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# The Rise of the Cultural Treaty: Diplomatic Agreements and the International Politics of Culture in the Age of Three Worlds

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## ABSTRACT

Beginning in the late 1950s, observers noted that states around the world were entering into cultural treaties—bilateral agreements promoting exchange and cooperation in a range of ‘cultural’ fields—at an accelerating rate. This article combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to offer an international overview of the growth in cultural treaty-making as a means of exploring the role of ‘culture’ in the conduct of interstate relations during the age of the Cold War and decolonization. The article first reconstructs the international history of how ‘cultural agreements’ were defined, and on that basis proposes a historically accurate way of categorizing them. Applying this categorization to data from the electronic World Treaty Index, it then presents a descriptive statistical analysis of how often, when, and by which states cultural agreements were signed between 1935 and 1980, identifying six major trends. The article concludes with a discussion of how to account, at the level of the international system, for these trends, suggesting that the mid-century rise of the cultural treaty reflected a distinctive historical conjuncture in which the statist and cultural-nationalist implications of such agreements made them seem a valuable diplomatic tool for certain states—to a degree not seen before or since.

## KEYWORDS

Cultural diplomacy; cultural agreements; treaties; Cold War; decolonization

In 1960, UNESCO stopped publishing bilateral cultural agreements. The organization had collected and published the texts of ‘diplomatic instruments relating to education, science and culture’ since 1951, but now was overwhelmed. ‘At first the number of these agreements was small,’ the organization explained in the preface to the 1962 *Index of Cultural Agreements* it chose to compile instead. ‘During the last few years, however, international cultural relations have developed to such an extent, and the number of agreements concluded has increased so considerably, that it would be extremely difficult to bring up to date a general collection reproducing the full texts of all the instruments in force.’<sup>1</sup>

State-to-state agreements on cultural matters seemed an important matter for UNESCO, closely related to its own mandate to promote cross-border cooperation in the fields of education, science and culture so as to create a peace ‘founded ... upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind’. UNESCO’s General Conference had, in 1948, called on all member states

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to 'deposit with the Director-General conventions they have concluded on cultural affairs, in order that information about them may be spread among other Member States'. In 1949, it instructed the Director-General 'to undertake a systematic comparative and critical study of cultural agreements and conventions now in force'.<sup>2</sup> And in 1950, 'considering that one of Unesco's essential tasks is to develop and improve international cultural relations; [and] considering that those relations are most often governed by cultural agreements', the body instructed the Director-General to compile and publish the texts of these diplomatic instruments.<sup>3</sup> UNESCO's *Collection of Cultural Agreements* appeared in loose-leaf format, in English and French, in 1951; regular supplements were published to keep the collection up to date.<sup>4</sup> The eighteenth supplement, released in 1958, was to be the last, however. The pace of this kind of treaty-making had simply become too fast for UNESCO to keep up.<sup>5</sup>

It is easy to see the problem UNESCO officials faced. Let us take 1960 as an example. When, in the last weeks of that year, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and the Soviet official Yuri Georgi Zhukov, chairman of the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, signed a bilateral agreement in Moscow establishing 'the principles for the development of cultural and scientific co-operation' between Cuba and the Soviet Union, the ceremony marked the end of an exceptionally busy year of cultural treaty-making for both countries.<sup>6</sup> In February, Zhukov had been in New Delhi to sign an agreement on 'cultural, scientific and technical cooperation' with India, and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev had signed a similar accord with Indonesian president Sukarno at Bogor, a resort town on Java south of Jakarta.<sup>7</sup> Between then and Che's December visit to Moscow, Soviet diplomats signed agreements of this kind with Finland, France, Italy, Afghanistan and Ghana. Prior to 1956, the Soviets Union had signed only two such agreements. The Cuban-Soviet agreement was likewise part of the Cubans' own new burst of cultural treaty-making; it was one of eight cultural agreements Havana entered into during that year alone.<sup>8</sup> Before Castro came to power in 1959, the Cuban state had signed no agreements of this kind.

Nor was this diplomatic trend limited to the communist sphere. January 1960 found Mexico's secretary of foreign affairs on a tour of Latin American capitals, signing cultural agreements with Brazil, Argentina and Chile in the course of a few weeks.<sup>9</sup> Mexican diplomats followed these with similar agreements with Peru, Yugoslavia and the United Arab Republic. In March Yugoslavia's ambassador and India's education minister signed an agreement 'for the promotion of cultural relations,' one of five such treaties Tito's regime entered into in 1960.<sup>10</sup> In August, the French politician Jean Foyer, recently appointed secretary of state for relations with the member states of the *Communauté française*, traveled to Chad, Central African Republic and Congo to sign 'agreement[s] on cultural cooperation' with representatives of each of these newly independent countries.<sup>11</sup> In November, France's foreign minister was in Yaoundé, Cameroon, to sign a similar agreement with that country's first foreign minister, Charles-René Okala.<sup>12</sup> These marked the beginning of a wave of cultural agreements between France and newly independent African states: 1961 would see France enter into cultural agreements with Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Niger, Mauritania and Guinea.

The bilateral cultural treaty had become a popular diplomatic tool—and a highly adaptable one. In 1960 alone, these were used to cement relations within the global socialist bloc, to expand the Soviet sphere's contacts with Western Europe and the developing world, to strengthen cooperation among Latin American countries, to bolster ties among countries active in what would come to be called the non-aligned movement, and to recast relationships between a former colonial power in Europe and newly independent states in sub-Saharan Africa. These diverse states had apparently come to agree that cultural relations were an important part of their foreign policy and that an appropriate means to advance these relations was by signing treaties: formal, written agreements prepared according to standardized diplomatic practice, signed by government ministers, generally requiring ratification and usually deposited with the United Nations for inclusion in the volumes of the United Nations Treaty Series.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, as UNESCO officials noted in 1962, they seemed to have arrived at this conclusion rather suddenly.

The event these sources point to—call it the rise of the cultural treaty—is the subject of this article. In it, I reconstruct and analyze the growing use of bilateral cultural agreements in the mid-twentieth century as a means of exploring broader transformations in the conduct of interstate relations in the age of the Cold War and decolonization. Charting the history of how, when, and by whom such agreements were used allows us to explore in particular the apparent growth of concern with ‘culture’ and ‘the cultural’ in postwar international relations. That such growth took place is suggested by a rich body of historical research, which documents the ways international political actors responded to ‘an age when cultural issues were steadily gaining in importance as determinants of international affairs’.<sup>14</sup> Recent examples include studies on the post-1945 expansion of various states’ official ‘cultural diplomacy’, on the ‘cultural Cold War’ and on the international cultural politics of decolonization, as well as the historiography on UNESCO.<sup>15</sup> The dynamic role of culture in postwar international relations is interesting, moreover, for the way it paralleled a broader embrace of the idea of ‘culture’ in intellectual life in the same period. Intellectuals’ growing focus on cultural critique, including the range of developments often referred to as the ‘cultural turn’ in the humanities and social sciences, was a ‘fundamental aspect’ of what the cultural historian Michael Denning calls ‘the age of three worlds’: ‘that short half-century (1945-1989) when we imagined that the world was divided into three—the capitalist First World, the Communist Second World, and the decolonizing Third World—as if each were a separate planet involved in an elaborate and dangerous orbit around the others’.<sup>16</sup>

For some observers at the time, a new emphasis on culture in international relations was a distinctive feature of the age. This was the argument of Charles Frankel, the Columbia University philosopher who led the US State Department’s division for educational and cultural exchange in the mid-1960s. In a 1966 speech, he argued revolutionary developments in education, travel and communications technology, and ‘the rapid and now almost universal acceptance of the egalitarian language and moral outlook of democracy’, had ‘changed the nature and conditions of national power, the character and function of diplomacy, and the very terms ... in which the “national interest” must be defined’. In short, a ‘new era in international relations’ was at hand: ‘the era of educational and cultural relations’.<sup>17</sup> But what did this ‘new era’ actually consist of, in terms of diplomatic practice? Evidently, it consisted in no small part of an intense burst of treaty-making. My discussion here is based on the notion that the bilateral cultural agreements thereby produced—the documents themselves as well as the historical patterns of their creation and use—offer rich materials with which to analyze the changing role of culture in twentieth-century international relations.<sup>18</sup>

One valuable approach to these materials would be to focus on a few agreements, or on those of a few states. Each treaty was, after all, shaped by factors specific to the particular bilateral relationship it regulated. Such factors should be explored through archival work and contextualized in light of the (often quite extensive) historiography on those countries’ foreign policy and cultural history. Several scholars have done just this, analyzing (or at least mentioning) particular agreements in the context of studying a country’s cultural diplomacy.<sup>19</sup>

Another valuable perspective, however, can be gained by taking a step back and considering these agreements as a group. The goal of such an approach would be to gain a global perspective on a development that was evidently global in scope. Scholars have only rarely examined cultural agreements from the broad, systemic point of view with which UNESCO officials and other observers discussed them in the 1960s; most of these have been scholars of international law, not historians.<sup>20</sup>

Here, I offer an historical overview of the uses of bilateral cultural agreements over forty-five years, using data available in the electronic World Treaty Index (eWTI), which codes agreements by topic.<sup>21</sup> The first way I approach these agreements is quantitative, mining this data to measure trends in cultural treaty-making over time. Quantitative patterns of treaty use cannot of course tell us what the treaties were for, nor to what extent particular agreements were in fact followed by concrete programs of cultural cooperation or exchange. But recent research has

shown that exploring historical patterns of treaty-making, including the emergence and spread of particular categories of diplomatic agreements, can offer insight into large-scale questions about the shape and functioning of the international system.<sup>22</sup> Cultural agreements have not been subject to any comprehensive, long-term study of this kind, but offer a valuable resource for such an investigation. Since a wide range of states signed these over a relatively long period, these agreements permit a comparative and transnational exploration of one significant way in which culture and diplomacy have intersected in practice. To conduct such an exploration systematically, we need a comprehensive, international overview of the dynamics of this type of treaty-making. Offering such an overview is one of this article's goals.

