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The Rise of Global and Transnational History

Abstract: *This chapter outlines the "historiographic revolution" since the 1990s, with a focus on the rise of global history and transnational history. Prior to the late 1980s and the early 1990s, historical writings had been presented primarily in the framework of nations or regions: American history, European history, and the like. During the last 20 years or so, a more global approach has become influential, along with a stress on transnational actors (e.g. races, non-state organizations) and themes (e.g. migrations, human rights). I pay particular attention to international history, traditionally conceptualized as a study of interrelationships among states, which has been increasingly put in the context of, or in juxtaposition with, transnational history.*

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There has been a sea change in the way historians understand, teach, and write history during the last 25 years or so. This may be more a personal observation of a historian who has been reading and writing on subjects and themes in modern history, focusing on international affairs, than a widely applicable generalization. But all historians, like scholars of other disciplines, have an obligation to relate their work to that of those who have preceded them and to locate themselves in the past, present, and possible future of their fields. As someone who has been studying history since the 1950s, I feel I have personally witnessed and been involved in some of the historiographic changes during the last six decades.

The recent historiographic transformation is evident in the frequency with which words like "global" and "transnational" have come to be used as part of titles of books and articles. Prior to the 1990s, few historical publications, if any, had made use of such adjectives, whereas they have since become common place. Such a phenomenon seems to reflect a significant new development in the way in which historians conceptualize and seek to understand the past, especially in the modern period.

Modern history till recently used to be studied in terms of the nation-state as the key framework of analysis. The scholarly discipline of history, after all, began in nineteenth-century Europe, when the nation-state emerged as the key unit of human activities, political, economic, social, and at times even cultural. History was a study of how a nation emerged and developed. Political, constitutional, and legal issues were examined in close detail, but at the same time, people's lives, activities, and dreams were considered a vital part of the national past for, as Hegel asserted, there was no such thing as history apart from national consciousness. Such an approach to history spread to countries and people outside the West as they, too, developed as modern states and engaged in nation-building tasks.

As an undergraduate (at Haverford College, Pennsylvania), I concentrated on British history, studying in close detail the constitutional developments under the Tudors and Stuarts and writing a senior thesis on the Anglican clergy in eighteenth-century England. In retrospect this was essential training for a would-be historian. I learned such basics as the reading of primary sources, the review of the scholarly literature, and the writing of a monograph that might potentially be considered for publication. Above all, my principal teacher (Wallace MacCaffrey) taught me and my fellow students that the study of British (or, by extension, any country's) history was an open book regardless of one's personal

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background. There were methodologies and generalizations available to all students and applicable to all countries. This was particularly encouraging advice to a foreign student like me, whose command of the English language was less than satisfactory. Having thus been initiated into the world of history study, I went on to graduate school, at Harvard University, where I was trained to become a professional historian. My field of specialization switched from British history to US history as well as to modern Chinese history, but there was no significant change in methodology or approach in the transition. History, in particular modern history that my fellow graduate students and I studied, still consisted of national histories. In each national history, themes like political unification, constitutional and legal developments, economic modernization, and cultural pursuits (including religion, education, and popular entertainment) were subjects of research, writing, and teaching, all pointing to the emergence of the nation as it came to exist at a given moment in time as well as to its subsequent development. Such a perspective may be termed nation-centrism, or the nation-centered understanding of modern history. Inevitably, the nation-centered historical study tended to accentuate the uniqueness of each country's experiences, ideas, and institutions. A country's past was a precious heritage passed on from generation to generation and constituted the shared memory of all its citizens. The historian's task in such a context, we learned, appeared to consist of exploring that heritage in all its nuances and then to pass it on to readers. "Exceptionalism" was thus a tendency that frequently characterized the way any nation's past was studied and understood.

Of course, as would-be scholars of history, we learned that a rich historiographic tradition existed so that one generation of historians would not just repeat what their predecessors had accomplished. A professional historian's task was to make an "original contribution" to the scholarly literature, such as adding new data, a fresh methodology, or even a controversial perspective on a country's past.

