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The “Next Big Thing”:: The Future of Diplomatic History in a Global Age

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It seems fitting to begin this address with a reference to Charles Maier, whose famous critique of our field, published twenty-three years ago, ushered in an era of critical introspection and self-flagellation among

diplomatic historians. Whether intended or not, one of Maier's more recent essays actually hints at the dawning of a new day, when diplomatic history might well return from the margin to the mainstream of historical studies. In "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History," published in June 2000, Maier argues that the age of "territoriality," an age of "bounded geographical space" marked by a "frontier at the edge and the lands within," was coming to an end. Between 1870 and 1970, bounded space had provided the "basis for material resources, political power, and common allegiance," for "identity space" and "decision space," for state sovereignty, and for the great...

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