

# H-Diplo ESSAY 295

Essay Series on Learning the Scholar's Craft: Reflections of Historians and International Relations Scholars

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## *Last Tango in Fayetteville*

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Growing up in a fast-developing peripheral section of Florence, Italy, I first learned to associate the word ‘craft’ to the construction sites surrounding our apartment building, with some architectural marvels and many genuine eyesores. As a kid, I was generally entranced by how new shapes—some expected, some surprising—emerged from the painstaking labor of bricklayers and carpenters. Then there were the occupants of each of those units in those three to five-story buildings, each adding their individual, conformist or peculiar touch to the interiors or balconies of those otherwise equally framed structures. I thus try to explain to the students in my History methods class the process of writing History as a similar craft combining predictability with some unexpected turns, the general shapes and the individual ‘touches,’ or accidents—a craft perhaps more similar to the one perceived by the observer rather than by the original architect of the structure. Pressed with questions on how I approach my own research, I tell them that it’s a bit like how famed historian William McNeill explained his seemingly “unscientific” method as a process starting with him getting curious about a problem, and “reading up on it,” then redefining the problem, which redirected his readings, “in turn further reshaping the problem” and so on, back and forth.... “until it feels right, then I write it up and ship it off to the publisher.”<sup>1</sup>

I could apply the same reasoning to my becoming a historian altogether. It was an accidental process, as Martin Conway also stated in his contribution to this series,<sup>2</sup> or rather an encounter with new realities that reshaped my views, then my ambitions, and even my final professional destination. Surely, as a kid in Florence, at a time—the 1960s-70s—in which America became an integral part of our daily cultural diet, I did not list Arkansas among the forty-five states or so of the U.S. that I could recite alphabetically. And so my professional trajectory was all but linear, but rather a ‘back and forth,’ then ‘reshaping the problem... redirecting my attention... until it felt right,’ and I ‘shipped’ myself to the Arkansas that had just bid me.

In hindsight, one could see the signs of my early interest and trajectory. Trained at first at a *liceo classico*, the high school branch with a curriculum heavy on classical studies and liberal arts, I was an avid reader from an early age (the choices ranged from Cicero to Isaac Asimov). Literature, Art, and History were of course pervasive in the Florence environment, at least the one into which I ventured almost daily, and the one I much preferred to the orderly, monotonous periphery—almost like the kid escaping parental oversight in Jacques Tati’s film *Mon Oncle*, to frolic in the far more vivacious and charmingly messy *quartier* where his uncle dwells. With most of my relatives residing just two blocks inside the ancient city walls, I found all pretexts especially to wander in the antique stores of the San Frediano quarter, sometimes sent on scouting

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in John L. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 48.

<sup>2</sup> <https://networks.h-net.org/node/28443/discussions/6479518/h-diplo-essay-273-martin-conway-learning-scholar%E2%80%99s-craft>.

missions by my great-aunt, who was a second-hand dealer more than an antiquarian proper. There, my grandmother (the aunt's sister), born in 1917, cooked for me the most improvised meals, and regaled me with her wartime stories—those I enjoyed best—of her petty crimes, her small role in assisting the U.S. troops during the liberation of the city, her love for the 'new dances' they brought along, and her tryst with 'Joseph' (I couldn't believe there was actually a GI Joe in my family, for a fleeting moment). But I am not suggesting that I was a historian in bloom just because I liked to immerse myself in all those layers of city and family that rose from medieval times to the contemporary 'bums,' as Grandma, using 'Nixonian' jargon, called the multinational hippy crowd that had turned her Santo Spirito quarter into a Euro version of Haight-Ashbury.

Indeed, nothing was so pre-ordained—and in my teenage life I was far from decided on my path. I just knew that the sciences were not for me (sometimes with regret, as in my fascination with science fiction literature I also harbored a secret unattainable dream to be like a Carl Sagan). Then, there was my family, an improbable springboard to academic life. My entire family, proximate and extended, was working class—and no one had reached a level of education beyond middle school. There was only one uncle who was self-taught, and whose passion for the Lost Generation American literature first inspired me to explore the same, and to seek beneath the surface of the stereotypes on American pop culture that so easily captured the imagination of those relatives who were close to my age. I was lucky to have two supportive parents who, with patience and devotion, understood that for me a university education was a practical as much as an intellectual choice. Sure, my father, who could be compared to an Italian John Mahoney as the father figure, Martin Crane, of the *Frasier* comedy show, often wondered out loud what loins I came from, but he seconded me every step of the way.