But to make convincing arguments on the basis of quantitative findings we need to know that the eWTI's coding rests on a reliable definition of which agreements should be classified as cultural. What, in other words, *was* a cultural treaty, and how (and by whom) was this defined? Defining cultural agreements has, it turns out, been a complicated question, marked by stark shifts and ideological contestation. The second way I approach these agreements, then, is through a historical investigation of how they have been defined, charting how the category of 'cultural agreement' itself developed at the international level. My initial goal with this part of my investigation was simply to identify a meaningful category on which to base my quantitative analysis. But this historical exploration offers valuable insights of its own, shedding light on an international debate on the meaning of 'culture' during a dramatic phase of twentieth-century international relations.

In what follows, I first reconstruct the international history of how such agreements have been defined. On this basis, I present the categorization that I use for counting these agreements. Second, I offer a descriptive statistical analysis of how often, when, and by which states such agreements have been created, identifying six major trends. This combination of approaches is designed to allow me to examine the bilateral cultural agreement as a particular tool of international relations and identify its distinctive features. That, in turn, is a first step toward a broader exploration of that tool's history in international and transnational perspective. In the article's final section I suggest ways that exploration might proceed, identifying two key features of the mid-twentieth-century bilateral cultural treaty that, I argue, help account for the trends in cultural treaty-making identified in section two.

## Categorizing the cultural

Strictly speaking, the terms of international law do not allow us to define cultural agreements as a particular type of agreement. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969) classifies diplomatic agreements on the basis of their form, not their content. Yet it has long been customary to categorize treaties by the topics they address. Early published collections of treaty texts, like Jean Dumont's *Corps universel diplomatique du droit des gens* (Amsterdam, 1726-31), offered 'a collection of treaties of alliance, of peace, of cease-fire, of neutrality, of commerce, of exchange, of protection and of guarantee'.<sup>23</sup> In the twentieth century, it became clear that anyone preparing a collection like this for the present would need to include a new category: treaties of culture. But what exactly that category referred to has undergone several changes.

The first such collection was published in Paris in 1938 by the Institute for International Intellectual Cooperation. This body (known by its French acronym IICI) was the executive agency of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, the Geneva-based League of Nations organ that is often seen as the precursor to UNESCO.<sup>24</sup> Viewing these as 'a rather new phenomenon in international life and in relations among peoples', the Institute compiled and published a selection of what it called 'intellectual agreements' concluded since 1919.<sup>25</sup> Intellectual agreements were those through which two or more states aimed to promote 'intellectual relations (artistic, literary, scientific, educational) among their peoples'. Using the adjective 'intellectual', rather than 'cultural', to refer to this broad domain was standard in international cooperation

after the First World War. In English just as much as in French, 'intellectual co-operation' was the name assigned to the movement that sought to use scholarly, artistic and scientific exchange to promote peace and order in the aftermath of the Great War (as well as to create international academic and scientific networks that excluded Germany).<sup>26</sup> The IICI's collection of intellectual agreements also employed the adjective 'cultural'. It did so, however, in one quite specific way.

The introduction to the IICI's collection identified three sub-sets of intellectual agreements. Most common were bilateral agreements on education, usually at university level (*accords universitaires et scolaires*). A second group consisted of narrow agreements founding an institute or arranging an art exhibition. Agreements of these two kinds had been signed sporadically since the mid-nineteenth century (the book notes such precedents as the 1874 agreement between Germany and Greece regulating excavations at Olympus and a 1905 Franco-British agreement on the exchange of university professors), and had come into more frequent use since the end of the First World War. But recent years had seen the emergence of a third group of agreements, of a new type: bilateral agreements in which two states arranged exchanges in education but also in literature, the arts, music, science and mass media. These agreements, 'embracing the quasi-totality of intellectual matters common to two nations', the book referred to as *accords culturels*.<sup>27</sup> While France had been the most frequent signatory of agreements of the older types, the state behind the new 'cultural' agreement was fascist Italy, whose 1935 agreements with Hungary and Austria were identified here as being the first of this kind.<sup>28</sup> These agreements were indeed a diplomatic innovation. In addition to their comprehensive character, these agreements featured a novel emphasis on the distinctive cultural identity of the two nations. In formal terms, they were distinctive in that they were signed by Italy's minister of foreign affairs and required ratification. In both senses, they marked the arrival of what can be called a cultural treaty.<sup>29</sup>

In the ideologically charged atmosphere of the 1930s, the distinction between these different types of agreements was fraught with meaning. Italian fascists, and later Germany's National Socialists, promoted cultural treaties in a manner than evoked the classic conflict between nationally rooted *Kultur* and liberal civilization. The German-Italian cultural treaty of November 1938 was presented in this spirit as modeling a new type of cultural relations among nations that embraced totalitarian state powers and the values of nationalism.<sup>30</sup> Liberal internationalists, on the other hand, celebrated the peace-making value of intellectual accords (of the kind signed by France and Belgium), while warning that 'certain accords of the type ... that the Institute's publication calls "cultural" accords' really sought 'to group states into hostile blocs or to submit the independence of a small country to the subjection of a powerful neighbour.'<sup>31</sup> These suspicions would be confirmed by the way Nazi Germany and imperial Japan used such accords to bolster the Axis alliance and lock in influence over satellite states during the Second World War.<sup>32</sup>

But the sharp distinction between the terms 'cultural' and 'intellectual' on which this debate (and the IICI's scheme of categorization) relied did not survive the war. After 1945, international organizations gradually abandoned the adjective 'intellectual' as a category, replacing it with 'cultural'.<sup>33</sup> This shift, evident not least in the name given to the UN's new 'educational, scientific and cultural' organization, almost certainly reflected the new prominence of the Americans, who had been comfortably referring to international 'cultural relations' throughout the 1930s, while their French counterparts engaged in a tense dance around the term.<sup>34</sup> Be that as it may, an embrace of the language of culture clearly marked UNESCO's effort in the 1950s to compile and categorize bilateral diplomatic agreements. The organization now referred to the whole class of agreements that the IICI had called intellectual as 'cultural'. Moreover, as its 1962 *Index* explained, this was not your father's 'culture': 'Readers of the Index will not fail to note how the idea of cultural relations has expanded during recent years. It now extends to new fields of action such as the peaceful uses of atomic energy, in so far as the latter involves the exchange of scientific information, scientists and research workers.'<sup>35</sup>

In spite of this change in language, UNESCO's scheme for categorizing the diplomatic agreements it saw as relevant to its field of activity was broadly similar to its predecessor's. This scheme divided cultural agreements into two main groups. First, 'general cultural agreements' were those 'dealing with all educational, scientific, technical and cultural exchanges and increasingly comprehensive in content', a grouping that corresponded to what the IICI had called *accords culturels*. Second came 'specialized cultural agreements': diplomatic instruments 'embodying clearly defined programs which deal with specific aspects of cultural relations'. This grouping merged two of the IICI's categories into one and rejected the earlier body's decision to assign a special category to agreements on educational matters. Instead, 'specialized' agreements were those that promoted cooperation, from a single exhibition to a multi-year exchange scheme, in one of the following fields: education, science and technology, mass media and information, or culture.<sup>36</sup>

This scheme of categories allowed UNESCO to include agreements addressing all of the fields under its mandate. But it had the potential to create some confusion. For one thing, by applying these categories retroactively, the 1962 *Index* outlined an anachronistic and misleading history of this form of diplomacy. The chronological list of 'cultural agreements' offered there begins with an 1840 agreement between Ecuador and Spain that established equivalence between the two countries' educational and professional qualifications.<sup>37</sup> In fact, as we have seen, it would be nearly a century after 1840 before anyone in the international community called a bilateral agreement 'cultural', and then in order to distinguish a new diplomatic tool from earlier agreements.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, UNESCO's *Index* used the idea of culture in ways that were inconsistent, if not contradictory. All the agreements it listed were 'cultural' according to a sense of the term that was clearly influenced by anthropologists' use of it: 'since the earlier notion of intellectual cooperation and cultural exchange has now been expanded to include exchanges and collaboration in all branches of education, science and technology, arts and letters, sport and tourism, the term 'culture' is now taken to mean the manner of life of the two exchange partners'.<sup>39</sup> But by also listing 'culture' as a field alongside of (and distinct from) 'education, science and technology, [and] mass media and information', the *Index* evidently used the term in a different, narrower sense as well. Specialized agreements on 'culture' were those that addressed 'cultural institutes; artistic exhibitions; [or] protection of literary and artistic property', or that promoted exchanges among the following categories of persons: 'artists ...; writers; musicians ...; painters and sculptors; actors; film actors; dancers; artistes; architects; librarians; museum archivists; archaeologists'.<sup>40</sup> If UNESCO's use of the adjective 'cultural' tipped its hat to modern anthropology, its use of the noun 'culture' rested on European bourgeois traditions that applied the term to a refined aesthetic realm of the arts and letters.<sup>41</sup>

