

Academic Culture and International Relations – A Transatlantic Perspective

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While research on transatlantic history and the transfer of culture and ideas often focuses on the middle of the 20th century, the international conference „Academic Culture and International Relations – A Transatlantic Perspective“ sought to extend this focus by looking both back into the early 20th century and beyond the 1960s.¹ Held at the Munich Center for Advanced Studies the conference explored the interplay of academic culture and international relations centering on three main dimensions: academic and cultural exchange as well as diplomacy, and the accumulation of social, cultural, and academic capital.

That official national interests and internationalism are by no means incompatible results of academic exchanges is common knowledge. However, the conference participants – in highly complementary papers – analyzed how the process of negotiation between on the one hand promoting national ideals and on the other hand contributing to mutual understanding and maintaining academic integrity actually played out.

Beginning chronologically, CHARLOTTE LERG (Munich) analyzed the activities of the Harvard Cosmopolitan Club – a social club founded in 1807/1808 – before World War I arguing that its performance of international politics on campus both served as „pseudo-diplomatic stages“ for national interest, cultural diplomacy and national identity, and provided an opportunity for the university to attain international reputation and relevance. In contrast to the „provincial national fairs“ of national clubs such as the flourishing *German Club (Deutscher Verein)* at Harvard, the Cosmopolitan Club and its emphasis on a – purposefully constructed – international atmosphere could be used as diplomatic meetings. In turn, this air of internationalism made the performance of national specialty all the

more effective as Lerg aptly demonstrated by an analysis of the Club’s Cosmopolitan Dinner in 1909. For example, the speech given by two time exchange German professor Eugen Kühnemann – titled „Germanism and Cosmopolitanism“ headed by the motto „Was ist das deutsche Vaterland – Soweit die deutsche Zunge klingt“ („What is the German Fatherland? As far as the Language Sounds“) – focused more on national identity rather than on international universalism.

Following Lerg’s argument that universities could (and can) serve as ideal locations for staging internationalism and cultural diplomacy on campus and beyond precisely because they are viewed as neutral, apolitical and transnational spaces, MOLLY SISSON (Leeds) further argued that this alleged tension was also released since academic integrity was mostly considered as increasing student’s credibility as ambassadors. Analyzing the Fulbright Exchange Programs in Germany and the role of student exchange in public diplomacy efforts in the post-war era, Sisson, from the point of communication sciences, maintained that especially in times of crises the Fulbright Program has been strategically applied to international relations using students as viable tools of US-American diplomacy. Yet, not only is the measurement of the impact of such programs on diplomacy difficult, but – as Sisson indicated in her title – students might also be „ambassadors unaware“.

In a similar vein, WHITNEY WALTON (Lafayette, IN) addressed policymaker’s and student’s attitudes towards US-French academic exchange programs. Walton concluded that students, teachers and scholars on both sides of the Atlantic – while mostly ignoring their respective government’s concerns and strictly separating academic integrity and propaganda – unintentionally fulfilled these state objectives serving as „cultural ambas-

¹ The issue of academic exchange and internationalism has only recently been taken up by scholars, see e.g. Belinda Davis i.a. (eds.), *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s*, New York 2010; Richard Garlitz/Lisa Jarvinen (eds.), *Teaching America to the World and the World to America: Education and Foreign Relations since 1870*, New York forthcoming August 2012.

sadors“ in the course of improved understandings between the outbreak of World War I until the Cold War era.

Moreover, as THOMÁS IRISH (Dublin) confirmed – whether or not intentional – the same can be discerned during World War I concerning academic exchanges between France, Britain and the United States. As Irish concluded especially exchange professors served as active „pseudo-diplomatic agents“ and inter-allied university relations became a key element in allied warfare. Following official French policy French academics were sent abroad to act as „informal diplomats“ disseminating propaganda on behalf of France in an attempt to win over elite opinion. Thus, while Germany was subject to academic boycott between 1914 and 1925, the reciprocal academic relationship between these allies intensified. Ultimately, this strong cultural Franco-British-American alliance found its expression, for instance, in the establishment of new Chairs at universities such as Harvard to facilitate exchange and enhance student mobility. As Irish noted, until 1925 this led to a removal of German universities from the position of international eminence which they had held before the war.