So yes, this is a bit of a 'born on the wrong side of the tracks' story. The Florence of my childhood resembled more the bleak, modern wastelands you see in early Fellini movies than the "Stones of Florence" fabled by Mary McCarthy;<sup>3</sup> hence my frequent escapes to my aunt's second-hand store in the historic left bank of the city. I entered the *Liceo Michelangiolo*, one of the city's historic high schools, as an improbable addition to that section (or pod) that included, among its blazoned members, Niccolò Capponi, of the famed family that once rivaled the Medici. In the school hallways, the corduroy-jacketed, pipe-smoking Niccolò used to call me 'disco boy,' and yes, I did use to strut like John Travolta.

Those early teenage years were indeed a bit escapist, more sci-fi than poli-sci. The political 'awakening' for me came with the infamous 'lead years,' the time in which Italy was haunted by terrorism of the extreme left and extreme right alike. If I must select a date, it would be one day when I was at a *matinée* of the very first Spiderman movie (this is the 1978 version—a ludicrously low-budget B movie). The show was suddenly interrupted, lights came on, and an announcer told the audience of twelve or so that our tickets would be refunded. All theaters and businesses had to shut down, in mourning, at the news of the assassination of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. For me, it was time to catch up with what my schoolmates had been debating for a while: basically the fate of our country, particularly as seen, with hope and many fears, by the Marxist left that was now trying—opposed by the United States and the Red Brigades alike—to enter mainstream politics striking a 'Historic Compromise' with the ruling Christian Democrats (the slain Aldo Moro was the main architect of this compromise from the CD side). I am not here to revisit those stories, but just to note that sometimes a 'trigger' (literally, in this case) can set in motion a desire to know and participate that had been slowly blooming. So I read, I subscribed to my first daily, I debated, I marched, I grew my hair long and sported a fuzzy goatee.

In my college years, in the Political Sciences Department of the University of Florence, which coincided with America's reassertion under President Ronald Reagan, neoliberal 'Thatcherite' economic policies, and Perestroika dreams in Russia, we, the students of the *collettivo politico* preserved a faith—a bit wavering, perhaps, but still heartfelt—in Marxism, believing that class struggle (now coated with some overdue identity politics, too) was still the engine that moved History forward. Italian or American poet-singers like Bob Dylan and Francesco Guccini set the tunes for our marches; but our first concerts became sensationally crowded when featuring international icons with an iconoclastic take on pop, from Lou Reed to Patti Smith, and from Peter Gabriel to David Bowie.

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<sup>3</sup> Mary McCarthy, *The Stones of Florence*, first published by Harvest HBJ, 1959.

In that Poli-Sci Department, which already had a vibrant transatlantic connection through the first of Italy's American History curriculum that had been established in the 1950s by Giorgio Spini, I was then drawn to International Studies. This was during the 1980s, a time in which Italy began to generate what the cliché would call a veritable 'cottage industry' in the field, and in Cold War studies in particular. Like other students of International Relations, I started first with the thought that a diplomatic career would be my vocation (while attempting a few pieces of fiction or poetry became rather a hobby). More than the lifestyle associated with any foreign service, whether in comfortable or hardship places, it was restlessness and the desire to travel the world - after seeing so many world-travelers in small, provincial Florence - that drove my choices. By the end of my college years, I had traveled throughout Europe (West and some still Communist East), but it wasn't enough. My older sister often parroted my daydreaming, comparing me to James Stewart's George Bailey (in *It's a Wonderful Life*) demanding a large suitcase (in my case, a huge backpack) to have room for stickers from all around the world. In Italy, the training for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is rather straightforward, and its admission tests quite rigorous, and, frankly, a bit heavy on one of its five areas of study, international economics, an obstacle too tough for me to have overcome quickly.