The confusing consequences of this double use of the idea of culture are in evidence in the electronic World Treaty Index (eWTI), which classifies cultural treaties in a manner that echoes UNESCO's scheme. Begun in the 1960s by the University of Washington political scientist Peter Rohn, the eWTI assigns a topic label to each bilateral agreement according to 'a special ordering system tailored to the intrinsic logic of the various subject matters of treaties'. This system features nine 'topic categories', each of which includes a set of narrower topics (identified by a short name).<sup>42</sup> Thus topic category 1, 'diplomacy', includes 1ALLY, for treaties of alliance, and 1PEACE, for peace treaties. Topic category 3, 'economics', features 3INVES (bilateral investment treaties) and 3TRADE (trade agreements). And topic category 7, 'culture', for agreements on 'exchanges and joint programs in cultural fields, broadly defined', include subtopics that seem designed to label what UNESCO called 'specialized' agreements in science (7SCI), education (7EDUC), and even space exploration (7SPACE)—as well as 'culture' (7CULT).<sup>43</sup> Like UNESCO's *Index*, the eWTI uses 'culture', applied to agreements addressing 'theater, opera, ballet, films, books, [and] sports', as a subset of cultural agreements. Unlike UNESCO's scheme, however, the eWTI does not offer a heading for what UNESCO called 'general cultural agreements'. Instead,

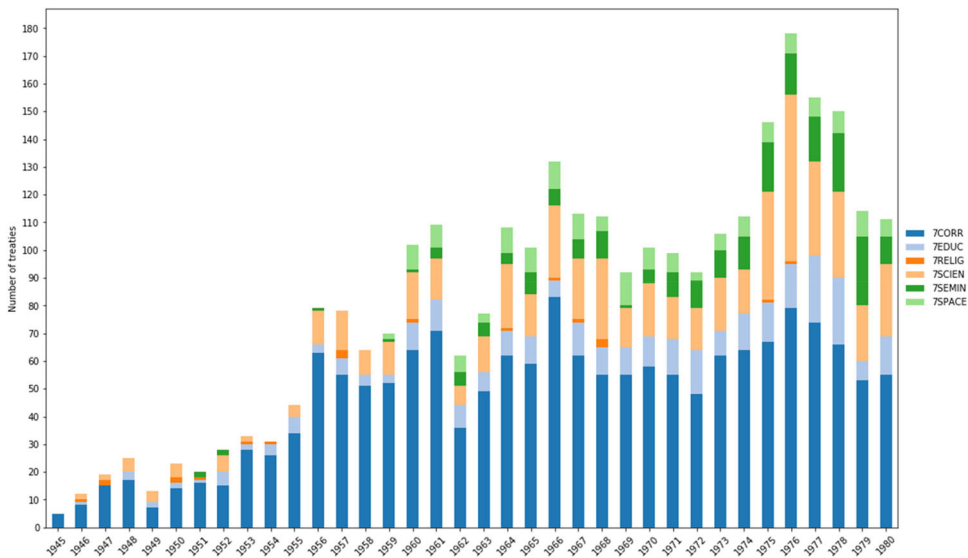


Figure 1. New bilateral agreements signed per year in eWTI topic group 7 (culture), 1945–80.

treaties on ‘matters concerning more than one topic in this topic group’ are also assigned to 7CULT. This choice effectively obscures the treaties that the IICI in 1938 first called ‘cultural’, mixing them up with narrower and less diplomatically significant agreements.

For the historian interested in the apparent rise of the cultural treaty after 1945, the question is: which type of cultural agreement was in fact on the rise? Looking at the number of new agreements signed after 1945 in the eWTI’s topic group 7 shows that the subgroup 7CULT accounted for the large majority of these; this was also the subgroup that experienced the most significant growth (Figure 1).<sup>44</sup> Within 7CULT, the agreement’s titles show that just over twenty percent of these were narrow, ‘specialized’ agreements related to a particular field (often film). The rest, having generic titles like ‘culture’, ‘cultural cooperation’ and so on, were almost certainly general cultural agreements—versions, that is, of the cultural treaty the IICI identified in 1938.

The group of agreements that experienced a boom beginning in the 1950s was, then, general cultural agreements (GCAs), and it is on these that the remainder of this article will focus. To do so, I have isolated those agreements which are most likely to be GCAs, creating a set that excludes all agreements that refer to a specific topic in their titles, as well as those which I have determined, by reading their texts, were not comprehensive in character.<sup>45</sup> The set includes agreements signed from 1935, when the genre was invented, until 1980. This cut-off point allows us to explore the use of the cultural treaty during the period of its greatest growth. As one IR scholar observed in 2010, ‘the concluding of formal cultural treaties—a practice which used to be commonplace up to the end of the 1980s—seems to have become outdated’.<sup>46</sup> The apparent ‘fall’ of the cultural treaty is, however, a topic for another investigation.

Focusing on general cultural agreements is valuable for two reasons. First, it allows us to base a quantitative investigation on a category that is rooted in diplomatic history, as opposed to abstract categorizations like the one offered by UNESCO in 1962. Second, once we peel away the anachronisms and confusions created by the postwar categorization, we see the outlines of a story that raises important, indeed troubling historical questions. In particular, it leads us to ask how and why a diplomatic innovation of the 1930s would go on to experience such apparent growth in use in the 1950s and 60s. As the historian Marlise Dérobert observed in 1971, the Nazis’ cultural treaties were, ‘from a technical point of view, still models of the genre’.<sup>47</sup> It is

rather ironic to find that a diplomatic tool first developed by Mussolini, and keenly embraced by Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, should go on to be so popular among postwar figures as diverse as Che Guevara, Nehru, Khrushchev and De Gaulle's culture minister André Malraux. What can account for this apparent continuity? To answer this question we need to know more about how in fact these agreements were used.

### Cultural treaty-making trends

A quantitative analysis of how often, when, and by which states general cultural agreements (GCAs) were entered into between 1935 and 1980 allows us to identify several trends. The first trend to note is simply that there was a substantial increase in the use of GCAs from the mid-1950s, in both absolute and relative terms. Plotting the number of new general cultural agreements signed per year shows that treaty-making in the 'cultural' category suddenly took off in the late 1950s and remained at a high level through the 1970s (Figure 2). Moreover, the number of GCAs signed per year grew also as a percentage of all bilateral agreements signed that year. Cultural agreements accounted for on average two percent of the total number of bilateral agreements signed per year between 1945 and 1954, while in the following decade that average jumped to nearly four percent.<sup>48</sup> The eWTI data, then, confirms UNESCO's impression—that cultural agreements became much more frequent from the mid-1950s—and demonstrates that this growth cannot be accounted for by a general increase in treaty-making.

Second, this increase was not gradual or even. Rather, it took place quite suddenly, and the number of new treaties signed per year was marked by several 'spikes'. 1956 stands out as a turning point. The number of general cultural agreements signed that year was more than twice as large as any previous year, and more than doubled in relative terms as well, jumping from 2.3 percent of all new bilateral agreements signed in 1955 to 5.15 percent in 1956. In the following twenty-five years, the quantity of agreements (and percentage of the total they represented) only rarely returned to the modest levels of the decades before 1955.

Third, the rise of the cultural treaty was a global event. Prior to 1956, the practice of signing such agreements had been almost entirely confined to Europe and Latin America. (Agreements

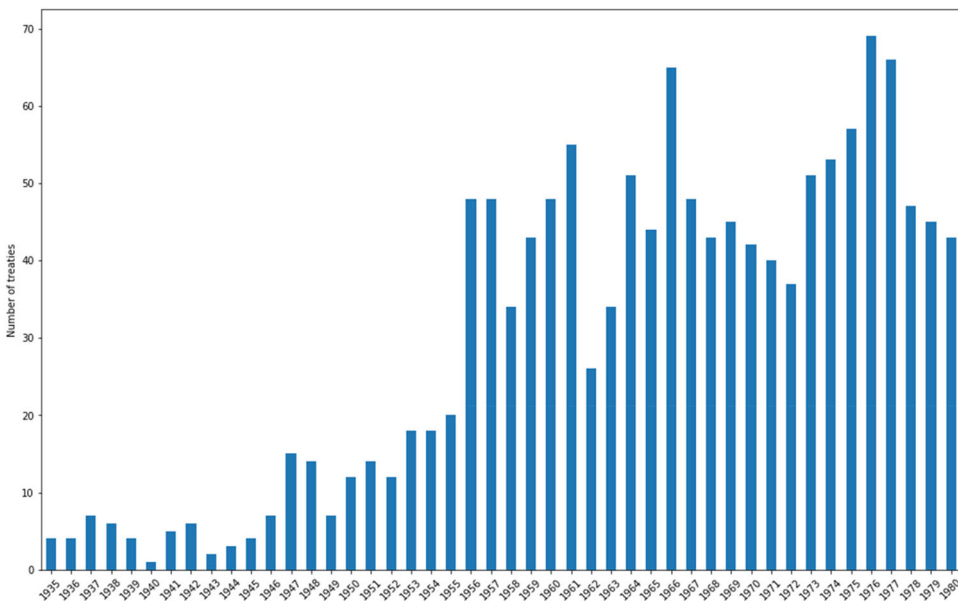


Figure 2. General cultural agreements signed per year by all states, 1935–80.

