

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339844255>

Article Review: "Special Section: The Cultural Turn and Beyond in International History"

Article · April 2019

CITATIONS

0

READS

249

1 author:



António Raimundo

University of Minho

20 PUBLICATIONS 58 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Assessing the Europeanization of Portuguese foreign policy towards sub-Saharan Africa [View project](#)



Portugal and Brexit [View project](#)

2019

H-Diplo

 [@HDiplo](https://twitter.com/HDiplo)

Article Review Forum

No. 851

23 April 2019

Article Review Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
Web and Production Editor: George Fujii

“Special Section: The Cultural Turn and Beyond in International History,” in *The International History Review* 40:3 (June 2018): 573-697.

Reviewers: **Spencer Mawby** and **António Raimundo**

URL: <http://tiny.cc/AR851>

Review by **Spencer Mawby**, University of Nottingham

What is the relationship between international history and other historical sub-disciplines such as cultural history, gender history, social history and political history? How and to what extent should practitioners of international history make use of concepts such as globalism, transnationalism, Orientalism and hybridity? To what extent have broader philosophical currents such as constructivism, structuralism, postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism had an impact on the methods of international historians? The prospect of untangling these knotty questions would give even the most theoretically orientated historians something of a headache but, given the greater interest which practitioners have shown in investigating the concepts which underpin historical work, the questions are difficult to evade and may yet multiply. In this edition of *International History Review*, the contributors trace one or two threads of discussion to something like a conclusion and in doing so offer a valuable means of orientation for those interested in these topics. The intention of this short piece of commentary on the six essays collected in this volume is to offer some further discussion of matters arising relating to methodology, concepts, and broader philosophical questions, rather than to offer a comprehensive overview of the authors' arguments which can best be gleaned from reading their original texts.¹

Each of the authors writes respectfully and even cautiously about the various different historiographical traditions in the sub-field of international history, but it is still evident that if novice historians were to ask how they should actually be spending their time, they would get different answers from different contributors. The most conspicuous disagreement is between Joseph Maiolo and Petra Goedde. For Maiolo, international historians should be devoted to archival research in different countries and, in the gaps between overseas

¹ Pedro Aires Oliveira, Bruno Cardoso Reis & Patrick Finney, “Introduction,” Special Section on “The Cultural Turn and Beyond in International History,” *The International History Review* (Hereafter *IHR*) 40:3 (June 2018), 573-575.

travel, should generate theories about how the international system influences the conduct of international affairs.² Although Goedde allows this approach to be a part of historiographical tradition, the priority for her is establishing a transnational approach which, somewhat oddly, might not entail moving much beyond analysing how culture impacts on a national foreign policy tradition.³ She gives as an example Penny Von Eschen's *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, which is an erudite study of America's Jazz Ambassadors, but one which does not extend beyond the National Archives and Special Collections of libraries and institutions within the United States.⁴ This kind of book would fail the tests set by Maiolo, so it may be the case that good transnational history may not make good international history.

Fortunately for its success, the three case studies which touch on Portuguese foreign and colonial policy featured in this collection all investigate cultural themes on the basis of research in a number of institutions located in different countries. Luís Nuno Rodrigues's essay is the most conventional in the sense that it examines American cultural power, in the form of the Fulbright Program, as an element in the traditional diplomacy of the United States.⁵ Alexandre Moreli is more ambitious in offering an analysis of the trilateral relationship between Portugal, the United States and Britain in the 1940s which incorporates notions of culturally determined misperception.⁶ The third contribution by Bruno Reis and Pedro Oliveira is impressive in neatly integrating cultural theory into an analysis of power relations at the end of the Portuguese empire in the 1970s.⁷

Reis and Oliveira stress the significance of relations between the post-revolutionary factions in the Portuguese metropolis and the new revolutionary leaders of the old Lusophone periphery and their work prompts reflection on the key methodological issue hovering over much of the collection, which is the radical archival disequilibrium between Europe and the United States on the one hand and much of Asia and Africa on the other. In his contribution, Patrick Finney questions the possibility of generalising from the work of American scholars, such as Frank Costigliola, "given that so much 'culturalist' work has focused on 20th century US policy-makers."⁸ It is relevant that this comment appears in a longer passage concerning the difficulty of finding textual traces of past emotive states when analysing political actors such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Setting aside the question of whether one wishes to offer a traditional political analysis or an

² Joseph Anthony Maiolo, "Systems and Boundaries in International History," *IHR*, 576-591.