Then there was the mentorship, in my case, represented by International History scholar Ennio Di Nolfo. I took my first Diplomatic History course with him, and even though the theme, Europe's balance of power and the Crimean War, was seemingly narrow, his approach broadened our perspectives from classic diplomatic channels to the role of groups and movements, and the synergy between power politics and cultural developments. Politically active at the time (he was involved with the first Socialist premiership of postwar Italy), Di Nolfo remained opposed to any dogma, pragmatic to the end—and so he helped moderate my political views as well. In his 1986 book titled *The Fears and Hopes of the Italian People, 1943-1953*,<sup>4</sup> I found inspiration in the way he blended the hermeneutic approaches of the intellectual, the political, and the diplomatic historian, in order to decipher postwar Italy's shifting, multivocal political meanings. Finding one of my favorite novelists, Italo Calvino, so frequently cited in the book was the final 'seduction' for me. After graduating under Di Nolfo's guidance with a (very traditional) thesis on the post-World War I settlement of the Italo-Yugoslavian border, I also embarked, with him as my advisor, in the History doctoral program of the Poli-Sci Department.

I should note my two mentors, Di Nolfo in Italy, and then John Lewis Gaddis in the U.S., also came from relatively modest family origins. That was probably why I felt not embarrassed in the least to tell them about my background. As a faculty member now, I have also helped promote our Honors College's freshmen mentoring program, which pairs first-generation students with faculty who also were first generation students. The program, I find, is quite rewarding on a human scale.

The Italian equivalent of the Ph.D. was then (and still is, to a lesser extent) rather free rein, akin to the original nineteenth-century notion of doctoral programs as independent studies, a general comprehensive exam, and a dissertation produced at the end of the third year. Not bound by class schedules and thanks to the modest scholarship that came with the program's benefits, I aimed at fulfilling an early dream—shared by many of my cohorts—of studying in England or the United States for at least a year or two (on a Fulbright scholarship perhaps?). I put myself to work, inquiring with various U.S. institutions countrywide.

Of course, as an early reader of the Lost Generation writers, I also wanted to test a dictum by one of their famed Italian translators, Cesare Pavese, an internationally renowned writer himself, who in 1946 suggested that America was "an immense theater where our common drama was played out with greater frankness than elsewhere."<sup>5</sup> I was always fascinated by the contrast between an official, established America and 'the other America,' whatever that 'otherness' meant at different times, but especially in the times of my upbringing, when the Italian TV broadcast may have shown golden age Hollywood movies, while in theaters we learned about America also through the stories and soundtracks of films like *Easy Rider*, or *Taxi Driver*, among many. Sure, the social contradictions and 'common drama' in Europe was just as manifest by then, and perhaps we didn't do it much justice, but it was the 'frankness' of those writers, singers, and movie-makers that

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<sup>4</sup> Ennio Di Nolfo, *Le paure e le speranze degli Italiani (1943-1953)*, (Milan: Mondadori, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Cesare Pavese, *La letteratura americana e altri saggi* (Turin: Einaudi), 194.

particularly captured my imagination, and, yes, made me (us) feel a little less provincial. (I now see much of the American 'provincialism' at play, but that's another story, one that I will not share here).

Private vicissitudes also came into play. The American girlfriend who first brought me to the United States in 1989 (nothing could be more cliché than this story of 'American girl - at a study abroad program - meets Italian boy') lived in Westchester County, New York, attended Sarah Lawrence College, and had broad connections with a New York scene that seemed straight out of a Woody Allen movie. Her mother, a Hungarian aristocrat who had escaped the country in 1956, was now a Philosophy professor at that liberal arts college. Among her neighbors were Paul Newman and Jessica Tandy ("what else?!", my first comment was). In my perception, I could not have been introduced to a more glamorous American world than this one, especially when including my girlfriend's father, renowned photographer Dennis Stock, who lived in Woodstock, and whom I had first known through his iconic portraits of James Dean and Audrey Hepburn. Later in life, when residing in much more rural and less cosmopolitan areas of the country, I used to quip with my friends that the American side of my life could only have gone downward from those early days.