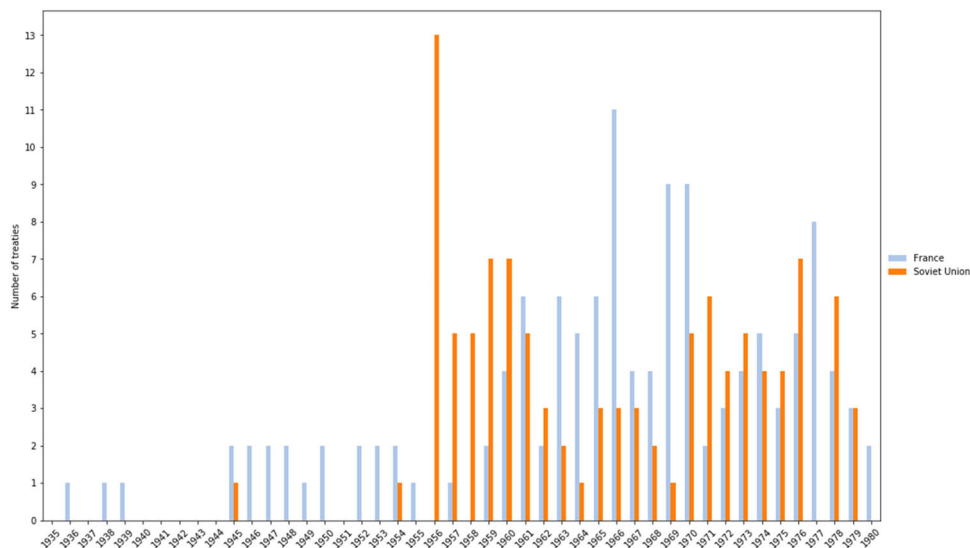
signed in 1935-1955 by countries outside of those two areas amounted to no more than sixteen percent of the total.) After 1955, states on all six continents contributed to the spread of the practice. The worldwide embrace of bilateral agreements on cultural exchange was underlined at the UN, where in February 1957 the General Assembly adopted a resolution inviting 'all States to promote, by mutual agreements and other means, wider cultural and scientific international co-operation'.<sup>49</sup> In 1960, UNESCO's General Conference likewise called on the body's Director-General to prepare 'a draft of principles which could serve as guiding lines' for such bilateral action.<sup>50</sup>

But if this development was global in character, it was not evenly so. Rather, certain states and groups of states drove the increase in cultural treaty-making far more than others. Which ones can be revealed by looking closely at some of the most striking increases, which appear as spikes in [Figure 2](#). The spike of 1956, for example, was largely the result of a sudden burst of cultural treaty-making among socialist states: their twenty-three agreements represented nearly half of that year's total.<sup>51</sup> This development can be traced above all to a policy shift in Moscow. Prior to 1956, the Soviet Union had signed only two general cultural agreements.<sup>52</sup> Now, Soviet officials deployed this tool with vigor, signing thirteen cultural treaties between April and October. These created cultural links with all the states of the 1955 Warsaw Pact (Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania—the same states that were members of Comecon), as well as with communist China, Mongolia, North Korea and Yugoslavia. (In addition, the Soviets penned cultural agreements that year with Syria, where the government was pivoting towards Moscow, and with Norway.) Ten additional agreements were signed among these socialist powers, led by North Korea, which established cultural ties with most of the European socialist states.

A look at the 1966 spike shows that this, too, was led by the diplomacy of socialist states. Agreements signed by at least one socialist state accounted for fifty-one percent of the year's total. New at this time was the effort of socialist powers to establish cultural ties with non-socialist countries in Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. Socialist states signed seven agreements with African states (such as the cultural treaty between North Korea and Ghana of 20 January, the Rwanda-USSR 'Agreement on cultural and scientific co-operation' of 6 May, or Czechoslovakia's accord with Congo-Brazzaville of 29 November); twelve with Middle Eastern states (including Tunisia's agreements with Hungary, Poland and Romania); and three with countries in Asia (between the People's Republic of China and Cambodia, the Soviet Union and Iran, and Poland and Afghanistan).

But the single biggest signer of cultural agreements in 1966 was France. Its eleven agreements—with countries from India to Poland, Bolivia to Ethiopia—accounted for nearly seventeen percent of the year's total. This prominence was typical of the 1960s, when France contributed a great deal to the high rate of use of cultural agreements: in 1961-1970, France signed an average of 13.6 percent of the annual total, and in 1969 and 1970 France was party to no fewer than twenty percent of the GCAs signed each year. Indeed, France's prominence in 1966 is indicative of the leading role that country played in the history of this treaty type as a whole. French diplomats did not lead in the early use of general cultural agreements, preferring in the interwar period to conclude narrower agreements on educational exchange.<sup>53</sup> In the postwar period, however, France embraced this technology, particularly from 1960. Viewing the number of GCAs France signed annually alongside the number signed by the Soviet Union allows us to observe that France, too, invested heavily in this diplomatic tool, but at different times ([Figure 3](#)).

The notable role of Paris and Moscow in cultural treaty-making is confirmed by ranking the countries that entered into the most GCAs during the period 1935-80 as a whole. A table showing the ten top countries in this ranking shows that France and the Soviet Union were indeed those that signed the most general cultural agreements ([Table 1](#)). This table also permits a fourth, more general, observation: a relatively small number of countries accounted for a notable



**Figure 3.** General cultural agreements signed by France and the Soviet Union per year, 1935–80.

**Table 1.** Top ten signatory states of bilateral general cultural agreements, 1935–1980.

France	129
Soviet Union	106
East Germany	95
Poland	85
Spain	76
Yugoslavia	73
Hungary	69
Czechoslovakia	66
Romania	64
Brazil	63

proportion of all cultural treaty-making. The 739 agreements signed by these ten states represent some fifty-four percent of the period total.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, charting France and the USSR’s numbers alongside the growth curve of the use of GCAs overall reveals that these two powers were not the ones driving the continued growth of cultural treaty-making in the 1970s (Figure 4). What accounts for this is a fifth trend: cultural treaty-making globalized. The practice spread, that is, to involve more countries in more parts of the world, forging formal cultural-diplomatic links within and between a greater number of world regions, even while socialist regimes continued to play a disproportionately large role.

Looking closely at the ‘spikes’ of 1976 and 1977, for example, we can see the prominence of several new actors. In part, socialist states other than the Soviet Union signed many agreements, including especially Yugoslavia and East Germany. (Socialist countries were party to 71 of the 135 agreements signed in 1976–1977, or fifty-three percent.) Where earlier peaks had reflected socialist regimes’ efforts to formalize cultural relations among themselves, the wave of agreements in the late 1970s aimed outward. These two years alone saw the signature of sixty-two agreements between socialist regimes and non-socialist states, including nineteen with Western European countries, fourteen with states in sub-Saharan Africa, seven with states in North Africa and the Middle East, and nine with non-socialist countries in Asia, such as Hungary’s agreements with Japan (1977) and the Philippines (1976).