³ Petra Goedde, "Power, Culture, and the Rise of Transnational History in the United States," *IHR*, 592-608.

⁴ Penny M. von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁵ Luís Nuno Rodrigues, "Establishing a 'Cultural Base'? The Creation of the Fulbright Program in Portugal," *IHR*, 683-697.

⁶ Alexandre Moreli, "The War of Seduction: The Anglo-American Struggle to Engage with the Portuguese Ruling Elite (1943-1948)," *IHR*, 654-682.

⁷ Bruno C. Reis & Pedro A. Oliveira, "The Power and Limits of Cultural Myths in Portugal's Search for a Post-Imperial Role," *IHR*, 631-653.

⁸ Patrick Finney, "Narratives and Bodies: Culture beyond the Cultural Turn," *IHR*, 624.

innovative cultural perspective, it is worth remarking on the fact that an enormous scholarly infrastructure exists for historians wishing to conduct research about any twentieth century American president, while any scholar attempting, for example, to write about the ideology or foreign policy practice of a figure such as Mozambican President Samora Machel will face many more practical obstacles as well as an uneven historiography.

To some degree the emphasis on transnationalism and cultural factors in much recent African history reflects the difficulty of gaining access to the kind of political records which are readily available in most western countries. Even well-appointed archives in Africa will often have thin documentary coverage of the post-independence period. African historians and Africanist academics employed in western institutions have showed considerable ingenuity over the years in uncovering personal and institutional records in neglected tin boxes but the inequities remain an unmissable feature of the methodological landscape. On an issue such as Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia in 1965, which was of consuming interest to African foreign ministries, it is a good deal easier to find literature about American and British policy than to identify works dealing with the shifting, and often contrasting, policies of, for example, the East African states of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

For those committed to transnationalism, the lack of attention to national foreign policy may be taken as a sign of the good health of the historiography on the grounds that the erstwhile emphasis on nation states formed a cornerstone of a discursive scholarly architecture which privileged elitist interests and, in many respects, constituted a continuation of the colonial project. For very different reasons those who favour a more social scientific form of investigation may also express scepticism about the nation as a unit of analysis and, in arguing for the salience of higher-level international systems, Maiolo represents this view. A host of conceptual questions arise at this point and they are perhaps most evident in the contrast between the ongoing utility of 'international systems' to social scientists and of the new emphasis given to emotions by those interested in extending the range of cultural analysis. Maiolo broadly aligns himself with the constructivist methods of political scientists but comments that decisionmakers "are still ensnared by autonomous social structures formed at the international level" (585); at this point, clarity is needed about how this sphere of autonomy can be conceived, particularly given that Maiolo makes some generous concessions to cultural theory in regard to the significance of discourse in shaping understanding.

The key example cited by Maiolo relates to the diplomacy of the First World War in which, it is suggested, international statesmen were universally transformed into Machiavellians. And yet the First World War was also the era of some highly sensitive and passionate statesmen whose life stories are potential grist to the mill of those who favour the emotivist orientation in the historiography. Here too the obstacles to effective analysis appear formidable and are illustrated by Moreli's essay about Anglo-American interpretations of the role of emotion in Portuguese foreign policy. He presents a persuasive case that American and British statesmen did employ sub-Freudian methods to analyse the purportedly haughty yet vain Portuguese ruling elite of the 1940s, but this is emotivism operating at one remove and under the guise of rationalising constructions. Moreli does not demonstrate either that Portuguese policy was influenced by the kind of affect described in ambassadorial reports back to Washington and London or that the reports themselves were driven by the emotions of Anglo-American envoys. Patrick Finney defends the new history of emotions as a turn back towards a more materialist history, and these novel approaches are frequently retailed under that attractive idea. Perhaps it is a sign of the difficulties which arise when every concept starts bleeding into every other, but incorporating something which is so closely felt by the human mind as fear or hope into a new materialism could equally well be characterised as an act of impish theoretical subversion in the manner of Roland

Barthes. It is an obvious point to make but the reconstruction of the emotive states of historical actors takes us a long way from an analysis of the productive methods by which human societies sustain human bodies; the latter enterprise certainly entered a first claim to be designated materialist history. Perhaps the dwindling band of economic historians really does still have greater entitlement to be writing materialist histories than those now writing histories of the emotions.

