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## Introductory Remarks

### Diplomacy on campus: the political dimensions of academic exchange in the North Atlantic

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In 1904 an outcry was heard in the corridors of Berlin University, one of the most eminent German universities at the time: the Prussian Ministry of Culture, after some negotiation, had established an exchange programme for professors with Harvard University.<sup>1</sup> To the majority of German academics it seemed outrageous and downright presumptions to suggest that a university in the USA, a country they by and large considered to be uncultured and academically backward, could ever be considered equal to their distinguished institutions, which looked back on a rich academic tradition. The exasperated professors' judgement was not the least occluded by the seemingly minor detail that the Berlin University itself had only been founded ninety years earlier and was therefore, in fact, almost two-hundred years younger than the scorned new partner across the Atlantic, founded around 1634.

In spite of this deep resentment on the German side, it quickly became clear that both sides profited from this deal. The German Empire, on the one hand, was keen to foster amicable relations with the emerging economic and military rival across the sea. For Harvard on the other hand, the exchange meant a welcome opportunity. The uneven pairing of a largely state-funded cluster of universities in Prussia – the agreement was not limited to Berlin – and a largely privately funded university on the other side of the Atlantic was typical for the time. The US government was not yet involved in academic exchanges; all the more reason to look at the university's motivations. Throughout the nineteenth century Harvard had remained a regional institution funded by private donors and the state of Massachusetts. From the last third of the nineteenth century onwards the university increasingly aspired to a position of national and international leadership and was, thus, seeking to create programmes ranging from international exchanges to its national scholarship plan of 1934 that were intended to give the university an edge over its competitors. The motives of the German side for selecting Harvard University are not entirely clear and the decision seems to have been driven by the German ambassador in Washington Theodor von Holleben's preference for Harvard. Holleben believed that Harvard University was the only intellectual bastion of significance in the USA.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, two eager German professors at Harvard University Kuno Francke and Hugo Münsterberg worked tirelessly to have their university known and respected in Germany while simultaneously striving to further Germany's image in the USA.<sup>3</sup> For

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inspiration the organisers of the German–American exchange programme looked to Great Britain and the creation of the Rhodes fellowship programme in 1902 in particular.<sup>4</sup> Other ambitious American universities did not want to fall behind and courted European scholars and governments to create exchange programmes. Columbia University's ambitious president Nicholas M. Butler, for instance, sought to build links with both France and Germany.<sup>5</sup> Soon numerous transatlantic exchange programmes linked US institutions of higher education with universities in Great Britain, Germany, and France.

Throughout the nineteenth century many American students had pursued their studies at German universities, which were considered particularly advanced at the time due to their emphasis on doctoral research in laboratories and small seminars.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, a transnational community emerged that was characterised by individual connections and bonds of professional collaboration as well as personal friendships.<sup>7</sup> Starting with the *Exposition Universelle* in 1889, it became common practice to host international conferences in various disciplines along with the Worlds' Fairs.<sup>8</sup> After 1900 international conferences took place more regularly, as, parallel to ever-easier modes of transport and communication, professionalisation in academia saw the founding of international associations.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously, the disciplines underwent waves of specialisation and diversification that were soon reflected in new departments, endowed chairs, and research institutes. As a result of these changes the network that held together the academic world became more formalised during the 1890s and 1900s.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, while occasional meetings between American and European scholars, followed by extensive correspondence, had been characteristic for the intellectual transatlantic exchange up until the 1880s,<sup>11</sup> around 1900 scholarly communication and cooperation became intensified and more structured along the lines of institutional affiliations, scholarly disciplines, and conference circuits. Nevertheless, private friendships and personal rivalries, of course, continued to feature just as prominently as before.

Establishing official exchange programmes was a key to reinforcing this transatlantic academic network that had been growing for some decades, and that was becoming more and more institutionalised.<sup>12</sup> Even as the First World War disrupted and recalibrated the balance within the academic world, the transnational scholarly sphere continued to flourish. The pre-1914 emphasis on the exchange of professors was replaced by the emphasis of exchanging students and post-docs by 1920. For this purpose, the International Institute of Education was founded in 1919, the German Academic Exchange Service in 1925, and the Junior Year Abroad programme between the USA and France in 1923/1924.