But next it was Southeast Ohio. In the end, I chose the program that also 'chose me' (with the best offer, among others, of a teaching assistantship and tuition waiver, without which I could not have afforded the program): it was Ohio University, in the little town of Athens. Aside from the generous offer, I went there mainly because the 'dean' of Cold War Studies, John Lewis Gaddis came highly recommended by Di Nolfo, and by my previous reading of his *Strategies of Containment*.<sup>6</sup> Gaddis had just founded his Contemporary History Institute (CHI). It would be an understatement to say that the training at the CHI was inspiring—'life-changing' would probably be a better way to put it. In that little building that had once been the 'house of entertainment for young men' on campus, we enjoyed not just original themes, but also interdisciplinary methodologies that made the application of History to current problems an actual endeavor. The CHI and OU included other scholars (Alonzo Hamby, Chester Pach, Steven Miner, Alfred Eckes, Patricia Weitsman, Katherine Jellison, Charles Alexander) whose works or teaching styles (e.g. Alexander's unparalleled deadpan humor) also helped me a great deal. As with Di Nolfo before, it was particularly Gaddis's interdisciplinary approach that drew me: the combination of rigorous historical analysis with IR theories, area studies, literature (of all kinds), and even the hard sciences (Chaos Theory), in addition to his lucid yet creative writing style, made our experience enlightening.

Moreover, the CHI vaunted a multicultural environment, as international students made about 30% of its members. The shared experience of students converging in little Athens from places spanning from South Korea to Germany (East and West) also created a multicultural cohort of friends (beyond the CHI as well) who enjoyed dance nights as much as seminar discussions—and who still keep a group correspondence to this day.

The year was 1990-91. At the time in which certain ideals/ideologies seemed to be triumphant (to the point that some claimed we had reached the "end" of more than just a historical phase, as rather the end of the conflict of grand ideas on which we had based many of our assumptions and historical consciousness), most in our generation approached that particular history of the Cold War with a dispassionate gaze at its various schools of thought, in themselves a reflection of that conflict's ideological strife. Perhaps I am speaking for myself only, but I saw many of those, like me, who were born right at the end of the baby-boom years, as holding a rather detached, perhaps too academic interest towards the social dreams or projects of many of those born earlier in that age group. It might not have helped that one of the authors I admired, Vojtech Mastny, soon would claim that the Cold War "inspired an enormous amount of scholarship from the mid-1950s through the early 1990s, most of which is now happily obsolete," [...] "though still worth reading," he added, "to appreciate how drastically perspectives have changed."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> John L. Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Vojtech Mastny, "The New History of Cold War Alliances," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4:2 (2002), 55.

And so I forged on, trying to re-examine and revisit those perspectives as a transatlantic observer of the U.S.-based scholarship, gradually becoming cognizant of certain cultural assumptions that drove those perspectives, whether I attempted to explain the Italian (or French) ways to an American audience, or to reevaluate certain assumptions Europeans had about a U.S. culture or power they claimed to know so well. After all, as I was completing my Italian dissertation (on U.S.-Italian relations in the post-World War II period) and also chose mainly U.S. fields of History at Ohio, I had to make that hard decision to market myself as an Americanist from Italy teaching in America. Choosing a comparative approach was, I thought, my best bet.

Back in Tuscany for one year to complete my dissertation, I made my final resolution. The people I worked with in Italy (Di Nolfo, but also Antonio Varsori, Leopoldo Nuti, and Marta Petricoli) were all congenial and inspiring as always. The institutional environment and the career prospects were a different story. To me, the Italian academic system seemed more and more like it had been designed by Franz Kafka on a bad day. Quite productive, no doubt. But not for me, not with that much red tape, long waiting period, and uncertainty regarding your tenure destinations. It has vastly improved in recent years, and there are certainly more welcoming prospects for the young in institutions like Roma Tre or the University of Padua (to name just the two I know best). So, the two years in the U.S. became seven - turning the Master's into a second Ph.D. (with Gaddis). The 'should I stay or should I go (back)' dilemma was ultimately resolved by my successful application for a post-doctoral fellowship at Yale.