What lies beneath much of this is the vexed question of how exactly culture can be analysed, explained, or understood and the even more subterranean matter of whether we should be aiming at analysis or explanation or understanding. Long before the cultural turn in international history came Michel Foucault's influential account, in *The Order of Things*, of the resonance of artefacts such as the painting *Las Meninas* and the novel *Don Quixote*.⁹ When published in 1966 the original French text of that book was called *Les Mots et les Choses* but a direct translation into English was thought to be unwise because Ernest Gellner had already published a book called *Words and Things* in 1959.¹⁰ Gellner's conclusions were almost the exact opposite of Foucault's. He cast doubt on the extent to which the world of words impinged on the world of things. Pursuing the methodological consequences of his epistemology in 1992, Gellner wrote, "Cultures are package-deal worlds; scientific inquiry by contrast, requires atomization of evidence. No *linkages* escape scrutiny. Empiricist theory of knowledge claimed that information arrived in tiny packages (which is false as a descriptive account); but the lesson learnt was that it should be treated as if it was so broken up. Such breaking up of clusters fosters critical revaluation of world-pictures."¹¹

Besides arriving at almost the same title for books in different languages, both Gellner and Foucault were polymaths with a strong historical sensibility. When it comes to measuring their impact on the historiography, the comparison ends there. *The Order of Things* is one of the core texts to have underpinned the turn towards cultural analysis across the humanities. By contrast, Gellner is primarily known by historians for his work on nationalism rather than his philosophical writing. Most academic historians are probably ill equipped to make judgements about which of the antithetical accounts of 'words and things' was more coherent, but the choice has been made and rather than a cautious, rationalistic, and atomistic international history (which would certainly have been labelled reductionist by critics) we have an ambitious, imaginative and sprawling international history (which can still be called extravagant by sceptics).

This collection does address the issue of the very wide field of inquiry which has opened up as a consequence of the impact of the cultural turn. Finney's attempt to utilise narratives and bodies as centripetal points which can bring much of current work about international history into a common orbit is well realised. Although offering an optimistic, positive and persuasive account of the state of the sub-field after the cultural turn, there are hints of disquiet in his overview that the cultural sprawl left in the wake of Foucault, and the poststructuralists may be too wide ranging to allow a common ground upon which the sub-discipline can meet and debate. Judging by the standard of the contributions to this collection we are certainly not there yet,

⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Pantheon Books, 1971).

¹⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things: A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and a Study of Ideology* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959).

¹¹ Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), 81.

H-Diplo Article Review

but a sense of that we are perhaps approaching the moment in time where concepts have been deconstructed to the point where conversation becomes difficult, means that the intellectual stimulus offered here is accompanied by an undertow of unease.

Spencer Mawby has a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science and is a Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Nottingham. He has published widely on British foreign and colonial policy after 1945 including monographs on the end of empire in Aden and the Caribbean. His last major publication was an overview of the historiography about British decolonisation entitled *The Transformation and Decline of the British Empire* (Red Globe Press, 2015). His current research deals with the institutional infrastructure of decolonisation in Uganda and the planned book is under contract with Bloomsbury.

Culture as an object of study or as an approach is a vast domain of inquiry that has unsurprisingly attracted the attention of various disciplines. While the broad set of interrelated developments in the humanities and social sciences commonly known as ‘cultural turn’ has been around from more than four decades, its impact in the sub-field of international history is relatively more recent. As with other academic domains, this shift of emphasis towards culture generated much debate and anxieties about the direction of the field. The point of departure of this Special Section is, however, a largely positive one. Its editors assert that taking into account the ideational and cultural dimensions of international history is a meaningful endeavour, even if only to show their limitations.¹ The editors offer a well-structured collection of essays, organized in a way that favours a certain degree of dialog among the different contributions. While the first part focuses on historiographical and conceptual aspects to provide evaluations, following different emphases and perspectives, of the cultural turn’s impact on the field of international history, the second part presents a set of case studies centred on Portuguese international history. As hinted at in several contributions, the study of small and medium powers has traditionally tended to be neglected by internationalists in general. The realm of culture, however, arguably offers greater room for actors less endowed with the ‘hard’ attributes of power, thus justifying more attention to their agency. Apart from that, it can be added that Portugal’s relatively long and rich history makes it a case with some potential to contribute to the greater cultural diversity in the field of international history that is called for by different contributors.

