get on with conceiving the next child.

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