For those of our generation who were trained as historians during the 1950s and the early 1960s, several fascinating shifts would occur in the study of the past, albeit still within the larger framework of national history. In the case of Chinese history, for instance, for a long time the country's "response" (or lack of response) to the West was a standard framework for understanding its modern experience, but then some scholars began to emphasize China's indigenous ideas and institutions that had prepared it for its modern nationhood. The focus on the nation

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as the unit of analysis remained, however. In US history, political developments interested most professional historians till the 1960s when a "social turn" emerged, with scholars emphasizing the need to pay closer attention than in the past to women, racial minorities, and others who had not been the primary actors in the political drama. Social historians were eager to bring these outsiders into their study of the American past. Women's history, African-American history, ethnic history, and the like were among the most interesting subfields of history in the last decades of the twentieth century. Rather than focusing on the "establishment," the new turn sought to incorporate the disenfranchised, the minorities, and the marginalized as authentic actors in the reconceptualized history of the American nation. This was still nation-centered history, but with a greater emphasis on the country's social groups and local scenes than on national politics. But the "social turn," if anything, accentuated the exceptionalist interpretation of the nation's past. For, to the extent that social history encouraged scholars and students to examine the nation's history "from the bottom up," as it was said, minute details and local developments came to claim their attention as much as, or even more than, broader themes and larger questions. The attention paid to local history was an important corrective to nation-centered generalizations, but it could also keep the historian's attention narrowly focused. If the larger national picture was sometimes lost sight of, even more so were other countries, not to mention the whole world. Without some examination and knowledge of concurrent developments elsewhere, it was easy to dwell on the local scene and emphasize its uniqueness. Cultural studies that gained influence simultaneously with social history may have accentuated this tendency through its emphasis on the text, i.e. the authenticity of the spoken or written word grounded on each individual circumstance. It was very difficult to generalize about written texts or works of art because circumstances of their creation were all different. At the same time, the "cultural turn" often implied a shift away from the study of elites (in the history of art, of literature, of music, and the like) toward a concern with mass consumption and popular culture. These phenomena, too, were seen as unique, both to the local scene and to the nation at large, reflective of national habits of mind, or "mentalities."

Needless to say, neither in their research nor in teaching, could historians just deal with one country and entirely ignore other countries or the wider world. A small number of scholars compared such phenomena as feudalism and nationalism across national boundaries. This was what

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came to be called comparative history. However, unlike comparative literature that grew in a very short period of time (mostly in the second half of the twentieth century) into a major field, often with its own separate department, comparative history was not practiced widely and often consisted of scholars of different nations' histories comparing their notes, so that their nation-centrism remained. It was primarily in the framework of a country's foreign relations, or diplomatic history, a genre that had its venerable beginning in the nineteenth century and persisted through most decades of the twentieth, that historians were obliged to familiarize themselves at least with the decision-making processes of a plurality of sovereign states. This was a field of history that examined how nations dealt with one another through diplomacy, trade, and at times through military conflict. Foreign policy was the key framework of study; each nation had its own definition of national interest, which it sought to maximize by utilizing all means, through peaceful diplomacy if possible but through military force if necessary. Since no pair of nations shared identical interests, there was always a potential conflict between them, which they sought to reconcile through treaties and agreements. When they failed to do so, war could result, and when it ended, the new circumstance compelled the belligerent nations to redefine their interests, sometimes leading to the establishment of a postwar arrangement. The process would go on ad infinitum so long as there existed separate nations.

Diplomatic history, the field in which I wrote my dissertation, required that the historian develop some knowledge of the countries whose mutual relations were being examined. That would include multiarchival research and an intimate knowledge of decision-makers in the countries involved. (In my own case, the dissertation dealt with international affairs in the Asia-Pacific region during the 1920s. Subsequently published as a book, *After Imperialism*, this was essentially a traditional monograph in which interstate policies were examined on the basis of published and personal documents of decision-makers in several countries.[1]) The "social turn" in the 1960s and the subsequent decades served to broaden the scope of inquiry, and diplomatic historians began exploring wider circles of people as they affected the decision-making processes: public opinion, party politics, interest groups, and the like. The "cultural turn" encouraged the study of popular images and perceptions: how people looked at other nations, what they thought their country stood for, or how they defined the national interest. Even in such situations, however,

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the nation remained the key unit of analysis. In the case of US diplomatic history, the framework was American foreign relations, whether "American" meant the decision-makers, public opinion, or both. (It may also be noted that most studies of US foreign relations remained monoarchival, based entirely on English-language sources. Even books and articles on Cold War history tended to be written without reference to Russian, not to mention Chinese and other language material.)