The first part of the collection starts with an essay by Joseph Maiolo, who reflects on the evolution of the field of international history by assessing in a general way the impact of the transnational, global, and cultural turns.² His broad canvas works well to introduce the more conceptual and methodological contours of the larger discussion. Among the different contributions, Maiolo’s take is the most sceptical one. While he sees ontological, epistemic, and methodological benefits in the debate generated by these different historiographical turns, he emphasises the drawbacks. Regarding the transnational and global turns, the author welcomes the move away from a state-centric approach owing to its elucidation of the complex webs of non-national interactions and globalization processes, but criticises this scholarship for writing the state “out of history” (583). Transnational historians, in particular, are criticized as neglecting the relationship between the states system and the transnational sphere. As for the cultural turn, after acknowledging that it brought “a renewed and more systematic study of the power of ideas in foreign affairs, especially of values, beliefs, and identity,” Maiolo downplays the insights derived from such engagement as “not especially novel” (584). Other familiar criticisms with which he agrees are the lack of clarity about how culture shapes policy-making and the consequent exaggeration of its effects, at the expense of wider social structures and material conditions. But his main reservation concerns what he sees as the preoccupation by culturalists with national policy and policy-makers, which according to him ends up “universalising the domestic” (585).

For Maiolo the different turns brought a larger scope to international history, but also a danger of a loss of coherence and purpose. Despite welcoming methodological innovation and pluralism in general, he argues

¹ Pedro Aires Oliveira, Bruno Cardoso Reis & Patrick Finney, “Introduction,” Special Section on “The Cultural Turn and Beyond in International History,” *The International History Review* 40:3 (June 2018): 573-575.

² Joseph Anthony Maiolo, “Systems and Boundaries in International History,” *The International History Review* 40:3 (2018): 576-591.

that the field's boundaries have blurred and that attention has been diverted from the causes of war and the conditions of peace, which in his opinion should be the issue of "prime concern" for internationalists (586). Against this, he proposes clear yet open disciplinary boundaries and resolutely advocates the systemic approach to international relations centred on the analysis of the structures, processes, and effects of international systems as interconnected wholes. Maiolo's main arguments seem, therefore, to revolve chiefly around ontological and, to a lesser extent, epistemological aspects. Ontologically, he espouses a systemic level of analysis which he depicts as preferable to both the allegedly state-level emphasis of culturalists and the disregard of states' roles by global-transnational historians. Moreover, although recognising the existence of other significant topics, he clearly expresses a priority for issues of war and peace, declaring a sort of thematic hierarchy for the field of international history. Epistemologically, while some eclecticism seems to be embraced, Maiolo appears to implicitly attach importance to the possibility of being able to explain causes in international politics, hence distancing himself from a more interpretivist position. Many of the concerns underpinning this relatively restricted overall standpoint are engaged by the two subsequent articles of the Special Section, which generates an interesting exchange.

Petra Goedde focuses on the impact of the cultural and transnational turns in the field of international history in the United States.³ Her assessment in general is much more enthusiastic than Maiolo's. She sees no "turning back" from the cultural turn in American foreign relations historiography (593). In her view, cultural approaches offer the opportunity to break out of a preoccupation with causality, allowing historians to embed cultural factors within broader explanatory frameworks. Following this understanding, cultural analysis does not replace other approaches, but "rather enriches and contextualizes them, leading to a more nuanced, if 'messy,' understanding of foreign relations" (595). Other positive effects of the cultural turn, according to Goedde, are the introduction of new methods of inquiry less centred on ideas of rationality as well as the challenge to the primacy of the nation as dominant category of analysis. She argues that the questions and methodologies introduced by the cultural turn have significantly shaped the emergence and practice of transnational history in the United States. The fusion of the cultural and transnational turns that took place in that country's historiography set the American approach to transnational history apart from its European and non-western counterparts. For Goedde, the greater role of culture in transnational scholarship in the United States enabled historians to reconceptualize the field of diplomatic history by integrating questions of power, war, and diplomacy with issues of race, class, and gender. The end result is a broader, more vibrant, and diverse field of American foreign relations history.