The sixty-four GCAs of 1976–77 *not* signed by a socialist state were characterized by two features. First, these included a wave of agreements between Western European states and

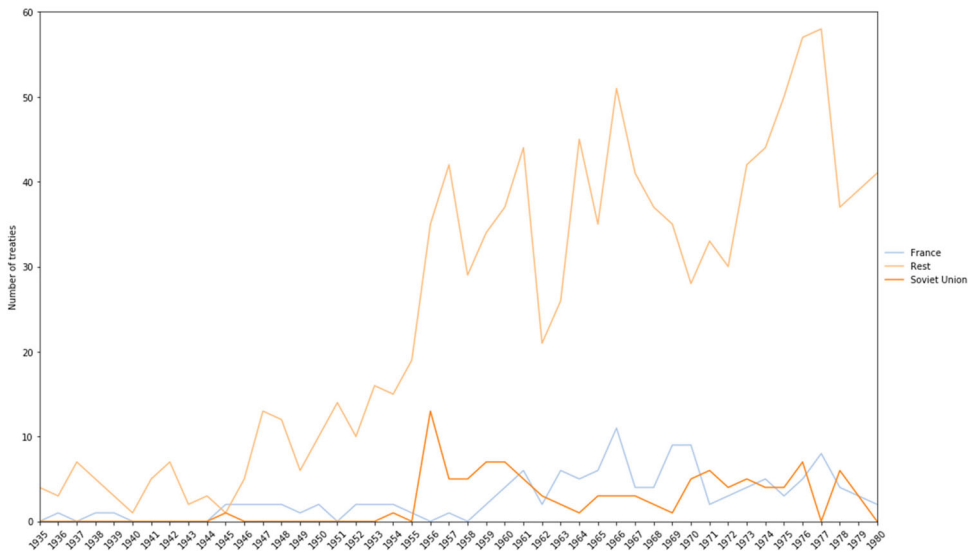
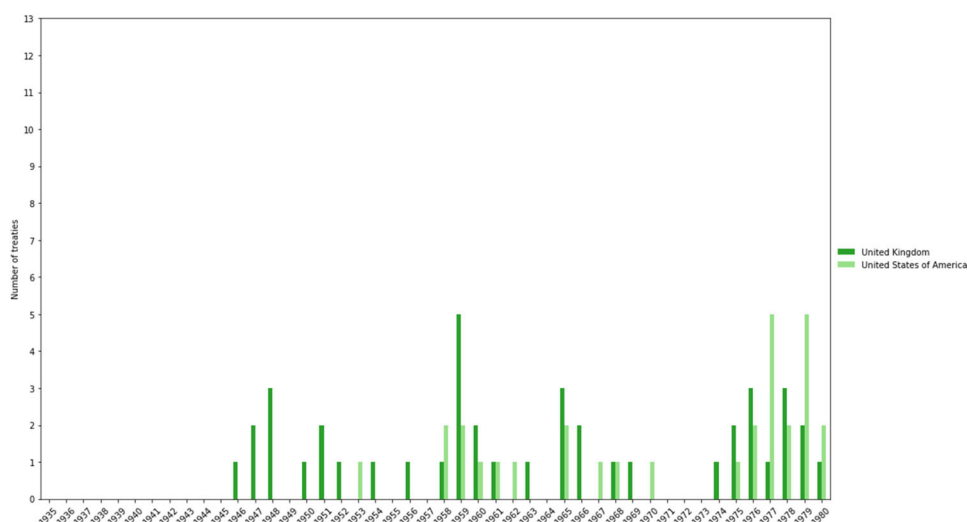


Figure 4. General cultural agreements signed per year by France, Soviet Union and all other states, 1935–80.

the Third World. Western European countries signed seven agreements with states in sub-Saharan Africa, six with countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and another six with states in Latin America. Second, these agreements marked a new degree of inter-connection within and among non-western regions. These years saw the adoption of six intra-Asian agreements (such as India's 1977 cultural agreements with Thailand and Sri Lanka) and six between Asian states and states in the Middle East and North Africa (such as South Korea's 1977 GCAs with Jordan, Morocco and Sudan).<sup>55</sup> 1976–77 also saw a high-water mark for cultural treaty-making by sub-Saharan African states: the fifteen agreements signed in 1976 came second only to the region's peak year, 1961.

The growing level of cultural treaty-making by non-western states suggested that these countries were answering the demand, made already in 1955 at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, to promote 'cultural co-operation among countries of Asia and Africa ... by pursuing bilateral arrangements'.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the degree of cultural treaty-making within regions varied widely. Of the twenty-five GCAs sub-Saharan African states signed in 1976–77, only one established relations with another state on the African continent: a convention on 'Culture, science and technology' signed by Togo and Algeria on 28 April 1976. The remainder were overwhelmingly with (mostly European) communist states or with France.<sup>57</sup> The diversity among the ways different groups of post-colonial states contributed to the growth in the use of cultural agreements in the 1970s shows, moreover, that this growth cannot be attributed simply to the growing number of states in the world. After all, by no means all states participated in the practice, so the increase in their number cannot by itself account for the practice's expansion.

Indeed, one of the most consistent patterns in cultural treaty-making across the period was the conspicuously modest role played by two powerful states: the United States and Great Britain (Figure 5). Between 1935 and 1980, the US entered into only thirty bilateral agreements on general cultural cooperation or exchange. And only about half of these were proper signed agreements; thirteen of them took more modest forms as exchanges of letters, memoranda of understanding or protocols. (These were emphatically 'agreements', that is, rather than 'treaties'—an important matter in Washington, since it meant they did not require ratification by the US Senate.) The UK's forty-three agreements are comparable to the number signed by other western European states, but amount to only about a third of the number signed by France, and less than West Germany, Spain, Italy, or Belgium.



**Figure 5.** General cultural agreements signed per year by the United States and Great Britain, 1935–80.

The low number of American and British cultural agreements is striking, because historically the US and UK are among the states that have otherwise signed the most bilateral diplomatic agreements. Indeed, one of the major findings of Peter Rohn's early work with the World Treaty Index was to demonstrate 'the dominance of the United States and to a lesser degree Great Britain in the crafting of international law' through registered bi-lateral agreements.<sup>58</sup> The record shows, however, that these two countries were *not* leading players in the making of international law in the field of culture. This, then, is a sixth observation: that the world's most active treaty-makers were far from being the world's most active *cultural* treaty-makers.

Of course, US cultural diplomacy during the Cold War was ambitious and multifaceted, as is documented in an ample historiography.<sup>59</sup> Washington's investment in cultural approaches to foreign policy was evidently not restricted by the low number of cultural agreements American officials signed. The case of the US makes clear that that a state's level of engagement with cultural diplomacy as such is not a reliable predictor of that state's use of bilateral cultural agreements. How, then, can we account for the trends I have identified here?

## Culture, the state and the international system

Each bilateral cultural agreement can (and should) be explained with reference to factors specific to the two signatory states at that particular moment. Such work can shed light on the meaning of these agreements for the parties, and on the motivations of those states that entered into such agreements most frequently. Research on the US-USSR cultural agreement of 27 January 1958 (the 'Lacy-Zarubin agreement'), offers a case in point. Historians of the Soviet Union have interpreted this diplomatic event in the context of the Soviets' broader embrace of cultural agreements after 1955, arguing that these served Khrushchev's new strategy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the West, drawing on Soviet internationalist legacies of the 1930s to respond to America's cultural penetration of Europe since 1945—while also pursuing access to American science and technology and creating opportunities for espionage.<sup>60</sup> No cultural treaty signed by France has enjoyed as much attention as the Lacy-Zarubin agreement, but the sheer number of them has likewise led scholars to explore France's investment in these agreements in the context of several nationally specific historical developments, including French efforts to manage decolonization, the visions of cultural politics that animated France's ministry of culture (founded under the leadership of the writer André Malraux in 1959), turf wars between that ministry and

the ministry of foreign affairs, and the longer-term history of the French state's deployment of *la civilisation* (and, later, *la culture*) *française* on the international stage.<sup>61</sup> One could continue in this way for each and every agreement, exploring the two parties' motivations as well as the power dynamics between (and within) the two states in question.

But insofar as the rise of the cultural treaty was an event in the international system as a whole, it makes sense also to seek systemic explanations. Scholarship on international law offers elements for explanations of this kind. The growing use of bilateral agreements to address the field of cultural relations seems to reflect the broader twentieth-century transition, in the words of one classic international law textbook, 'from a system of coordination of the international intercourse of mainly European states in limited areas, such as diplomatic relations and war, to a universal system of cooperation in numerous fields between quite different entities'.<sup>62</sup> That broader change, the same book argues, can be attributed to 'the advances of natural sciences and technology, increasing global economic and political interdependence and the need to address problems which can no longer be properly dealt with within a national framework'.<sup>63</sup> The only book-length study of bilateral cultural agreements of which I am aware, a 1977 French dissertation in international law, accounts for the emergence of an 'international law of culture' in the twentieth century in similarly broad terms, referring to factors like 'scientific and technological progress, the interdependence of economies, and international public opinion'.<sup>64</sup>

There are two problems with such explanations, one temporal and one geographical. First, the first general cultural agreement were signed in 1935, but they became a major feature of international relations only twenty years later. In other words, if the emergence of the cultural treaty was one event, its rise to international prominence was a separate event. This suggests that generic features of modernization cannot account for the mid-century rise of the cultural treaty in a satisfactory way. The second problem is that the factors these explanations cite are global in nature, but, as we have seen, the cultural treaty was *not* embraced globally. The broad but uneven adoption of this diplomatic tool—very much by some powerful states, almost not at all by others—cannot be accounted for by references to global trends.

One starting point for how we might more specifically account for the patterns of cultural treaty-making I have identified comes from a basic insight about treaties: insofar as international law 'governs primarily the relations between states', international cultural law makes sense only if both parties accept that culture is itself part of 'relations between states'.<sup>65</sup> There could be plenty of cultural intercourse among the citizens of two states without there being any desire or perceived need for the two states to formalize their relations in that regard. The deeper historical issue, then, was the ideologically charged question of the appropriate relationship between the state and cultural life.