Studying the movements within the academic world and across national borders provides a new dimension to the expanding field of transatlantic history, which focuses on the interrelations and interconnections between the societies and cultures surrounding the Atlantic Ocean. The new approach to transatlantic history grew alongside the established field of Atlantic history,<sup>13</sup> the transnational approach to history,<sup>14</sup> and international history<sup>15</sup> especially in the twentieth century. By including North and South America as well as Africa,<sup>16</sup> the notion of the transatlantic space differs markedly from the older concept of space of Atlantic historians who focused exclusively on the North Atlantic.<sup>17</sup> Transatlantic historians seek to evaluate the role of the state and of the individual in the historical process that led to the making of the transatlantic space, by combining social, cultural, political, and

diplomatic history approaches. In this issue we focus on academic actors within the Northern part of this transatlantic world. Their international communications and transnational communities provided a fertile ground for the facilitation of intercultural transfer that contributed to the exchange of ideas and concepts across national borders and academic disciplines.<sup>18</sup>

However, this process of intercultural transfer should not be confused with older concepts of diffusion and most prominently with Americanisation.<sup>19</sup> Concepts of diffusion in general fail to explain the conundrum of the modern world, which seems to become more similar and more dissimilar at the same time. By focusing on the transfer process, which involves individual agency as well as the expectations of the receiving society, the concept of intercultural transfer allows us to take into account the transformations and mutations each object undergoes in the process of transfer.<sup>20</sup> In assigning agency to the receiving society intercultural transfer studies, thus, unseat the notion of mono-directional transfer.<sup>21</sup>

Agency is also the key to analysing international relations within the academic world. Using merely a state-actor-driven cultural diplomacy approach fails to acknowledge the initiative of institutions and scholars who direct the political attention their transnational networks may have generated according to their own needs and circumstances. Hence, this issue uses the more extended concept of 'academic diplomacy' that will be introduced below.

The ideal of a transnational republic of letters dates back to the mediaeval period, and it continues to be invoked by scholars and politicians alike.<sup>22</sup> This republic of letters combines local, regional, national, and global identities and forces scholars to negotiate their loyalties within these different and often overlapping frameworks. Scholars teaching at a particular university and researching a specific topic are often simultaneously part of institutional, national, and international networks that include professional organisations, research and book projects, and visiting programmes. Even the administration and organisation of teaching and learning may reach across national limits.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, neither academic internationalism nor even transnational cooperation is, of course, free from competition. With the rise of nationalism during the nineteenth century, national identity became an increasingly relevant factor to scholarly identity. While travelling abroad for academic purposes and maintaining networks across borders, at times of heightened nationalism and political conflict, scholars and students were prone to be corrupted by national interests, regional loyalties, and political ideologies.<sup>24</sup>

Around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century national governments took a decidedly more active role as knowledge developed into a crucial asset in the international contest for influence. The rivalry between France and Germany soon extended into the realm of culture and sciences. With the USA emerging as a new force on the global stage, both, Germany and France, started to build a presence on American campuses through the creation of visiting professorships and the funding for institutions and museums dedicated to their respective national culture and history.<sup>25</sup> Both nations were convinced that they were the apogees of culture and academia, and they believed that by generously imparting their knowledge onto American minds they could gain a powerful political ally across the Atlantic. Meanwhile, confidence was growing among the intellectual community in the USA that they could and would finally step out of Europe's shadow in terms of their cultural achievement in general and with a particular eye on higher learning and research. The ostentatious

'Palace of Education' at the St. Louis Worlds' Fair in 1904 projected this message very clearly, where almost two-thirds of the floor space, and most of the more prominent locations, was dedicated to domestic educational exhibits including numerous universities.<sup>26</sup>

The generous funding provided by donors such as John D. Rockefeller for the founding of the University of Chicago or Andrew Carnegie for various research institutes propelled American academia to the top. And eventually the enormous migration of European academics, who had to leave Nazi-occupied Europe in order to avoid persecution and death, secured a leading position for US universities, thus bypassing most of their European rivals. Although one might be tempted to read the growing influence of US institutions in the North Atlantic world of higher education during the 1920s and 1930s as a by-product of growing American power,<sup>27</sup> recent research has shown that academic diplomacy was a key factor in establishing the leading role of the USA in the North Atlantic community.<sup>28</sup>

The essays in this issue derived from the papers given at the international conference 'Academic Culture and International Relations – A Transatlantic Perspective' hosted at the Centre for Advanced Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich in May 2012. Our four contributions stretch from the turn of the century into the Cold-War era, thus highlighting continuities and changes in the development of the North Atlantic culture and diplomacy within the academic world. While research so far has focused on the time around the end of the Second World War and the following decade, this publication links post-Second World War developments to what happened during the first decades of the 'American Century'.