This reorientation of international academic relations was significant, yet temporal. The post-war era, as KONRAD JARAUSCH (Chapel Hill, NC) pointed out in his key note address on the „German-American Dialogue about *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*“, witnessed the „slow emergence of a transatlantic discursive space“ – as exemplified by the re-foundation of the *German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst)*, the largest German national agency supporting international academic relations and co-operation, in 1950.² However, as the degree of communication across the Atlantic gradually developed – across academic individuals and communities at large – the intellectual debates such as the so-called Fischer controversy in the 1960s or the *Historikertreit* in the late 1980s also led to tensions in the transatlantic co-operations. However, in the long run, as Jarausch emphasized, these helped strengthening the transatlantic connections.

The significance of such transnational

contacts was also highlighted in PHILLIP STELZEL's (Durham, NC) analysis of the various ways in which West German historians in the post-war era enlisted but also rejected US-American colleagues for their own historiographical enterprises. The internationalization of the disciplines offered these „transatlantic spaces“ for West German historians such as Fritz Fischer and Gerhard Ritter to capitalize on their transatlantic contacts viewing US-American historians both as colleagues of shared interests as well as useful allies. As Stelzel pointed out, particularly in times of historiographical debates like the Fischer controversy US-American historians became „court of appeals“ for German historians.

Accordingly, STEPHAN PETZOLD (Leeds) argued that Fritz Fischer's transnational encounters encouraged Fischer to on the one hand further develop his already existing critical attitude toward the German conception of history and his appreciation of Western humanist tradition, and on the other hand establish a transnational network which provided to Fischer a form of social and scientific capital. In this process, Fischer's US-American and British colleagues became his main reference points for his rethinking of German history. While nearly isolated in the German academic community during the controversy, Fischer's foreign colleagues encouraged and supported his work.

A similar interplay between political and diplomatic sciences as well as mutual exchanges and learning can be discerned in Italian-US academic relations as ANDREA MARIUZZO's (Ithaca, NY) reconstruction of the career of Italian political scientist Mario Einaudi illustrated. Mariuzzo argued that Einaudi developed a specific „Atlantic cultural identity“ which shaped his academic, social and cultural perspective when acting as intellectual in international political debates. Immigrated to the United States in 1933 because of his anti-fascism, Einaudi was considered an expert of European policies by government institutions as his involvement in the elaboration of American war policy in Italy and continental Europe by the *Council*

² The organization was founded on January 1, 1925 but closed down in 1945.

of *Foreign Relations* and the *Department of State* during World War II illustrates. Moreover, Einaudi strongly contributed to the development of a critical political science theory of foreign policies in Cold-War America and committed his career to the establishment of academic exchange programs between the US and Italy and to the attempt „to explain Europe to Americans“ (as his obituary published in the *New York Times* stated) and vice versa.³

Thus, German and Italian academic exchanges with the United States highlight the reciprocity of social thought and intellectual debates influencing both sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, besides multidirectional academic exchanges, KENNETH BERTRAMS (Bruxelles) pointed to the „domestication“ and adoption of US-American patterns in Belgium between 1919 and 1970. Addressing the political motivations behind the organization and the circulation of academic knowledge, Bertram argued that since its inception the *Belgian American Educational Foundation* (BAEF) – founded in 1919 as an offspring of the *Committee for Relief* in Belgium launched and directed by Herbert Hoover and the local counterpart *National Committee for Relief and Alimentation* headed by Belgian Emile Francqui – effectively „defragmented“ and „deprovincialized“ the Belgian academic community. In this process US-American patterns were not reproduced, but rather re-ordered and transformed to local patterns. Eventually, as Bertrams concluded, the „American experience“ felt by the BAEF alumni led to a distinct local form of network solidarity and the creation of an „esprit de corps“ adhering to the US-American creed of democracy and liberty.

This „American experience“ – yet, in a totally different context – enabled oppositionist Iranian exchange students to turn Iran’s domestic affairs into an international concern by engaging in the global public discourse on human rights in the 1970s as MATTHEW SHANNON (Philadelphia, PA) laid out in his presentation. Nearly uncontested during the 1960s and early 1970s, the Pahlavi regime argued that economic development had to precede political liberation and successfully implemented a positive image of the government as a proponent for human

rights on the international scene. However, as Shannon pointed out, in the mid-1970s a growing opposition of Iranian exchange students began to openly challenge and delegitimize this image arguing that political freedom and economic growth could and should coexist. By forging alliances with various NGOs and „congressional internationalists“ in the United States Iranian exchange student organizations exposed to an international audience both the prevalence of torture at home and government sanctioned surveillance abroad by the Shah’s security organization (SAVAK).⁴ According to Shannon this transformed the global discourse on human rights, and is one example of students acting not only as ambassadors abroad but also as dissidents at home using the knowledge of so-called „Western“ values of democracy to voice dissent.