It was precisely this issue that American officials cited to explain Washington's reluctance to enter into bilateral cultural agreements. In a 1969 discussion of the Cold War 'cultural contest' between the superpowers, the former assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs, Charles Frankel, argued that 'in America, "culture"—the liberal arts, sciences and professions, education, literature, painting, the performing arts, architecture, and design—is the work of private citizens who are not employees of the government, and who produce what is not an official product'. For this reason, 'cultural policy, and particularly the cultural policy of the United States, cannot be viewed as a technique of maneuver, or a tool that can be freely used as the government wishes to use it, for purposes defined within the traditional perspectives of diplomacy'.<sup>66</sup> The Soviets, by contrast, argued that state regulation of international cultural relations was appropriate and indeed necessary. 'As a result of the increased pace of social, scientific and technical progress', wrote the Soviet cultural official Genadii Mozhaev in 1965, 'the pattern of international contacts has become infinitely more intricate and complex, so that steps have had to be taken to regulate these exchanges and put them on a sound legal footing with provision for further extension and development'.<sup>67</sup> It went without saying that it was states, using the 'sound legal footing' of diplomatic agreements, that should take these regulatory steps. French

officials likewise assigned a central role to state institutions in advancing the country's cultural relations with the outside world. Based on the view that French language and culture were on the defensive, their belief was 'that [France's] cultural action is not separable, in our age, from its diplomatic action'.<sup>68</sup> The appropriate role of the foreign ministry, its office for cultural affairs confidently asserted in 1958, was to 'export that which ... the intelligence and taste of the [French] public produce'.<sup>69</sup>

The difference among these positions highlights a simple but revealing pattern: countries that embraced an interventionist role for the state in domestic cultural life tended to pursue cultural agreements with other states; those that espoused a limited vision of the state's role did so much less often. On one side of this divide we find the USSR—where, by Soviet officials' own account, 'the importance of the role of State control and State establishments in the cultural life of the country is evident'—and France, which, 'out of all democratic countries ... has taken furthest the assertion of an active and explicit political presence in the cultural field'.<sup>70</sup> On the other side are the United Kingdom and the United States, united in their liberal scepticism of any form of state planning in the cultural sphere. (Britain had created a national-level Arts Council in 1946, yet for this body 'to produce a cultural plan for the nation' would be, according to the council's own chairman in 1968, 'wrong, both politically and socially wrong'.<sup>71</sup>) France's state-supported *Maisons de la culture* were by no means equivalent to the Soviet Union's nationalized cultural institutions and repressive censorship apparatus. Nor was the UK Arts Council's system of subsidies the same as the American use of tax incentives to encourage private patronage. But these countries' clear answers to the basic question of whether or not the state should play a direct role in the nation's cultural life correspond strongly to their propensity (or not) to enter into bilateral cultural agreements.<sup>72</sup>

If the comparative history of domestic cultural policy offers one key to interpreting trends in this form of external cultural action, another comes from cultural policy's inter- and transnational history. Recent scholarship has highlighted the transnational context in which a new field called 'cultural policy' first emerged, for example at events like UNESCO's 1967 Monaco Roundtable on Cultural Policies.<sup>73</sup> The enthusiastic planning and action that followed in countries around the world during the 1960s and '70s—what has been called 'the cultural policy moment'—coincided precisely with the global diffusion of the practice of cultural treaty-making, with which it shared core presuppositions: above all, the notion that it was appropriate for the state to mobilize culture as a national resource, be it for internal development or external relations.<sup>74</sup> This international context bears further exploration, not least with regard to the use of cultural agreements by 'Third World' states.

Another system-wide explanatory approach can be derived from observations about the meaning of 'culture' in these agreements. Elsewhere, I explore this question through a systematic analysis of the texts of a large sample of cultural agreements.<sup>75</sup> Here, for now, we can observe that general cultural agreements tended to invoke two of the meanings of culture most often identified by historians of that concept. First, these agreements tended to posit the existence of two distinct and coherent (usually national) cultures, represented by the two signatory states. The agreements were 'cultural', in this sense, in that they referred to the 'particular way of life' of the two parties (one of three categories of usage of the word 'culture' identified by Raymond Williams), using 'culture' to label what Immanuel Wallerstein calls 'culture (usage 1)': 'the set of characteristics which distinguish one group from another'.<sup>76</sup>

Second, by using the term 'cultural' to distinguish the content of these agreements from that of other of treaties, these agreements used the culture concept to refer to a distinct subset of human activity, distinguished from other pursuits by its symbolic, aesthetic or simply non-practical character. This sense seems to echo the use of the term to describe 'the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (Williams) or Wallerstein's 'culture (usage 2)': 'some set of phenomena which are different from (and "higher" than) some other set of phenomena within any one group'.<sup>77</sup>

Through their combination of these two meanings, these agreements embodied a particular understanding of culture: one which students of the concept's modern development help us recognize as a particular artefact of the middle decades of the twentieth century. This was that understanding which, as summarized by the International Relations theorist Christian Reus-Smit, 'treats cultures as coherent entities, ... imagines them as autogenous, ... [and] sees them as analytically distinct from society'.<sup>78</sup> Culture had become a global concept already by the late nineteenth century, when intellectuals around the world used variations of the term to identify a realm of autonomous human subjectivity and meaning-making in contrast to the 'anarchic and anomic socio-economic energies' released by their societies' transition to commercial modernity.<sup>79</sup> But it was during a 'burst of cultural theorizing between the 1920s and the 1950s' that anthropologists began to make it into a central concept of the social sciences, sharpening culture's status as an analytically distinct realm (as in the work of Talcott Parsons) and speaking with confidence about the integrated, self-referential nature of particular 'cultures' (as in the work of Ruth Benedict).<sup>80</sup> In the 1950s, intellectuals associated with the 'new left' in the first, second and third worlds made 'culture' a central focus of their efforts to respond to 'the crisis of Stalinism, the triumphalism of the American century, and the electrifying new politics of the national liberation movements'.<sup>81</sup> Elements of this understanding of culture—especially an emphasis on culture as a realm that was constitutive of national identities and that must be protected from commodification—were invoked by reformers and UNESCO officials during the 'cultural policy moment' from the 1960s to the early 1980s.<sup>82</sup>

This cultural vision was by no means universally accepted, of course. At UNESCO, for example, it was hotly contested, especially by the same liberal-capitalist powers that took a dim view of state-driven cultural policy as such.<sup>83</sup> By the 1980s, in any case, both parts of this vision of culture came under strain. The notion of cohesive national cultures was increasingly abandoned by anthropologists, challenged by feminist and minority group activists and mocked by the cross-border flows of globalizing cultural industries.<sup>84</sup> The understanding of culture as a sphere that was sharply distinct from social and especially economic life was likewise questioned by scholars, even as it was undermined by national and international policies that now conceived of culture 'as a form of wealth that ... results in job creation and economic development thanks to growing visitor and creative economies'.<sup>85</sup> The point of this highly compressed foray into conceptual history is to suggest that this kind of intellectual-historical context can offer another helpful key to interpreting trends in the use of cultural treaties. It does this in part by highlighting that the time period of these agreements' greatest use seems to correspond to the life-span of a particular set of ideas about culture itself.

On the basis of these two observations, I suggest that the patterns I have identified in cultural treaty-making between 1935 and 1980 reflect a distinctive historical conjuncture, during which a confluence of (a) political visions that embraced a strong role for the state in promoting and regulating cross-border cultural flows, and (b) a particular set of understandings of culture itself, could be operationalized through diplomatic agreements—agreements that (some) states found useful to meet the challenges of the Cold War and decolonization.

Looking ahead, I propose that analyzing the practice of cultural treaty-making on the basis of these two factors offers a systemic and historically specific means of understanding why the cultural treaty rose when it did, and of accounting for which countries engaged most often in the practice. This approach suggests ways to account for the otherwise puzzling fact that a treaty type developed in the 1930s by Europe's fascist powers was embraced decades later by a broad set of states that included liberal democracies, post-colonial republics and socialist dictatorships. It suggests, too, ways of making sense of the list of countries we find among the top ten signatories of general cultural agreements (Table 1)—an otherwise unlikely assemblage of France, several European socialist states, and Spain and Brazil, two countries ruled by right-wing dictatorships for most of the period under study—in that it points to policies of statist control over the country's international projection and national-cultural ideological commitments that

appear to have linked them.<sup>86</sup> This approach offers hints, moreover, as to why the cultural treaty 'fell' in the final decades of the twentieth century: because both factors—(a) the statist visions of the state-culture nexus and (b) the understanding of 'culture' as distinct from society and the market, while deeply tied to a particular (usually national) community for whom the state could speak—declined in strength at that time. In sum, this approach may allow us to give further depth, in the realm of international history, to Denning's insight about the historically specific significance of 'culture' in the age of three worlds.