In my three years at Yale, I was allowed to experiment for the first time with a teaching curriculum of mine that included (besides my role as 'substitute' for Gaddis, who had just transitioned to Yale, in his History of the Cold War course while he was at Oxford for a second time) a seminar I entitled "The American Century: Views From Abroad." I am still grateful to the History Department and the International Security Studies Program for letting me thus explore, via pedagogical means, my new areas of interest: cultural relations, Americanization, and anti-Americanism (the works of Akira Iriye, Rob Kroes, Richard Pells, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Federico Romero, and especially, in both style and approach, Richard Kuisel, had further inspired me in that direction).<sup>8</sup> The first edition of that course was in the fall of 2000; the next fall, the seminar's second edition started on September 12. The events of the previous day should have prepared me to see a line of some twenty students outside the classroom waiting for an override. Still, I was a bit befuddled, and perhaps my intimidated demeanor managed to trim that number somehow. Those who remained gave me all the feedback a scholar can dream of when wrestling with methodological or thematic approaches.

When I left Yale to take the job in Arkansas, I enjoyed a very simple advantage of having had my two dissertations already published. The Italian one (*Italy and American Hegemony in the Mediterranean, 1945-1958*),<sup>9</sup> which came out while I was struggling with doctoral comps at Ohio, was unexpectedly announced as a finalist for the Acqui Storia Prize. I had no idea what that was, until Di Nolfo reminded me that his *Fears and Hopes of the Italian People* had won the prize in 1987. That made me a bit too giddy. The prize awarded a handsome amount of liras; the award ceremony is traditionally attended by the Italian President, as well as personalities from academia and showbiz. None of this happened for me. The book remained among the unranked three other runner up-no prize finalists (honestly, I thought that was fair, as this first book seemed to me to be rather rough around the edges).

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<sup>8</sup> Akira Iriye, "Culture and Power: International Relations as Intercultural Relations," *Diplomatic History* 3:2 (April 1979): 115-128; Rob Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen The Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, And Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism As Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany, 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999); Federico Romero, "Americanization and National Identity: The Case of Postwar Italy," in Luciano Tosi (ed.), *Europe, Its Borders and the Others* (Naples: ESI, 2000); Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Alessandro Brogi, *L'Italia e l'egemonia americana nel Mediterraneo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1996).

That first book, however, gave me an opportunity to establish another academic connection. As a now moderate liberal, I was at first irked, then intrigued by Geir Lundestad's "Empire by invitation" thesis,<sup>10</sup> which I put to the test as an interpretive key for the book. Italy turned out to be among the staunchest (and often manipulative) allies of the U.S., in part because the Communist opposition there was so strong. Testing the thesis earned me a short fellowship—in 1992, while just starting on the Italian monograph—at the Nobel Peace Institute, which was directed by Lundestad. Compared to the 'Norwegian dean' of Cold War studies (there I also met his successor in that role, a young Odd Arne Westad), I emphasized a little more the manipulative intent of European allies, next to their sincere need for American protection. This was a two-way flow of influence, though I never went as far as some other authors who were (over)stressing the Europeans' power of initiative and their ability to contest or instruct the Americans' leadership.<sup>11</sup>

The invitation thesis to me also revealed the extent to which, especially in a deeply divided country like Italy (between pro-U.S. and pro-Soviet parties), the United States became a foil for internal discourses on society and modernization (a theme I would explore more thoroughly in my third book). Just as important to me, the invitations issued by America's allies also revealed the persistence of intra-European rivalries. So, I adapted the argument to show how the large nations of Western Europe often promoted American hegemony competitively, vying for Washington's special favor, and through such maneuvers hoping to win their struggle for greater rank and leverage *within* Europe. Unexpectedly, the United States found itself able to play on these rivalries to assert its hegemonic role. Always willing to challenge others—and himself—Lundestad was gracious enough to take this mild critique from a youth still finding his way through academia. I would later return to the Nobel institute, this time as a fellow for six months in 2007.

The thesis on competitive invitations also allowed me to hone my craft in comparative analysis. There were several reasons—besides situating myself as a foreign Americanist in America—for cutting my niche in comparative studies. First, as is often the case when one chooses an area or place of study, it was a matter of personal taste and desires. The concentration on France and Italy was simply the result of a combination of the two cultures I knew best: the one of my origins, and that of which I soon became enamored—as I was an early reader of French literature, admirer of French art, listener of French music, and watcher of French films, from lighthearted Louis de Funès to the *Nouvelle Vague* artists. And so, I wanted to spend as much time in Paris as I could, from my Ohio or Arkansas bases in the U.S.