Diplomatic history, or the history of foreign affairs, increasingly came to be called "international history" during the 1970s. *The International History Review*, established in 1979, became a major organ of the field, together with *Diplomatic History*, launched by the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) in 1977. While the founding editors of this latter journal chose to call it "diplomatic history," the articles it published frequently discarded this traditional phrase for others, including "international history." (This was a term familiar to British scholars and students, but in the United States and other countries "history of international relations" was more common.) "American foreign relations" probably remained the most widely used expression in college courses dealing with the subject, notably in the United States, and "international history" may initially have meant no more than a sum of the foreign relations of all countries, or at least of the major powers. (I, too, changed the title of the principal courses I taught from "foreign relations" to "international history" in the mid-1980s.) At least, the increasing popularity of "international" as against "diplomatic" history suggested that scholars were becoming interested in going beyond examining how nations devised their policies and strategies toward one another and in conceptualizing some sort of a world order in which they pursued their respected interests.

The field of international history, nevertheless, was still focused on the nation as the key unit of analysis. In terms of the larger world, the "great powers" almost always took center stage. This can best be seen in the fact that major diplomatic and military events continued to determine the chronology of international history. It was virtually universally accepted that the world went from the Napoleonic wars and the consequent "Vienna system" (the European order that was established at the Congress of Vienna in 1815) to the First World War and the "Versailles system," defined by the victorious powers at the Paris Peace Conference, and from there to the Second World War (usually characterized as the breakdown of the Versailles system, although the Asian part of the global

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conflict entailed the collapse of the "Washington system" that had defined regional affairs during the 1920s). But, as virtually every historian noted, the Second World War somehow led to the US–USSR Cold War, a condition of "neither peace nor war" and maintained by a system of "bipolarity." This was a chronology defined by interrelations among the great Western powers in which small nations of Europe and virtually all countries and people in other parts of the globe counted for little. William Keylor's *The Twentieth-Century World* (1983), a widely used and very helpful survey, followed such a sequence of events, as did Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), arguably the best study in the genre of international history published before the 1990s.[2] The book offered a systematic analysis of the ways in which the major powers had risen and fallen since the sixteenth century, a history that traced the emergence and eventual decline of the Austrian empire, the Dutch empire, France, Britain, and Germany, until the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two superpowers to determine the fate of the world. Kennedy might have discussed the possibility of the eventual decline, if not the demise, of the Soviet Union, but in the 1980s such a prediction would have seemed premature. In any event, the author concluded by speculating on what great powers in the future might come to challenge the United States: China, Japan, a united Europe, or some other country? The book caught the attention not only of historians but of the public at large, especially those in the United States who were keenly concerned about the their country's future position in the world. In examining international history through an analysis of the relative military and economic strengths of the great powers, the book typified the nation-centric approach to international history that prevailed at that time.

The study of imperialism that flourished from the 1960s through the 1980s may also be fitted into this general historiographic phenomenon. William Langer's *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* (1935) was probably the best example of diplomatic history writing before the Second World War.[3] As a multiarchival, extensive study of the imperialistic rivalries from the 1880s through the First World War, it had no equal. And its scope was global, covering Africa, the Middle-East, Asia and the Pacific—but curiously not Latin America. Nevertheless, as the title of the book indicated, Langer was primarily interested in following the ways in which the great powers of the West, which were by definition empires with extended colonies all over the world, vied with each other for greater weight in world politics. This was geopolitics on a grand scale.

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One studied imperialism as an extreme form of national history as each country struggled for regional or even global hegemony. (Recall A. J. P. Taylor's masterpiece in the old genre: *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* published in 1954).[4] Even when historians paid attention to domestic political and social forces that supported, or opposed, imperialism, as Walter LaFeber and Ernest May, among others, did in their studies of the US emergence as a colonial power after the Spanish–American War, their focus was nation-centric.[5] While there is little doubt that influential monographs by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, notably *Africa and the Victorians* (1961), as well as those by others who followed in their wake, helped broaden our understanding of the origins of modern European imperialism, we should note that they did not alter the basic focus on decision-makers and their presentation of data in the framework of geopolitical struggles for power.[6]