Goedde's views in general emerge as more open and pluralistic than those of Maiolo. She is patently less in favour of clear historiographic boundaries. Moreover, her analysis of the evolution of American historiography demonstrates that a cultural analysis does not have to be centred on the national or domestic level, giving much evidence of its application to transnational subjects. While rejecting a state-centric focus, her understanding of a transnational approach is one that still considers the nation-state to be a relevant analytical category, particularly in matters relating to foreign policy. And if a broader plurality of topics is also admitted, even more traditional concerns such as war and peace are depicted as benefitting from an approach that is more attentive to cultural and emotional elements. The author makes plain her differences vis-à-vis Maiolo's perspective by stating that America's foreign relations "cannot be explained solely or even primarily through

³ Petra Goedde, "Power, Culture, and the Rise of Transnational History in the United States," *The International History Review* 40:3 (2018): 592-608.

structural analysis of systems that operate in predictable ways, can be measured objectively, and follow rational and realist patterns” (601).⁴ Culture is not presented in a monocausal way, but rather as complementing other factors, allowing more comprehensive and nuanced, if ‘messier’, understandings. Goedde appears to be epistemologically comparatively less preoccupied with explaining causation. Along a parsimony versus complexity trade-off axis, Goedde’s views seem closer to the latter end of the spectrum than Maiolo’s.

Patrick Finney’s essay takes the discussion a step further.⁵ He offers an evaluation of the current condition of ‘culturalist’ international history by focusing on contemporary Anglo-American contributions that he categorises around two key themes: narratives and bodies. Finney’s starting point is the observation that the legitimacy of culturalist approaches is no longer fundamentally questioned, underlining that present debates focus more “on how to operationalise culture rather than on whether this should be done” (610). This does not stop him from recognising enduring weaknesses in the “canon” of culturalist work, such as “a persistent under-theorisation of how culture operates, fragmentation amongst competing approaches that is inimical to ‘big picture’ synthesis, an unhealthy presentist preoccupation with late twentieth-century topics and a lingering American-centrism” (610). According to Finney, the adopted categorisation around two core threads allows scholars to organise disparate contributions and better grasp the domain’s current trajectory, providing “orientation” in present debates and enabling them to “push them on further” (611). Furthermore, the author is mindful to discuss linkages with debates in historical theory and draw insights from cognate disciplines, particularly International Relations (IR).

For Finney much ongoing culturalist scholarship already engages with the sense-making work of narrative, but could be improved by using recent contributions from adjacent fields that have looked, for example, at how particular narratives are formulated and deployed, and their impact in the world. He urges culturalists to pay attention to these conceptual advancements, yet without losing sight of older approaches’ strengths, in terms of their “sophisticated, non-linear, understandings of causation and the operation of systems of meaning, and their rich, deep and broad depiction of the ideational context for and constitution of policy-making discourse” (618). Similar conclusions are reached for the more material-oriented work on gender, senses, and emotions that is discussed under the broad category of “bodies” (625). According to Finney, the future agenda of culturalists should “continue to work these two core themes, melding insights from IR with the traditional strengths of their own practice, and applying them to cases that range far beyond the twentieth-century and the United States” (626). While far from comprehensive, this assessment adds to the previous essays in terms of clarity and depth. Its taxonomy usefully organises and relates different contributions, working for less field fragmentation. Moreover, Finney’s openness towards disciplinary cross-fertilization efforts helps him identify potential ways of advancing the culturalist programme’s operationalization. In that endeavour he embraces some eclecticism, favouring a middle-ground between the

⁴ Emphasis added.

⁵ Patrick Finney, “Narratives and Bodies: Culture beyond the Cultural Turn,” *The International History Review* 40:3 (2018): 609-630.

abstraction that is usually associated with disciplines such as IR and the concreteness more commonly linked to the field of history.⁶

The second part of the Special Section offers the opportunity to bring the previous insights into a fruitful conversation with the case studies on Portuguese international history. In view of their thematic and temporal diversity I will centre my attention on the essay by Bruno Cardoso Reis and Pedro Aires Oliveira, which better fits my expertise and allows me to follow a more focused evaluation.