From a more methodological standpoint, I wanted to depart from a diplomatic history that hemmed the narrative into national silos or bilateral relationships. Very few scholars who preceded me had conducted parallel or intersected studies of Cold War France and Italy, among them Irwin Wall, Marc Lazar, and Chiarella Esposito<sup>12</sup>; and within broader contexts, also Charles Maier, David Ellwood, and Federico Romero—and, more recently, Victoria De Grazia and Martin Conway.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The earliest version of this thesis is in Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952," *Journal of Peace Research* 23:3 (September 1986): 263-277.

<sup>11</sup> For a historiographical account, in which my take on these issues was compared to authors such as Michael Creswell, Marc Trachtenberg, and William Hitchcock, who were advancing that "European initiative" argument, see Irwin Wall, "France in the Cold War," *Journal of European Studies* 38:2 (June 2008): 101-120.

<sup>12</sup> Marc Lazar, *Maisons rouges: Les partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours* (Paris: Aubier, 1992); Chiarella Esposito, *America's Feeble Weapon: Funding the Marshall Plan in France and Italy, 1948-1950* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994); Irwin Wall drew frequent comparisons with Italy in his books on France and communism, finally drawing a comparative analysis in "L'amministrazione Carter e l'eurocomunismo," *Ricerche di Storia Politica* 9:2 (August 2006): 181-196.

<sup>13</sup> Charles S. Maier, "The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy after World War II," *International Organization* 31:4 (Autumn 1977): 607-633; David W. Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe: The U.S. and the Reconstruction of Western Europe* (New York: Longman, 1992); Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1993); Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century*

The younger ones studying Cold War France and Italy jointly have been based in either France (for example, Frédéric Heurtebize),<sup>14</sup> or Italy (such as Valentine Lomellini, Bruna Bagnato, Andrea Scionti).<sup>15</sup> It was not just the internal similarities of these two countries that drew my attention. Perhaps more than the parallel paths and the analogies drawn by previous studies, I realized from the start of my research that a comparative analysis could show developments and characteristics in the U.S. relations with the two countries that tended to remain hidden or ignored in separate treatments of U.S. bilateral relations with either one of them. Furthermore, the comparison can be revealing of broader trends within the European context. That is how even the best-known events in these countries' Cold War politics can be reassessed under the critical lenses of analogies and contrasts, and even in the triangulation of their multinational and transnational elements. That triangulation, for example, was quite revealing of how U.S. and Western policies in the Middle East evolved during the 1950s, showing a transatlantic framework that affected both decolonization and the emerging continental integration in Europe.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, from the angle of these competitive invitations, I saw more clearly the interplay of transnational contexts and national identities. Issues of collective security and ideological cohesion favored the invitation; but, as Europe became thus integrated within an Atlantic framework, each nation also reasserted - and in some cases, reinvented within a general context that also restored a sense of 'Europeanness' (often vis-à-vis the U.S.) —its national identity and culture. The pursuit of status, or prestige, constituted the underlying theme of my second book,<sup>17</sup> in which I dealt with all these elements of national identity, intra-European rivalries, and 'negotiated' roles within continental integration and transatlantic framework. My take was that especially for two nations, Italy and France, who had suffered drastic declines in power, issues of substance and appearance were inextricably linked. From that angle, I also found how the U.S. became cognizant that this connection could foster its own hegemonic role. The interconnection of rank and role issues also became integral part of the way in which the two nations managed continental integration and the growing global interdependence. Other scholars before or after me have considerably reevaluated the role of emotions in international relations.<sup>18</sup> Seeing how a mixture of emotions and realism shaped Italy's and France's politics of international status was my way of contextualizing emotions within traditional diplomatic interactions rather than juxtaposing or contrasting them to that diplomatic dialogue.