When such a nation-centric and the overwhelmingly geopolitical character of the scholarly literature in international history began to change is difficult to determine precisely. But it seems clear that by the 1970s, more and more historians were coming to view international relations not simply in diplomatic and political terms but also in the context of economic, social, and, of particular importance, cultural developments. In 1978, I felt comfortable enough to speak, as SHAFR's outgoing president, of "international relations as intercultural relations."[7] The idea that nations were both political entities and cultural communities and so interact with one another at these two levels did not seem so quaint by that time. In the late 1960s I had published *Across the Pacific*, tracing changes and continuities in the mutual images that Americans, Chinese, and Japanese had held of one another since their initial encounter (both actual and virtual) in the nineteenth century.[8] I further elaborated on the "cultural approach" to international history in *Pacific Estrangement* (1972) and in a number of essays written in the 1970s, and in 1981 I published *Power and Culture*, a study of the Pacific War (1941–1945).[9] By the dichotomous title I tried to convey the sense that the key Pacific rivals, Japan and the United States, dealt with one another during the war at two levels, geopolitical and cultural, and argued that these two levels were not always congruent. Cultural relations, it seemed to me, often developed with their own momentum, not just as an appendix to power-level rivalries. The book was still nation-centric, but such a dual perspective on international history may have had the potential to develop into a less geopolitically oriented study of international relations.

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When a more openly transnational approach to the study of international history emerged is difficult to say, but it seems that some time during the 1980s the word "transnational" began to be used by a small number of historians. To cite a personal example, I used the adjective twice in my presidential address at the 1988 meeting of the American Historical Association.[10] Entitled "The Internationalization of History," the presentation reiterated the importance of the cultural dimension of international relations, but this was by then nothing new. What is interesting in retrospect is that I seem to have used the adjective "transnational" rather un-self-consciously. If I had been actually trying to promote a novel, transnational way of studying the past, I would have entitled the talk "the transnationalization of history." But I was not aware at that time that there was a big difference between "international" and "transnational." In any event, what I tried to suggest in this presentation was the need to "denationalize" the study of history in order to explore "historical themes and conceptions that are meaningful across national boundaries." I could have said "transnationalize" rather than "denationalize," but at that time I must not have come across such an expression. I did mention several examples like "human beings' relationship to nature, the definitions of beauty and truth, social justice, freedom against power, and the struggle to preserve memory" as worthy subjects for historical inquiry. Above all, I argued that all history was "human history" and that historians must explore the existence of a "world cultural outlook" at a given moment in time.

Such ideas, expressed in vaguely global and transnational terms, seem to indicate that I was taking tentative steps toward global and transnational history but that I was not yet aware how potent a force the new perspectives would prove to be in the last years of the twentieth century, or that there was a sharp contrast between them and not only the traditional national history but also the existing literature in international history. In 1992, I published a book entitled *The Globalizing of America*, and followed it with *China and Japan in the Global Setting* in 1993.[11] The use of terms like "global" and "globalizing" suggests that I was beginning to notice what in retrospect was the growing popularity of such adjectives in journalistic and scholarly circles, but they did not result in any reconceptualization of the past, at least as far as my own work was concerned. The former was a survey of US foreign affairs from Woodrow Wilson to Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the latter a brief history of China–Japan relations from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth

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century. Despite such titles, neither book mentioned, let alone analyzing, the phenomenon that more and more writers were beginning to discuss: globalization. Initially, I did think of calling the US foreign relations survey "Globalization of the United States," but that would have been the only place in the book where the term "globalization" appeared. This was not a study of globalization at all. Besides, my editor told me he was not "comfortable" with the term, perhaps reflecting the still existing gap between historical study and the scholarly trends in economics, anthropology, and other disciplines where globalization had become a subject of scholarly inquiry by the 1980s, if not earlier. A study of history couched in the framework of globalization would have entailed a serious confrontation with global forces that transcended national boundaries. But my work, along with the bulk of studies published by historians in the early 1990s, was still nation-centric, whether the subject be national, imperial, or international history. Despite my call for "denationalization" and for exploration of themes that transcended local boundaries, I was not exactly practicing what I preached.