Precisely this transfer of Western ideology was one of the focal points in the concluding discussion chaired by Jarausch. Evidently, academic culture is part of and reacts to international relations. Be it imposed from above through government efforts or below through networks and individuals, academic exchangees act as intermediaries, (un)intentionally appropriating their identities and knowledge to changing conditions.

However, as the participants pointed out in the discussion, the focus on Western values creates an unbalanced academic dialogue between countries. It seems for a successful reciprocal cultural transfer certain preconditions such as shared values must be met on one or on both sides. Germany, for instance, arguably had to „westernize“ itself to be again part of the international academic community after World War I and World War II. And while it has also become clear by the cases of Fischer and Einaudi that the influence can be vice versa and is not solely a unidirectional „Americanization“ of Europe,

³In 1960 Einaudi became the founding director of the *Center for International Studies* at Cornell University to further interdisciplinary research in international affairs. In 1991 the Center was renamed the *Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies*.

⁴Short for *Sāzēmān-e Ettelā’āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar* (*National Intelligence and Security Organization*), which operated between 1957 and 1979. Iranian

the analysis of academic culture is undoubtedly linked to questions of hegemony. Especially today the forging of networks with prestigious institutions like Harvard serves as social, scientific, and cultural capital, and a – constructed – desirability leading to one-way exchanges as, for example, the high numbers of Chinese exchange students in the US suggest.

This indicates more an integration of Non-Westerners into „the West“ rather than mutual exchanges. Subsequently, it remains disputed whether the terms „transnational“ and/or „international“ should be used in the context of academic transfer – let alone the debate on the actual definition of these terms. Maybe recourse to the „old hat“ globalization theory will help further illuminate the relation between academic exchange and power distribution. Moreover, more comparisons between countries and an examination of South-South academic cooperation, for example between Latin American Universities, would help to open this field of study beyond „the West“.

Conference Overview

Panel I: Academic Diplomacy before the Second World War

Chair: Christof Mauch (Munich)

Tomás Irish (Dublin): Reconfiguring the Academic World: Inter-Allied University Relations during the First World War

Charlotte Lerg (Munich): Performing International Politics on Campus: Germans at Harvard 1895-1935

Panel II: Political Actors in Cultural Diplomacy

Chair: Thomas Adam (Arlington)

Molly Sisson (Leeds): Ambassadors Unaware: The Fulbright Program and American Public Diplomacy

Andrea Mariuzzo (Cornell): A Biographic Contribution to Trans-Atlantic Academic Exchange: Mario Einaudi between Cultural Diplomacy and Development of Political Science

Panel III: Political Dimensions of Academic

Migration

Chair: Heike Bungert (Münster)

Kenneth Bertrams (Bruxelles): From Relief to Belief: The Belgian American Educational Foundation and the Domestication of Academic Knowledge (1919–1970)

Whitney Walton (Purdue): The Politics of Unintended Consequences in French and American Educational Travel, 1914–1970

Panel IV: German Historians and their Transatlantic Debates

Chair: Wolfgang Weber (Augsburg)

Stephan Petzold (Leeds): Anglo-American Re-education, Transnational Scholarly Relations and the ‘Westernisation’ of the West German Historical Profession, 1945–1965

Phillipp Stelzel (Duke): Enlistment and Pragmatic Cooperation: West German Historians and their American Colleagues, 1945–1989

Keynote Address

Prof. Dr. Konrad Jarausch (Chapel Hill): Contemporary History in Transatlantic Perspective: The American-German Dialogue about *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*

Panel V: Political Assistance from Afar

Chair: Michael Kimmage (Washington)

Isabella Löhr (Paris/Heidelberg): „A Defence of Free Learning“: Academic Refugee Organizations in Britain and the U.S. since 1933 [cancelled due to illness]

Matthew Shannon (Temple): American-Iranian Alliances: International Education and the Challenge to the Right to Development

Concluding Discussion

Chair: Konrad Jarausch

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