This also informed my fourth reason for choosing a comparative approach. Like others who focus on transnational trends, my aim was to combine elements of diplomatic history, political history, and cultural history, refracting all three through a transnational lens. In that I was not unique, and perhaps the claim to originality I could make was in drawing some fine distinctions regarding which of those elements takes priority. So I have still dealt with diplomatic history as the arena of

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*Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2006); Martin Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945—1968* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020)

<sup>14</sup> Frédéric Heurtebize, *Le péril rouge. Washington face à l'eurocommunisme* (Paris: PUF, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> See for ex. Valentine Lomellini "Reassessing the Communist utopia? Eurocommunists at the mirror of 'developed socialism'" *History of Communism in Europe* 2 (2011): 29-50; Bruna Bagnato, *L'Italia e la guerra d'Algeria (1954-1962)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2012) Andrea Scionti, "I Am Afraid Americans Cannot Understand": The Congress for Cultural Freedom in France and Italy, 1950–1957," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 22:1 (Winter 2020), 89-124.

<sup>16</sup> Brogi, "Competing Missions: France, Italy, and the Rise of American Hegemony in the Mediterranean," *Diplomatic History* 30:4 (September 2006), 741-770.

<sup>17</sup> Brogi, *A Question of Self-Esteem: The United States and the Cold War Choices in France and Italy, 1944-1948* (Westport: Praeger, 2002)

<sup>18</sup> For a good survey of this literature see Barbara Keys, "Emotions in Intercultural Relations," in Robert D. Johnson, (ed.), *Asia Pacific in the Age of Globalization* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 212-220. See also Jessica Gienow-Hecht (ed.), *Emotions in American History: An International Assessment* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

power in which the policy makers remain the protagonists, albeit with attention to not just their cultural milieu, but also their individual cultural and intellectual assumptions, along with the ostensible ideological ones.<sup>19</sup> I was from the start informed by the arguments of one of my earliest readings on U.S. cultural diplomacy, by Frank Ninkovich, who noted that it was not so much that culture became politicized in the early Cold War, but rather that “foreign policy issues began to be framed in idealistic cultural terms.”<sup>20</sup> It may seem a quibble, but to me, framing decision-making this way did not decentralize the importance of leadership and power; in fact, it made its actions more understandable than they would be by simply assuming that leaders “politicized” culture. And I thought this could be applied to the foreign policies of other states, not just of the United States, and beyond the early Cold War era. This was not a way to remain state-centric. In the debate between stressing the weight of “international society” versus that of the “policy makers” (thus restoring the importance of traditional Political History),<sup>21</sup> I tried to strike a middle path by giving equal weight to both.

There was an additional reason that led me to draw parallel (or intersected) studies on France and Italy, perhaps one which stemmed from a bit of national *amour-propre*. Within a comparison that drew from political and cultural aspects beyond mere power relations, I wanted simply to restore Italy’s role in transatlantic relations. I knew from colleagues in Italy, and from my first experience in writing on Italy in the Cold War, how frustrating it was to attempt that task, when one focuses solely on the strictly diplomatic aspects of Italy’s Cold War. As with other (younger) Italian historians,<sup>22</sup> my broader political-cultural approach has shed some light on otherwise neglected aspects of the Cold War, in which minor power actors like Italy could still generate some mighty transnational forces, be they the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its intellectual affiliates, or the entrepreneurial (and politicized) oil state agency (ENI), or European federalist proponents (from Alcide De Gasperi to Altiero Spinelli)—or the Vatican.

So, I kept combining transnational contexts with a particular attention to internal vicissitudes, distinctiveness, prerogatives, and in general, matters of identity. To me, the transnational features are as important to reveal cross-cultural fertilizations as they are relevant to highlight the efforts—at various levels of power, and of intellectual or popular debate—to coalesce a

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<sup>19</sup> A relatively short account in which I dealt with the intersection of cultural assumptions (including gender aspects) and ideology is Brogi, “Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce and the Evolution of Psychological Warfare in Italy,” *Cold War History* 12:2 (May 2012), 269-294.

<sup>20</sup> Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 67.

<sup>21</sup> Erez Manela, “International Society as a Historical Subject,” *Diplomatic History* 44:2 (April 2020): 184-209; Fredrik Logevall and Kenneth Osgood, “Why Did We Stop Teaching Political History?,” *The New York Times*, 29 August 2016.