The concept of 'academic diplomacy' captures how international relations played out within the academic world.<sup>29</sup> This can literally mean making diplomacy visible on campus by hosting representatives of foreign governments, establishing research centres and museums, or actively pursuing exchange programmes in line with the nation's foreign policy.<sup>30</sup> It also refers to the many roles academics played when they travelled abroad and became representatives of their university, their discipline but also of their country and sometimes even of their government. The notion of academic diplomacy is based on the premise that academia is institutionally tied in with nation-states and at the same time linked to an international and transnational community of scholars – be it real or idealised. As national institutions, universities could play a key role in cultural diplomacy and comparable policies, however, as academic institutions, universities followed their own agenda that included scholarly pursuits as well as the need and desire to secure funding, prestige, and influence. These motivations may converge or mutually reinforce each other but it would be too easy to simply speak of politics co-opting the academic world.

Academic diplomacy is the kind of interaction that could occur on an international and on a transnational level within the transatlantic scholarly community and was not necessarily devoted to research, teaching or learning but to representation and influence. It could result in intercultural transfer of ideas and concepts and create a transnational discourse. However, it could also result in the rejection of ideas presented to a particular culture. Personal and professional networks of scholars and universities sometimes served as channels for diplomatic communication on a sub-governmental level, while a place on the diplomatic protocol provided universities and scholars with international visibility and access to power. Agency may, thus, lie with politicians

visiting a campus or with the university administrator, the fund-raising technocrat or with professors and students who were part of exchange programmes.

For example, one of the most important speeches of the Cold War – the so-called ‘Iron Curtain Speech’ by Winston Churchill – was after all delivered on the campus of Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri and not in a traditional political venue. President Franc Lewis McCluer had big plans for his small all-male college and his effective financial planning, even during the Depression. His ambitious determination had earned him the nickname ‘Bullet McCluer’. In the early 1930s he had managed to secure a considerable endowment for the explicit purpose to reach out to national politicians and international representatives and to entice them to come to Fulton. Thanks to his exceptional effort and commitment during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s election campaign, when he mobilised the whole college, McCluer had gained access to the inner circle of the Democratic Party. Tom Van Sant, who had graduated from Westminster College in 1918 and happened to be a close friend of Harry Truman helped the shrewd college president to manoeuvre his small Midwestern alma mater onto the world stage by boldly inviting Truman to bring his British guest and have him deliver what would become a famous speech.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, when John F. Kennedy visited Berlin in the summer of 1963, he not only famously identified himself with the citizens of that divided city, but he also spoke to the students of the recently established Free University of Berlin.<sup>32</sup> For the young academic institution, founded on the frontlines of the Cold War, this prominent guest was more than an honorary visitor. He became an icon who guaranteed the very existence of this institution of higher learning. The university administration incorporated the US President’s visit into their institutional narrative to such an extent that just a few months later, when Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, the students in Berlin marched in mourning as if they had lost one of their own and the newly founded Institute for American Studies was named for the late American president. During his visit JFK had highlighted the importance of universities, students, and professors in the ideological conflict of the Cold War.<sup>33</sup> Academic freedom and the enlightened tradition of higher education itself became part of Western rhetoric, rendering the university campus a formidable stage for cultural diplomacy.<sup>34</sup> The academic institutions in turn knew to seize the opportunity and turn their cultural capital to political profit.

Academic diplomacy may, thus, be pursued by ‘outsiders’ such as Winston Churchill or JFK who used spaces and structures within the academic world for their purposes as well as by ‘insiders’ such as Francke who worked for his former home country’s prestige abroad, or Butler, who saw international connections and political influence as a vital asset for his university.<sup>35</sup> At times, it may be difficult to clearly identify an actor as ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’, as men like McClure or Butler moved easily between these two roles. The long-serving president of Columbia University Butler (1902–1945) was also a force to be reckoned with in New York municipal politics and within the Republican Party. Twice, in 1920 and in 1928 he even toyed with the idea of running for President.<sup>36</sup> At the same time it is worth noting that there may well be events, organisations, and endeavours that primarily focused on the traditional activities in a scholar’s life and still carried an element of academic diplomacy. Prestigious international conferences and exchange programmes immediately spring to mind. To be sure, national interests and political ideologies have compromised the integrity of the idealised republic of letters more than once.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless agency cannot only lie with national governments. Academic institutions, especially in view