Reis and Oliveira's article sets out to explore the role of cultural myths in Portugal's decolonization and search for a post-imperial role.⁷ More specifically, it traces the influence of cultural norms in shaping Portuguese foreign policy over time, arguing that the myth of a special connection between Portugal and Africa was not completely abandoned with decolonization, but rather was refashioned for the post-colonial era. According to Reis and Oliveira, the colonial myth of the Portuguese as "uniquely soft colonizers, adapted to the tropics and capable of embracing cultural hybridity and multiracialism" was turned into a post-colonial myth depicting Portugal as "naturally adept at managing post-colonial relations" (633). The authors aptly look at the ways in which these mythological visions helped legitimize the end of Empire as a "mutual liberation" as well as promote the idea of an "exemplary decolonization," which was later replaced by a new narrative presenting Portugal as a "bridge-building" state, based on a partly reconstructed national identity that reconciled European and Lusophone elements (635-638). Reis and Oliveira maintain that the cultural identification with other Lusophone countries has never ceased to "condition" Portuguese foreign policy priorities since the mid-1970s (647). Despite the many ambiguities, tensions, and illusions, shared cultural links remained "a powerful factor in shaping strong and resilient relations" between Portuguese-speaking countries' elites and institutions, even when other important dynamics seemed to be pulling them apart (649). The broader argument advanced by the article is that the importance of cultural factors in international history cannot be ignored, although they should be seen as complementary to other, more material, factors.

On the whole this research offers rich and interesting insights, based on a multiplicity of sources, in relation to an under-researched empirical case that illustrates, in a nuanced manner, wider theoretical points on the role of culture. While drawing on previously existing studies, particularly on Norrie MacQueen's work (which is appositely quoted throughout the text) as well as on the authors' own scholarship, it extends and deepens such contributions by, on the one hand, covering a long time period that helps reveal the continuities that the article emphasizes, and, on the other, by making use of conceptual tools that provide some guidance and focus to the research.⁸ The conceptualization is a very generic and pragmatic one, largely based on the concept

⁶ For a supportive view of less disciplinary division see, for instance, George Lawson, "The eternal divide? History and International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 18:2 (June 2012): 203-226.

⁷ Bruno C. Reis & Pedro A. Oliveira, "The Power and Limits of Cultural Myths in Portugal's Search for a Post-Imperial Role," *The International History Review* 40:3 (2018): 631-653.

⁸ See, for example, Norrie MacQueen, "Portugal and Africa: The Politics of Re-engagement," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 23:1 (1985): 40-42; MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London: Longman, 1997); MacQueen, "Re-defining the 'African vocation': Portugal's Post-Colonial Identity Crisis," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 11:2 (2003): 181-199; MacQueen, "A Community of Illusions? Portugal, the CPLP and Peacemaking in Guinea-Bissau," *International Peacekeeping* 10:2 (2003): 1-26. Among the authors' work see, for example, Pedro Aires Oliveira, "Portuguese Empire: 2. Africa," in John M. MacKenzie,

of myth and on insights on normative change, which are briefly discussed at the beginning of the article. In view of the exploratory goals of the research, this broad approach appears in the main justified, as it helpfully traces the origins, development, and impact of cultural norms on Portuguese foreign policy. However, it also has some drawbacks that seem to have contributed to the two major weaknesses of this study.

First, the length and depth of the analysis come out as unbalanced, creating a sort of fragmentation between two parts of the article. The core of the analysis is centred on the decolonization and re-engagement phases, between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s (covered in section 2 and 3), managing to follow a roughly chronological account. In contrast, the authors provide only a brief and shallower analysis for the subsequent period (section 4), which is narrowly centred on the Lusophone community (CPLP). To some measure this is understandable, as the first part deals with what can be seen as defining moments for the cultural myths explored in the article, also corresponding to the period for which archival sources and more secondary literature are available. However, for the period after the mid-1980s, one is left wondering about how the 'bridge' narrative might have evolved, since, contrary to what the title of that section indicates, not much is provided specifically on the reconciliation of Portugal's European and Lusophone identities. More should have been said about the country's participation in the European Union and how that related concretely to the enduring Lusophone dimension of its foreign policy. Moreover, as implicitly acknowledged by the authors, Portugal's Lusophone identity goes beyond CPLP dynamics. Approaching this aspect through the wider Lusophony narrative might have been a way of reaching a more comprehensive and deeper analysis of the different actors and contexts that influenced the trajectory of such dimension.⁹ This leads to my second point.