By then, on the other hand, a handful of historians were already engaged in the study of what they called "global history." They were becoming keenly aware of developments throughout the world that transcended and breached national boundaries, such as communications technology, the growth of multinational enterprises, and population movements. And they believed that traditional nation-centered framework for understanding the past, in particular the recent past and the contemporary world, was no longer helpful in comprehending such phenomena. Global history would have to be the way. Arguably the first systematic exploration of the genre, something akin to a historiographic declaration of independence, was *Conceptualizing Global History* edited by Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens and published in 1993. In the introduction to the volume, which contains essays by eleven scholars, Mazlish pointed to recent global developments and declared, "A new consciousness is needed to help view these developments… A new subfield of history… must be created."[12] That subfield he would propose to call "global history"—or, "new global history," as he would soon come to prefer to name it. He would distinguish global history from world history, a field that had existed for a long time as a subject for teaching and for public edification. In Mazlish's conception, the new global history would focus on cross-national phenomena such as economic globalization, migrations, environmental issues, and human rights, subjects that

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had been treated, if at all, in the context of national histories or else of international relations. But, according to Mazlish and his colleagues, these were truly global developments so that to confine them into national or even international frameworks would be inadequate. Thus from the beginning global history was distinguished from, and posed a challenge to, the nation-centered historiography. The latter continued to provide the bulk of research and writings in the general field of history, but even they increasingly became aware of the new challenge and began to seek ways to meet it, as will be elaborated upon in chapter 3.

The emergence of global history as an alternative to national history had the effect of encouraging a number of historians to delineate "transnational history" as yet another subfield. As noted above, the adjectives "global" and "transnational" had begun to be used by historians by the late 1980s, so that it is not surprising that some began speaking of transnational history as a subcategory of, or a fresh approach to, the study of history. The distinction between global history and transnational history, to be sure, was often tenuous and remains so. In this book, therefore, these two genres are treated interchangeably. However, if they were entirely identical, there would be no need to use two different words where just one should suffice, and so some differences in their objectives and approaches will have to be noted. Most fundamentally, global history and transnational history share two characteristics. First, they both look beyond national boundaries and seek to explore interconnections across borders. Second, they are particularly concerned with issues and phenomena that are of relevance to the whole of humanity, not just to a small number of countries or to one region of the world. They are anxious to confront the conventional wisdom that prioritizes the West and tends to view world history through themes and chronologies that are only, or at least primarily, applicable to Europe and North America. Scholars of global history and transnational history have continued to exemplify these two perspectives on the study of modern and contemporary history.

Why, then, did some historians begin to identify their work as transnational history rather than global history? In part this was because they called for a transnational approach to the study of a nation's past. Some of the pioneers in this regard, such as Ian Tyrrell, Thomas Bender, and Frank Ninkovich were historians of the United States, and they began to argue, already in the 1990s but especially after the turn of the new century, that the nation's history had too often been studied in isolation from the

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rest of the world and that its past could not be fully understood unless its political, economic, social, and cultural developments were examined as an integral part of world history, in particular of humankind's emerging hopes and fears in an increasingly interdependent globe.[13] Because there had been a strongly exceptionalist bent in the traditional study of US history, the writings by these and other scholars had the effect of reminding their readers and students that a transnational approach to the nation's past was the only way to comprehend its legacy. Historians of some other countries likewise began to accept and apply such a perspective to their studies. At this level, therefore, transnational history was akin to a transnational understanding of national history. The nation as the key unit of analysis still remained.

Others, however, were incorporating non-national entities in their studies. Perhaps the best example in the 1990s was Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*, published in 1996.[14] The author was a political scientist and perhaps for this reason was bolder than most historians in asserting that civilizations and not nations were likely to be the principal actors in the coming century. Although Huntington was forecasting the future direction of the world, his emphasis on a non-national entity like a civilization, coming from a prominent scholar of a discipline that had traditionally focused on the nation as the unit of analysis even more consistently than the study of history, made a profound impact on historians as well as on others. The assertion that the coming global conflict was likely to pit Islam and other civilizations against the Christian civilization of the West sounded novel to those who had been accustomed to think of world crises in terms of clashes among powers, not religions. Historians knowledgeable about the Middle-East or Asia, however, were quick to point out that there was much that Christianity and other religions, notably Islam, shared, and that it would be wrong to view the development of civilizations in the framework of the West versus the non-West. They noted, on the contrary, that all regions of the world had developed through their interactions and intermixing so that there was nothing pure and unchanging about Christianity or Western civilization, or for that matter any religion or civilization. One sees here the critique of the traditional West-centric scholarship that grew more vocal during the 1990s and constituted part of the historiographic transformation of the decade.