of (trans)national co-opetition,<sup>38</sup> have their own agendas ranging from prestige and funding opportunities to political influence. Hence, an approach that moves beyond notions of extramural interference versus ivory tower integrity promises to be fruitful to our understanding of the ways in which international relations subsisted on the links that bound together the republic of letters and how various actors, be they academics, politicians, or diplomats navigated between these different spheres, performing international relations on campus but also using these circumstances for their own advantage or for that of their institutions.

The four essays in this special issue provide cutting-edge research analysing the role academics and universities have played in regard to forming political alliances from the turn of the nineteenth century into the era of the Cold War in the North Atlantic space. In addition to the political role of academics in international relations, the authors brought together here also explore the funding provided by private and state agencies for fostering academic exchanges. The question whether funds dedicated to academic diplomacy was, as Molly Bettie shows, ‘money well spent’ occupied the US-State Department in the 1950s just as much as the university rectors on the board of the Belgium *Fondation universitaire* in the 1920s, as Kenneth Bertrams argues, or the French National Office of French Universities and Schools between 1910 and 1932, as Whitney Walton and Tomás Irish reveal. Part of the debates about providing government funds for exchange programmes stemmed from reoccurring disagreement about the purpose of these efforts. Different visions sometimes overlapped but, as Bertrams argues, did not necessarily ‘converge’, as internationalist ideals met national interests, when academic actors found themselves caught between the public and the private sector, or when universities, as Irish shows, created their ‘own foreign policy’. Furthermore, as an exchange is at least bilateral in terms of nations involved, each side might have, as both Walton and Bertrams argue, very different interpretations of the uses of such a connection. Even among the members of one national government, goals were not, as Betty shows, always clear. An irksome dilemma has haunted performing international relations on campus from the beginning: while the academic sphere might be an attractive setting for the staging of diplomatic ties, its atmosphere of critical analysis and professional scepticism renders it, as Walton and Betty remind us, extremely sensitive to anything remotely resembling propaganda. That is not to say that scholars and university administrators shied away from the opportunities diplomacy presented to them. Quite to the contrary, they knew very well how to profit from the cultural capital of their membership in the transnational republic of letters, be it to build an international network for themselves, as Irish shows, or simply to secure funds, as Bertrams makes clear. The consideration of the active role of university administrations as essential to the concept of academic diplomacy provides not only an extension to the government-focused approach to cultural diplomacy but it also endows academics and administrators with agency.

The essays by Irish and Bertrams deal with the period of the First World War and its immediate aftermath. Both authors examine how at a time of diplomatic crisis non-state actors were able to craft a role for themselves on the international stage through using the academic stage to present, project, and promote their visions. Scholars such as Richard Garlitz and Lisa Jarvinen<sup>39</sup> have argued that an open alignment of US-foreign policy and academic international connections emerged in full only after the Second World War. Challenging this view, Irish shows how academic networks were

recalibrated during the First World War very much along the lines of political alliances. Unlike Cold-War endeavours, though, these efforts were not so much driven by nation-states but by the universities themselves. German scholars having manoeuvred themselves and their once dominant *Wissenschaftsnation* into isolation left a vacuum in the academic world that the American representatives readily strove to fill. Using Columbia University as his case study, Irish charts institutional strategies and relates them to national interests and diplomatic agendas. Moreover, he shows, how soon after the war ended, both French and American university leaders sought methods to make their cooperation more permanent. Exchange programmes were only one part of this effort that also included the endowment of chairs, reforms to synchronise the systems of higher education, and facilitate cooperation. The most lasting effect, Irish discovers, was the introduction of Western Civilisation courses for American undergraduate students.