## Notes

1. UNESCO, *Index of Cultural Agreements* (Paris: UNESCO, 1962), 7.
2. UNESCO General Conference Third Session (Beirut, 1948), resolution 6.91; Fourth Session (Paris, 1949), resolution 6.91-6.911.
3. UNESCO General Conference, Fifth Session (Florence, 1950), resolution 34.2-34.22. These steps are narrated in UNESCO General Conference, Sixth Session, 'Report by the Director-General on Measures Taken by the Secretariat with a View to Collection, Publication and Analysis of Cultural Agreements at Present in Force (6C/PRG/19)', May 7, 1951, 224272, UNESCO Digital Archive.
4. UNESCO, *Recueil des accords culturels / Collection of Cultural Agreements* (Paris: UNESCO, 1951).
5. UNESCO, *Index*. The official resolution of UNESCO's General Conference calling on the Director-General to oversee the preparation of an *Index of Cultural Agreements* is Resolution 6.12 (1960), in *Records of the General Conference, 11th session, Paris, 1960: Resolutions* (Paris, 1961), 63, available online at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114583>. See also 'Note on Unesco's collection of cultural agreements' in UNESCO, *UNESCO Handbook of International Exchanges*, vol. 2 (Paris: UNESCO, 1967), 68–71.
6. The Cuba-USSR cultural agreement (12 Dec. 1960) is published in *United Nations Treaty Series* (henceforth UNTS), vol. 421, 3. The Cuban-Soviet joint communiqué (19 Dec. 1960) is published in English translation in United States Department of State, *The Castro Regime in Cuba* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1961), Annex A.
7. India-USSR (12 Feb. 1960): UNTS, vol. 392, 153. Indonesia-USSR (28 Feb. 1960): UNTS, vol. 392, 191.
8. The others were with Egypt (13 Jan.), the People's Republic of China (23 July), North Korea (29 Aug.), Guinea (15 Oct.), Romania (28 Oct.), North Vietnam (2 Dec.) and Czechoslovakia (22 Dec.). Cultural agreements with Albania, Poland, East Germany and Hungary followed in the first half of 1961.
9. Brazil-Mexico (20 Jan. 1960): UNTS, vol. 789, 211. Argentina-Mexico (26 Jan.): UNTS vol. 635, 79. Mexico-Chile (28 January 1960): UNTS, vol. 1364, 103.
10. India-Yugoslavia (11 March 1960): <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/LegalTreatiesDoc/YU60B1387.pdf>. Yugoslavia signed cultural agreements in 1960 also with Poland (15 Feb.), Greece (1 March), Mexico (26 March) and Italy (3 Dec.).
11. France-Chad (11 Aug. 1960): UNTS, vol. 821, 99. France-CAR (13 Aug. 1960): UNTS, vol. 814, 345. France-Congo (15 Aug. 1960): UNTS, vol. 821, 199.
12. Cameroon-France (13 Nov. 1960): UNTS, vol. 741, 101.
13. The term 'treaty' has no precise definition in international law. Even the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties defines a treaty simply as 'an international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by international law' (article 2). The UN's own treaty service notes however that the term 'treaty', rather than 'agreement', has nonetheless generally been 'reserved for matters of some gravity that require more solemn agreements. Their signatures are usually sealed and they normally require ratification.' *United Nations Treaty Collection: Treaty Reference Guide* (New York: United Nations, 1999), 3.
14. Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 170.
15. On post-1945 cultural diplomacy see for example: Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin, 'Geopolitics and Soft Power: Japan's Cultural Policy and Cultural Diplomacy in Asia', *Asia-Pacific Review*, xix (2012), 37–61; Christian Saehrendt, *Kunst im Kampf für das 'sozialistische Weltssystem': Auswärtige Kulturpolitik der DDR in Afrika und Nahost* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017). On the 'cultural Cold War': Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Nancy Jachec, *Europe's Intellectuals and the Cold War: The European Society of Culture, Post-War Politics and International Relations* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015); Giles Scott-Smith and Charlotte A. Lerg, *Campaigning Culture and the Global Cold War: The Journals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). On the cultural politics of decolonization: Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture', in Christopher J. Lee (ed),

- Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 45–68; Elizabeth M. Holt, 'Cairo and the Cultural Cold War for Afro-Asia', in Chen Jian et al. (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018); Cynthia Scott, *Cultural Diplomacy and the Heritage of Empire: Negotiating Post-Colonial Returns* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019). On UNESCO: P. Betts, 'Humanity's New Heritage: UNESCO and the Rewriting of World History', *Past and Present*, ccxxviii (2015), 249–85; Poul Duedahl (ed), *A History of UNESCO: Global Actions and Impacts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Chloé Maurel, *L'histoire de l'Unesco: les trente premières années* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010); Lynn Meskell, *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
16. Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London: Verso, 2004), 2.
  17. Charles Frankel, *The Era of Educational and Cultural Relations. Edward L. Bernays Foundation Lecture at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Medford, Mass., April 25, 1966* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1966), 3–4.
  18. Frank A. Ninkovich makes compelling arguments for the value of the historical study of cultural diplomacy in *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 2.
  19. Among the few historical studies focusing on one or more bilateral cultural agreements, see: J.-P. Barbian, '"Kulturwerte im Zeitkampf". Die Kulturabkommen des "Dritten Reiches" als Instrumente nationalsozialistischer Außenpolitik' *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* lxxiv (1992), 415–59; J. Petersen, 'Vorspiel zu "Stahlpakt" und Kriegszallianz: Das Deutsch-Italienische Kulturabkommen vom 23. November 1938', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, xxiv (1988), 41–77. More or less substantial discussions of particular bilateral cultural agreements can be found in much of the literature on state-to-state cultural diplomacy, including (by way of example): N. Gould-Davies, 'The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy', *Diplomatic History*, xxvii (2003), 193–214; Herman Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 181–5; J. M. Lee, 'British Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War: 1946–61', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, ix (1998), 112–34; Albert Salon, *L'action culturelle de la France dans le monde* (Paris: Nathan, 1983), 108–10; Stefano Santoro, *L'Italia e l'Europa orientale. Diplomazia culturale e propaganda 1918–1943* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005), 208–9; Frank Trommler, *Kulturmacht ohne Kompass: deutsche auswärtige Kulturbeziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 660–70. The cultural agreement that has enjoyed the most attention is surely the US-Soviet ('Lacy-Zarubin') agreement of 27 Jan. 1958, which is frequently (if generally briefly) discussed in the historiography on the cultural Cold War: David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19–32; Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 170–76; Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*, 42–52; Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 151–83; A. Kozovoi, 'A Foot in the Door: The Lacy-Zarubin Agreement and Soviet-American Film Diplomacy during the Khrushchev Era, 1953–1963', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, xxxvi (2016), 21–39; J. D. Parks, *Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence: American-Soviet Cultural Relations, 1917–1958* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1983), 170–72; Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 14–20.
  20. See in particular Eulalia Ghazali, *Contribution à l'étude des accords culturels: vers un droit international de la culture* (Grenoble: Université des sciences sociales de Grenoble, 1977).
  21. P. Poast, M. J. Bommarito and D. M. Katz, 'The Electronic World Treaty Index: Collecting the Population of International Agreements in the 20th Century', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, Feb. 15, 2010).
  22. E. Keene, 'The Treaty-Making Revolution of the Nineteenth Century', *International History Review*, xxxiv (2012), 475–500; E. Keene, 'The Standard of "Civilisation", the Expansion Thesis and the 19th-Century International Social Space', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, xlii (2014), 651–73; Z. Elkins, A. T. Guzman and B. A. Simmons, 'Competing for Capital: The Diffusion of Bilateral Investment Treaties, 1960–2000', *International Organization*, lx (2006), 811–46.
  23. Jean Dumont, *Corps universel diplomatique du droit des gens: contenant un recueil des traités d'alliance, de paix, de trêve, de neutralité, de commerce, d'échange, de protection et de garantie, de toutes les conventions, transactions, pactes, concordats, et autres contrats, qui ont été faits en Europe depuis le règne de l'empereur Charlemagne jusques à présent*, 8 vols. (Amsterdam: Wetstein, 1726). This is the oldest publication listed in United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, *List of Treaty Collections* (New York: United Nations, 1956), 3. For published collections of treaties devoted to a particular subject matter, see 26–40.
  24. Institut international de coopération intellectuelle (IICI), *Recueil des accords intellectuels* (Paris: Institut international de coopération intellectuelle, 1938). On the IICI, see Jean-Jacques Renoliet, *L'Unesco oubliée: la Société des nations et la coopération intellectuelle, 1919–1946* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999).
  25. IICI, *Recueil*, 1.