Civilizations and religions, however, were not the only examples of non-national entities to which historians were increasingly paying attention. There were other identities of people, including races, tribes,

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and ethnic communities that were not interchangeable with nations and had their own agendas. The traditional historiography had treated such groups in the context of national affairs, but now they began to be seen as having their unique histories that were not identical with, or subsumable under, national histories. Indeed, their past could best be understood if they were recognized as transnational existences. In a way the emergence of "whiteness studies" at the turn of the century, unlike "black studies" that had primarily meant "Afro-American studies," suggests that race was beginning to be seen as a subject that should be examined across national boundaries. Noticeable, too, was a renewed interest on the part of scholars to consider racism a transnational phenomenon, viewing the relationship between various races not simply as a national problem. By the turn of the new century, these and other non-national entities were beginning to be seen as equally important components of history as nation-states.

By coincidence, an increasing number of historians were turning their attention to what political scientists and sociologists had identified as non-state actors. Eric Hobsbawm's 1994 publication, *The Age of Extremes*, a survey of "the short twentieth century" (from 1914 to 1991), discussed "transnational firms" or what some called "multinational corporations" as a key aspect of the "increasingly *transnational* economy" that had begun to emerge in the 1960s.[15] It may well be that as a historian trained in Marxist historiography, Hobsbawm had been more aware than most others of worldwide economic phenomena. Indeed, Marxist theory had always stressed the cross-border solidarity of capitalists, workers, and other classes and in that sense been an inspiration to those seeking to get away from the nation-centric framework of historical study. It must be noted, at the same time, that as Marxism turned into Leninism, and Leninism into Maoism, the classical formulation of global linkages had often to compete with, and even been superseded by, nationalistic perspectives. It would be fair to say, then, that while potentially a pioneering conception of transnationalism, Marxism did not directly lead to the transnational historiography of the recent decades.

In any event, multinational enterprises were non-state actors in that they were not interchangeable with any given state but combined the capital, labor, and markets of many countries. They were profit oriented, and in order to increase productivity and market share, they were increasingly "out-sourcing" their products as well as service. "Out-sourcing," sometimes called "off-shore procurement," was a typical

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instance of a globalizing economy. Although multinational enterprises were never completely free of regulations and taxes imposed by states, they functioned with their own agendas and momentums. Even in a government-regulated economy such as China's, they were not identical with the governmental apparatus and so qualified as non-state actors, with greater freedom to work for profit than the majority of the population who were not involved in such enterprises. It is not surprising that, just as historians were beginning to take the phenomenon of globalization seriously as a theme in recent and current history, they were becoming fascinated by the emerging visibility and influence of multinational enterprises as non-state actors.

Likewise, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) began to attract the attention of historians. Political scientists had been studying these institutions since at least the 1970s, but historians had been rather slow to turn their attention to them, especially to international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). To be sure, important historical studies of peace movements, women's rights advocacy, educational exchange programs, and other activities in which private organizations in various countries had played major roles had been published before the 1990s, but most of them were thematic treatments and were not treatises on non-state actors as such. Historians of international relations, in particular, had virtually ignored INGOs. (For that matter, they had not even incorporated intergovernmental organizations—IGO—such as the League of Nations and the United Nations into their work except as arenas in which big-power diplomacy took place.) But the awareness grew that one could never develop a fuller understanding of world affairs so long as one focused on individual states and unless both IGOs and INGOs were brought into the picture. Part of this was because "world affairs" involved such issues as environmentalism, prevention of diseases, human rights, and cultural exchange—all transnational subjects in which NGOs had been seriously interested. To cite a personal example, when I began collecting data in the early 1990s on international educational exchange and related programs for the enhancement of what I called "cultural internationalism," I was struck with the roles played by INGOs whose number and scope of activities seemed to have grown impressively throughout the twentieth century. I eventually published a small book on the subject (*Global Community*)[16]. But I was far from being alone. A growing number of historians were also beginning to pay attention to INGOs in their studies of international affairs.

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Multinational enterprises, non-governmental organizations, religious establishments, and many other institutions are all non-national, non-state entities, and for this reason the term "transnational" may be applied to them. They exist as separate identities from states and nations, and they establish connections with one another across national boundaries. In order to stress that these, along with civilizations, races, and other categories that are not identifiable with separate nations, the examination of their history would deserve the term "transnational history." If global history considers humans as a universal category of being, concerned with the question of what it means to be human, transnational history looks at individuals in various contexts, including nations.