Bertrams presents the particular case of Belgium, where the immediate humanitarian goals of the Commission for Relief in Belgium during the war were soon after transformed into a drive for academic American–Belgian cooperation. What seemed like a perfect idea ran quickly into complications that resulted from the personal rivalries between Herbert Hoover and Émile Francqui, the two leading organisers on both sides of the Atlantic. There was also more general incongruity regarding the general goal of an exchange programme. Bertrams analyses how the resulting two-foundation structure helped to neutralise disagreement but also furthered unintended consequences such as the reproduction of Belgian elites as the selection process for eligible candidates fell to university administrators. Furthermore, this set-up left it to each side to interpret the purpose of the exchange. While Belgian officials hoped that the transfer of American technical know-how would boost their economy, Hoover and his men followed their slightly vague vision of ‘international understanding’ and character building. Consequently, both inadvertently fostered the engrained two-culture narrative that pitted the pragmatic New World in which business and engineering flourished, against Old Europe, where one went to study the arts. Nevertheless, the Belgian case represents one of the earliest examples of the kind of public–private partnership, with a dominant US player that became the hallmark of academic diplomacy during the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>40</sup>

The essays by Walton and Bettie are devoted to student exchange and the different visions of the tasks and experiences of students abroad. Even if we accept that ‘exchange’ is a ‘seductive term’,<sup>41</sup> as it implies parallelism and mutuality, which, in fact, is rarely an accurate description,<sup>42</sup> exchange programmes lend themselves particularly well to examining intercultural transfer. When we conceptualise these structures as part of the network that bound together the academic world, mutuality appears as less important than interpretation. Arguably, exchange programmes are, like ‘real’ diplomatic ties, the structure that is filled with meaning. Both authors point out that neither students nor language assistants and not even professors were trained diplomats, even if they were called ‘ambassadors’ in political rhetoric. How and why then, do exchange programmes feature so prominently in academic diplomacy even today? Opponents have complained time and again that the impact of these programmes was not tangible and control almost impossible. Yet, it emerges in these essays that, in fact, the much-criticised ambivalence and volatility actually strengthened exchange programmes in the long run. They were easily adjustable to



geopolitical change and diverse cultural contexts and they offered leverage points for very different political, public, and private agendas.

Walton argues, that national interests, which drove many exchange organisers, did not necessarily contradict the internationalist ideals that often animated exchanges. Looking at arguments and attitudes over a long period of time from 1920 to 1970, Walton is able to show how forging an internationalist mindset became a political goal in itself among Americans, much like Hoover's idea of 'mutual understanding'. Walton places particular emphasis on the students' voices and the way they negotiated patriotism with the new internationalist, and often more critical, perspective they gained on their home country from afar during their stay abroad. They challenged ideas about US imperialism and racial discrimination but also faced anti-Americanism and encountered first-hand Communism. Additionally, Walton takes a new perspective as she examines not only motivations in the sending country, here the USA, but also considers how the receiving society, in this case France, reacted to foreign students and evaluated their impact. Weaving together expectations and experiences of the different actors, this essay draws a comprehensive picture of the intended and unintended consequences in student exchange.

The Fulbright programme is, to this day, the flagship of international exchange. Nevertheless, there have been hard-fought battles about its meaning. Bettie analyses how public debates about the USA's role in world affairs influenced the handling of academic exchange by American government officials and how responsibilities within the US government for Fulbright scholarships shifted repeatedly between 1953 and 1999. She highlights the continuing debate over how much government control could and should be exerted over these 'academic ambassadors'. There was no easy answer, as Bettie can show. Any attempt to openly influence exchangees or to direct their conduct resulted in a loss of credibility for the programme and damaged the international reputation it depended upon within the academic community. Hence, complicated parameters not only determined the running of the Fulbright programme but also guaranteed its success. Only its acceptance by scholars around the world enabled the programme to spread from Europe to Asia, to Africa, and to the Middle East, in accordance with US foreign policy interests. If reputation is the key, nobody in the multi-layered set-up could control the process completely. However, as long as the USA and their partner nations, scholars and diplomats, universities and administrators, all felt that they benefited from the deal, the arrangement was successful. After all, thanks to the high prestige the Fulbright programme was able to maintain, scholarships honour the scholars and their institutions, and are much sought-after financial resources. Therefore, looking at these different perspectives, Bettie concludes, that they in fact mutually re-enforced each other.

The four essays presented here open a new door to our understanding of the transatlantic academic cultures and political alliances that were formed in the course of the twentieth century. They bring together in unique and innovative ways two strands of scholarly inquiry that have been separated in the past: the history of higher education and diplomatic history. While historians of higher education have largely neglected the political dimension of scholarly exchanges, diplomatic historians have rarely looked at what actually happens on the ground, focusing rather on the administration and political motives behind exchange programmes. In bringing together both perspectives the contributions in this issue flash out structures and mechanisms of academic diplomacy.

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