26. D. Laqua, 'Transnational Intellectual Cooperation, the League of Nations, and the Problem of Order', *Journal of Global History*, vi (2011), 223–47.
27. IICI, *Recueil*, 5.
28. The Austro-Italian agreement 'for the development of cultural relations' (2 Feb. 1935), is published in *Bundesgesetzblatt Österreich* 138 (19 April 1935), 531; in French translation in IICI, *Recueil*, 65–74. Italy's 'cultural convention' with Hungary (16 Feb. 1935) is published in *League of Nations Treaty Series* 163 (Geneva, 1935), 15; in French translation in IICI, *Recueil*, 144–50.
29. B. G. Martin, 'The Birth of the Cultural Treaty in Europe's Age of Crisis', *Contemporary European History*, xxx (2021), 301–17.
30. Petersen, "'Vorspiel'", 55.
31. J. Mirwart, 'Les accords intellectuels', *Revue de droit international et de législation comparée*, xix (1938), 134.
32. Barbian, "'Kulturwerte'"; E. Bruce Reynolds, 'Imperial Japan's Cultural Program in Thailand', in Grant K. Goodman (ed), *Japanese Cultural Policies in Southeast Asia during World War 2* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 107; Atsushi Shibasaki, 'Activities and Discourses on International Cultural Relations in Modern Japan: The Making of KBS (Kokusai Bunka Shinko Kai), 1934–1953', in Madeleine Herren (ed), *Networking the International System: Global Histories of International Organizations* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), 66.
33. J.-A. Pemberton, 'The Changing Shape of Intellectual Cooperation: From the League of Nations to UNESCO', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, lviii (2012), 34–50.
34. The story of the US state department's Division of Cultural Relations, founded in 1938, is told in Ninkovich, *Diplomacy*. French intellectuals' interwar debates over the word 'culture' are documented in Philippe Bénétou, *Histoire de mots: Culture et civilisation* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1975), 76, 101, 130; Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort*, 46.
35. UNESCO, *Index*.
36. *Ibid.*, 39.
37. *Ibid.*, 85.
38. The first explicitly 'cultural' multi-lateral agreement was the Inter-American Convention on the Promotion of Cultural Relations (Buenos Aires, 23 Oct. 1936). In fact, this treaty focused exclusively on educational exchanges.
39. UNESCO, *Index*, 65. On the idea of culture in twentieth-century anthropology, see: Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
40. UNESCO, *Index*, 18.
41. T. C. W. Blanning, 'The Commercialization and Sacralization of European Culture in the Nineteenth Century', in T. C. W. Blanning (ed), *The Oxford History of Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 126–52; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958).
42. Peter H. Rohn, *World Treaty Index*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1974), xx.
43. The eWTI's 'Topic definitions and descriptions' are available at: <http://db.lib.washington.edu/wti/topic.htm> (last accessed 24 February 2022).
44. The group of agreements marked in Figure 1 as 7CORR corresponds to eWTI's 7CULT but reflects several corrections; hence the amended label.
45. The curated dataset on which the following analysis and discussion are based is published on the open data platform Zenodo under DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5159745. A detailed log of decisions about which agreements to include is available at: [https://github.com/humlab/the\\_culture\\_of\\_international\\_relations/wiki/eWTI-Notes:-Selection-Decisions-Log-2020,-2021](https://github.com/humlab/the_culture_of_international_relations/wiki/eWTI-Notes:-Selection-Decisions-Log-2020,-2021).
46. David Crikemans, *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy of the Belgian Regions: Flanders and Wallonia* (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2010), 21.
47. M. Dérobert, 'Des "relations culturelles" aux "politiques culturelles"', *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, xiii (1971), 623.
48. For further tables and calculations see: [https://github.com/humlab/the\\_culture\\_of\\_international\\_relations](https://github.com/humlab/the_culture_of_international_relations).
49. General Assembly, eleventh session, Resolution 1043 (XI), 21 Feb. 1957. See: [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1043\(XI\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1043(XI)).
50. UNESCO General Conference, Resolution 6.12, 1960. (This was the same resolution that called for the preparation of the *Index of Cultural Agreements*, published in 1962.) See: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114583>.
51. 48% of the GCAs signed in 1956 (23 out of 48) were agreements in which both parties were socialist or communist states.
52. Romania-USSR (13 Sept. 1945) and People's Republic of China-USSR (12 Oct. 1954).
53. Martin, 'Birth', 304.
54. The count of the top 10 countries' GCAs comes to 826. Eighty-seven of these were with other countries in this group. To avoid duplicates, we remove that number, giving us the total of 739, which represents 54.2% of the total of 1363.
55. This count treats Iran as part of the Middle East, rather than Asia.

56. 'Final Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference (Bandung, 24 Apr. 1955)', in *Asia-Africa Speak from Bandung* (Jakarta, Indonesia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1955), 161–9. See also Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2008), 45.
57. The exceptions were Turkey-Nigeria (21 Oct. 1976), Mexico-Gabon (14 Sept. 1976), Portugal-Cape Verde (21 Jan. 1977) and South Korea-Sierra Leone (22 Dec. 1977).
58. G. Pearson, 'Rohn's World Treaty Index: Its Past and Future', *International Journal of Legal Information*, xxix (2001), 545.
59. For a recent overview, see Michael L. Krenn, *The History of United States Cultural Diplomacy: 1770 to the Present Day* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
60. Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*, 26–28, 52–54; Gould-Davies, 'Logic', 207–8.
61. Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort*; Salon, *L'action culturelle*, 108–10; Gilbert Pilleul, 'La politique culturelle extérieure, 1958–1969', in *De Gaulle en son siècle: Actes des journées internationales tenues à l'Unesco, Paris, 19–24 Novembre 1990*. T. 7, *De Gaulle et la culture* (Paris: Documentation française, 1992).
62. Peter Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction to International Law*, Seventh (London: Routledge, 1997), 7.
63. Ibid.
64. Ghazali, *Contribution*, 31.
65. Malanczuk, *Akehurst's Modern Introduction*, 5.
66. C. Frankel, 'The "Cultural Contest"', *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, xxix (1969), 139–40. Washington's effort to make 'private people-to-people cultural contacts', arranged in partnership with private companies and foundations, the face of American cultural diplomacy (even when these were in fact covertly steered and paid for by the government), is an important theme in the vast literature on American policy in the cultural Cold War. See in particular: Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists*; V. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone Between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). Quotation from Ninkovich, *Diplomacy*, 59.
67. G. A. Mojaev, 'The Role of Cultural Agreements in the Development of International Relations and Exchanges', in *UNESCO Handbook of International Exchanges* (Paris: UNESCO, 1965), 75. On Mozhaev, a key figure in the articulation of the new Soviet cultural diplomacy after 1956, see Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*, 29–30.
68. Pilleul, 'Politique culturelle', 153. See also Lebovics, *Mona Lisa's Escort*, 181–5.
69. 'Rapport d'activité de la Direction générale des affaires culturelles et techniques' (1958), quoted in Pilleul, 'Politique culturelle', 144.
70. A. A. Zvorykin, *Cultural Policy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* (Paris: UNESCO, 1970), quoted in Carole Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 200. Claude Pariat, *La culture, un besoin d'Etat* (Paris: Hachette, 1998), quoted in Jeremy Ahearne (ed), *French Cultural Policy Debates: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.
71. Quoted in Michael Green and Michael Wilding, *Cultural Policy in Great Britain* (Paris: UNESCO, 1970), 56.
72. These four states—the US, UK, France and the USSR—are central cases for comparative analyses of cultural policy. Rosenstein, *Understanding*, 195–209.
73. G. Vestheim, 'UNESCO Cultural Policies 1966–1972: The Founding Years of "New Cultural Policy"', *Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidskrift*, xxii (2019): 174–95; Rosenstein, *Understanding*, 211–5.
74. The global 'cultural policy moment' is analyzed in Sarah Brouillette, *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 55–69.
75. Some provisional findings from this work are in B. G. Martin, 'Keeping it Simple: Word Trend Analysis for the Intellectual History of International Relations', in Sanita Reinsone (ed), *DHN 2020: Proceedings of the Digital Humanities in the Nordic Countries 5th Conference. Riga, Latvia, October 21–23, 2020* (CEUR Workshop Proceedings 2612, 2020), available at: <http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-2612/paper7.pdf>.
76. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 90; I. Wallerstein, 'Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vii (1990), 33.
77. Williams, *Keywords*, 90; Wallerstein, 'Culture', 33.
78. Christian Reus-Smit, *On Cultural Diversity: International Theory in a World of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4–5. See also Kuper, *Culture*.
79. A. Sartori, 'The Resonance of 'Culture': Framing a Problem in Global Concept-History', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xlvii (2005), 696.
80. Kuper, *Culture*, 5, 52–4; Reus-Smit, *On Cultural Diversity*, 23–7.
81. Denning, *Culture*, 83.
82. Brouillette, *UNESCO*, 55–69.
83. A range of policy debates at UNESCO have ultimately had to do with competing understandings of culture; several such debates are explored in recent research on the organization's history, including for example: P. Betts, 'Humanity's New Heritage'; J. Brendebach, 'Contested Sovereignities: The Case of the "New World Information and Communication Order" at UNESCO in the 1970s' in G. Feindt et al. (eds), *Cultural Sovereignty*

*Beyond the Modern State* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 106–27; Brouillette, *UNESCO*; Maurel, *Histoire de l'Unesco*; Meskell, *Future in Ruins*.

84. Reus-Smit, *On Cultural Diversity*, 30–6; Kuper, *Culture*, 206–25.

85. Brouillette, *UNESCO*, 101.

86. Such elements in the cultural diplomacy of twentieth-century Spain and Brazil are identified in: David Brydan, *Franco's Internationalists: Social Experts and Spain's Search for Legitimacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Maricó Janué i Miret and Albert Presas i Puig (eds), *Science, Culture and National Identity in Francoist Spain, 1939–1959* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); J. Dumont and A. Fléchet, 'Brazilian Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century', *Revista Brasileira de História*, xxxiv (2014), 203–21; Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

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## Data availability statement

Data supporting the analyses conducted in this article have been published on Zenodo: <https://zenodo.org/record/5159745>.