The transnational approach to the study of history, in other words, does not deny the existence of nations and the roles they play in contributing to defining the world at a given moment in time. The intricate interrelationship between nations and transnational existences, between national preoccupations and transnational agendas, or between national interests and transnational concerns is of fundamental importance to the study of transnational history. This may be seen in the relationship between international history and transnational history.

As noted earlier, international history deals with relations among nations as sovereign entities. World affairs are the sum of all such interstate relations, and the globe is envisaged as the arena for the interplay of independent nations. Transnational history, in contrast, focuses on cross-national connections, whether through individuals, non-national identities, and non-state actors, or in terms of objectives shared by people and communities regardless of their nationality. The globe is seen as being made up of these communities that establish connections with one another quite apart from interstate relations. International and transnational phenomena may sometimes overlap, but often they come into conflict. For instance, historians have had trouble understanding why Woodrow Wilson, the leading champion of national self-determination, rejected the idea of global racial equality, as shown when he refused to consider an additional statement in the preamble of the League of Nations charter that would affirm that principle. But we would be able to understand such a seemingly contradictory stance by Wilson if we recognized that he was an internationalist but was never a transnationalist. In other words, his vision of an ideal world was one in which all people aspiring to national independence would be given a chance, but never one in which all races were given the same rights.

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Wilson had an internationalist vision, but he was a nationalist and an anti-transnationalist when it came to conceptualizing a globe in which all races enjoyed equal freedom. History is full of examples of such a disparity between internationalism and transnationalism, a phenomenon one could only comprehend by introducing the idea of a transnationally defined world, as against a nation-based international order.

On the other hand, international and transnational affairs can, and have sometimes come together. Educational and cultural exchange programs may offer a good example. In most cases, initiatives for promoting understanding by bringing individuals, works of art, or theater groups into contact across borders come from private sources, such as educational institutions, museums, and foundations, but official agencies, too, frequently become involved, as do intergovernmental organizations. As I tried to document in *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (1997), there was a vigorous engagement with cultural, as against political, internationalism since the late nineteenth century, and a large number of national as well as international organizations, both public and private, played their roles.[17] In such instances, it is impossible to distinguish international and transnational agendas. (I might have entitled the book "cultural transnationalism and international order," which might have better described the coincidence of transnational and international endeavors in the field of cultural exchange.) Likewise, the environmental movement can be both international and transnational. A world conference on the environment may be attended by representatives of both governments and of non-governmental organizations. A history of environmentalism, then, would have to be understood both in international and transnational frameworks. These two frameworks would be difficult to separate, but it would be wrong to merge them into one, for that would make it easy to obscure the important roles played by numerous NGOs and private individuals who dedicate themselves to the cause. In other words, international history has its own chronology, and transnational history another. An event such as the UN-sponsored conference on the natural environment convened in Helsinki in 1972 may have been a minor footnote to the geopolitical story of the Cold War, but in transnational history, it was a landmark, a defining moment in the history of environmentalism. In the chronicle of international history, moreover, the year 1972 may best be remembered as a major turning point in US relations with the People's Republic of China, as seen in President Richard Nixon's trip to Shanghai in February. In the history of

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the Cold War, the same year may also be seen as marking a significant phase in the reduction of tensions, the year when Nixon met with the Soviet leaders for limiting the two countries' nuclear arsenals. The transnational significance of the Helsinki conference on the environment was of a different character and cannot be submerged under the story of the Cold War. An interesting question would be to explore the connections between these two sets of historic events, one international and the other transnational. What impact did the US–PRC rapprochement or the US–USSR détente have on the natural environment and the environmental movement? Conversely, can it be said that the transnational momentum as exemplified by the Helsinki meeting made an impact on geopolitical developments? The latter interpretation would be possible if we note that environmental questions have remained serious for all nations and have compelled the "powers" to seek to find areas of cooperation and accommodation even as they may pursue their respective geopolitical agendas. Through some such inquiries and observations, we should be able to amplify our understanding of the past and go beyond standard accounts of historical developments.

A crucial contribution of transnational history, then, would be to enrich our understanding of both national history and international history. Global history, of course, serves the same purpose, so that together the global and transnational perspectives challenge the existing historiography. It is in this sense that we may speak of a major historiographic transformation since the 1990s.

Notes

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