The article would have benefited from greater conceptual clarity and specificity. Indeed, when reading it in conjunction with the other contributions to this Special Section, it is difficult not to ponder some of Finney's main insights. While centred on the concept of myth, in a more or less explicit way his article ends up engaging with a series of other concepts and themes, such as culture, norms, narratives, discourses, symbols,

et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Empire* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016); Oliveira, "Decolonization in Portuguese Africa," in Thomas Spear (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Bruno Cardoso Reis, "Portugal and the UN: A Rogue State Resisting the Norm of Decolonization (1956-1974)," *Portuguese Studies* 29:2 (2013): 251-276; Reis, "Myths of Decolonization: Britain, France, and Portugal Compared," in Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto (eds.), *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015).

⁹ Several recent studies, not quoted by the authors, would be helpful to deal with the suggestions made above, especially: Sarah Ashby, *The Lusophone world: the evolution of Portuguese national narratives* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2017); António Costa Pinto and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, "Ideologies of Exceptionality and the Legacies of Empire in Portugal," in Dietmar Rothermund (ed.), *Memories of Post-Imperial Nations: The Aftermath of Decolonization, 1945-2013* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); António Raimundo, "The Europeanisation of Foreign Policy: An Assessment of the EU Impact on Portugal's Post-Colonial Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa," *European Integration Online Papers* 17:1 (2013): 1-23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1695/2013001>; António Raimundo, "Mapping the Agency of a Small, Former Colonial Power: Portugal and EU Political Conditionality in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 15:4 (2014): 589-605. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15705854.2014.945274>; Steven Robinson, "Painting the CFSP in National Colours: Portuguese Strategies to Help Shape the EU's External Relations," *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 28:2-3 (2015): 235-255. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/ijis.28.2-3.235_1.

emotions, perceptions, memories, identity, nationalism, etc. It might be contended that this is part of the richness of cultural approaches, but the profusion of these concepts along the text without adequate specification of their scope, mode of operation, and interconnections arguably makes it more difficult to deepen the analysis and, at times, to follow in full its main points. Finding the sort of balance between concreteness and abstraction that Finney's essay alludes to is, admittedly, a challenging task. Yet in this case a practical and potentially helpful step in that direction might have been to dedicate more space (at the outset and separately from the more empirical analysis) to the discussion of the main concepts and terms of the research. In his review of the culturalist cluster on narratives (to which the idea of myth can be related) Finney alludes to the distinction made in the literature between how narratives can both cause behavior and constitute identities. Reis and Oliveira are also attentive to those two dynamics in a generic or implicit fashion, as when, for instance, they refer to the way in which Portuguese foreign policy elites "think and act" (648). This is but one example of how more specificity and precision from the start could have produced clearer and deeper analysis.

Such weaknesses are only minor aspects considering the study's overall richness and interest. If broader insights can be extracted from it as well as from the discussion of the more historiographical and conceptual essays above, I would conclude concurring with the editors of this Special Section that the possibilities offered by more cultural approaches of international history are far from exhausted and should be pursued from different perspectives, in dialogue with other disciplines.

António Raimundo is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Research Centre in Political Science and International Relations of University of Minho and Associate Fellow at the Centre for International Studies of ISCTE-IUL, Portugal. Previously he was Invited Assistant Professor in International Relations at the Department of History of ISCTE-IUL and Junior Visiting Researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of University of Lisbon. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science. His current research areas include: Foreign Policy Analysis, European integration, Europeanisation, small states, Portuguese foreign policy, and Europe-Africa relations. He has published on those topics in different international and Portuguese journals, and is currently editing a volume on contemporary Portuguese foreign policy towards Africa.

© 2019 The Authors | [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States License](#)