<sup>22</sup> The scholarship of the past two decades on U.S.-Italian ‘transnational’ relations in the Cold War is rich, so I am only indicating what I read lately, without any particular order: Paolo Acanfora, *Miti e Ideologia nella politica estera DC* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013); Massimo Teodori, *Maledetti americani. Destra, sinistra e cattolici: storia del pregiudizio antiamericano* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002); Ilaria Tremolada, *La via italiana al petrolio: l’ENI di Enrico Mattei in Iran, 1951-1958* (Milan: Ornitorinco, 2011). See also sources cited in note 15 above. Cf. from the U.S., Roy Domenico, “For the Cause of Christ Here in Italy’: America’s Protestant Challenge in Italy and the Cultural Ambiguity of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 29:4 (September 2005), 625-654. I should also mention a book that first invited reflections in Italy on the troubled confrontation of the PCI with U.S. mass culture: Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000). See also Kaeten Mistry, *The United States, Italy and the Origins of Cold War: Waging Political Warfare, 1945-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a survey of recent literature see Mario Del Pero and Federico Romero, “The United States, Italy and the Cold War: Interpreting and Periodising a Contradictory and Complicated Relationship,” in Antonio Varsori and Benedetto Zaccaria eds., *Italy and the International System from Détente to the end of the Cold War: The Underrated Ally* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 15-33.



nation's 'imagined community.' From here came *Confronting America*, where identity and ideology were shown through their interconnections.<sup>23</sup>

This third work, I was told, defied categorization (and somehow won a prize from the Southern Historical Association). That was in part my goal: like my previous studies, but even more so, the book is neither diplomatic nor transnational history per se, but a combination of both. I will not elaborate here on its arguments, as the book has already been amply discussed in an H-Diplo roundtable.<sup>24</sup> I will just point out that for me this was also a way to revisit certain assumptions on ideology (from my own youth as well) and on the global impact of America's own currents of dissent, or pluralism (going back to how Cesare Pavese described it). Secondly, I wanted to draw public attention to the level of sophistication of all involved—the Italian and French Communist parties, some of their rivals on the right or center, but also official and non-official channels from the United States.

Likewise, from my base in Arkansas, I am now exploring one of its prominent international voices, Senator William Fulbright, and his impact on transatlantic relations.<sup>25</sup> Again, it is through the prism of America's dissenters in the Cold War that I hope to make sense of this theme as well: the diplomatic and intellectual transatlantic dialogue on liberal internationalism.

Personally, too, in almost twenty years in Arkansas now, I keep searching (and finding) diversity over consensus. Right off the bat, for a humanist like me, it was a relief to see that even in the 'Bible Belt' I could find (in this fine college town of Fayetteville) an established organization of freethinkers. Here, I even found a venue for one of my passionate hobbies: Argentine tango. And, lo and behold, the University of Arkansas has a study abroad program based in Rome, in the majestic Palazzo Taverna, near Piazza Navona—luring me to do some back and forth again.

My 'scholar's craft,' too, owes something to Arkansas. As all of the contributors to this series have shown, it is always a work in progress, assisted by a congenial environment. I will never attain the level of craftsmanship in narrative history of my colleagues here Elliot West, Daniel Sutherland, or Evan Bukey; nor can I master the art of biography like fellow internationalist Randall Woods does. But I can certainly learn something from them. And because we also keep learning in the classroom, I am constantly reminded that mentorship should come along with modesty as well, when faced with some brilliant students who are filled with youthful enthusiasm.

When I think of the paths taken or where I might go next—and, like many immigrants, with growing nostalgia for the Old Country—it's like re-reading one of my favorite quips by Kurt Vonnegut: "History is merely a list of surprises," he wrote, "It can only prepare us to be surprised yet again." So, as he recommends, I "write that down."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2011).

<sup>24</sup> H-Diplo Roundtable XIII-16 (2012), <https://hdiplo.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIII-16.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Some of my arguments are inspired by a collection of essays I co-edited: Alessandro Brogi, Giles Scott-Smith, David J. Snyder, eds., *The Legacy of J. William Fulbright: Policy, Power, and Ideology* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slapstick or Lonesome No More!: A Novel* (New York: Random House, 2010), 255.

Internationalism, and Europe.” He has so far visited at least half of the countries on the priority list of one hundred he drafted when he was a teenager.