The Frictions of Research in Foreign Archives

By David A. Guba, Jr. (Ph.D. Candidate, Temple University)

"Everything is very simple in war, but the simplest thing is difficult. These difficulties accumulate and produce a friction, which no man can imagine exactly who has not seen war." When the famous military strategist Carl von Clausewitz wrote these words in the 1820s, his mind was consumed with the essential unpredictability of modern warfare. Even the greatest military strategist, Clausewitz contended, could be undone by the capriciousness of real war. Inclement weather, physical exhaustion, and ambiguous or false intelligence—what Clausewitz termed "frictions"—all undermine even the grandest of military strategies. And to overcome these frictions and achieve victory, Clausewitz argued, one must experience the realities of war firsthand and persevere.

For any doctoral student in history doing work in foreign archives, Clausewitz's notion of unpredictable frictions captures the essence of the research experience. From transportation logistics to "misplaced" reading room reservations, outdated finding aids to random and unannounced archive closures, the unpredictable obstacles one faces when researching abroad are enough to undo even the most meticulously laid-out plans of attack. And, much as in war, it is perseverance in the face of such unforeseen obstacles to research that leads one to dissertation victory and "earns the admiration of the world and of posterity." For the past few months, I have been living, teaching, and researching in France thanks to Temple's initiative to Globalize the Study of United States History. When not teaching English and History at the University of Angers, I am in Paris doing research for my dissertation on France's imperial encounter with Egypt and History at the University of Angers, I am in Paris doing research for my dissertation on France's imperial encounter with Egypt. My first chapter on Napoléon's military invasion of Egypt in 1798. On the surface, France, I spent hours poring through the archive's online finding aids, searching for any dossier that might contain information about the Armée d'Orient, the 35,000 soldiers Napoléon brought to North Africa in 1798 to "liberate" and "enlighten" the Egyptians. During these soldiers' time in Egypt, many of them experimented with the drug and published nearly 50 dissertations back to metropolitan France, where pharmacists and chemists received a text message from AirBnB telling me that the room I had booked for the next two nights in Paris was no longer available. The company ensured me that I would be fully reimbursed.

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Two weeks after my initial trip, I returned to Paris cautiously optimistic about a second round at the SHD. This time my trip to Paris was unburdened by weather and traffic, and I actually arrived on time at the SHD, where my reservations were confirmed. Once I settled into my reserved seat in the Louis XIV reading room, however, an archivist approached me and informed me that the documents I requested did not exist. I kindly showed the archivist printouts of my reservations and the online catalogue that listed the documents for the Armée d'Orient under call number B5. "Ce n'est pas possible!" she replied. "Ces documents," she continued, "sont déposés sous cote B6." After consulting with several other archivists, I learned that over the past year, the SHD had reclassified the files of the Armée d'Orient under a new call number and had yet to update this information on the online finding aids. While this confusion over call numbers ensued, I received a text message from AirBnB telling me that the room I had booked for the next two nights in Paris was no longer available. The company ensured me that I would be fully reimbursed.
for the booking (gee, thanks!) and encouraged me to find another host through their website.

As these unpredictable frictions mounted, I could not help but recall Clausewitz’s famous words about the frictions of real war and the resolution needed to overcome them. For a second time, my plans for research at the SHD were undone by seemingly unavoidable variables over which I had no control. At first, feelings of anger and panic took hold of my psyche. How could I ever expect to complete my research if I couldn’t master the logistics of reserving materials or even a place to stay?

After a walk around the Château de Vincennes to collect my thoughts, I mustered the resolve to march on. Masking my panic and frustration with a smile, I re-reserved the documents for my next visit and kindly asked the archivist if anything in their library holdings could aid me in my research on Napoléon’s Egyptian Campaign. Luckily the library held several published collections of Menou’s correspondence that I could access without a reservation. And after an online search for new accommodation, I was able to find a room at a hostel that did not break my budget.

The experience of these first two trips to the archives in Paris taught me several Clausewitzian lessons. Much like war, research rarely unfolds according to plan. Frictions and setbacks arise without warning and often when you least expect them. Some issues as simple as getting to the archives and making reservations can be the most difficult. And when faced with such unpredictable difficulties, you must remain resolute and steadfast in your mission if you ever hope to achieve victory. Though warfare and historical research are worlds apart, both are governed by the same Clausewitzian maxim: ‘There is hardly a worthwhile enterprise . . . whose execution does not call for infinite effort, trouble, and privation.’

Politics and Partisan Warfare in the Revolutionary War: The Case of New Jersey

By Steven Elliott (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

Early on October 25, 1779, a party of American loyalists crossed the Arthur Kill from Staten Island to land at Perth Amboy in Whig-held New Jersey. These men, from Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe’s Queen’s Rangers, a Tory regiment specializing in partisan operations, were acting on intelligence received from loyalist spies in New Jersey informing them of the presence of fifty American flatboats stored at Hilsboro. Such boats, useful for moving supplies and men along the numerous small waterways in the American colonies, presented a valuable yet vulnerable target. Upon reaching their destination, though, the Rangers found only eighteen boats remained at the Hilsboro location. The Tory partisans thus altered their objectives, opting to press on to Somerset Court House where they freed fifty-two loyalist prisoners.

The following day, the Rangers defeated a counterattack by the local militia and withdrew back to New York. This brief vignette illustrates a miniscule portion of a much broader aspect of the War of Independence. Traditionally, the American Revolution has been regarded as a “limited war,” keeping within the restrained, formalized character of European warfare during the eighteenth century. Earlier historians have recognized the existence of a more violent, savage form of warfare on the western frontier and in the southern colonies, but few have devoted their attention to the northern theater. In this essay, I show how fighting in New Jersey during early 1780, characterized by small raids and ambushes, attacks on civilians, and open-order infantry tactics, complicates the traditional narrative of the war in New Jersey. In short, the war in the Middle Colonies had a partisan character just as did the southern theater or the western frontier. While the presence of Native Americans and frontiersmen in the latter two theaters, as well as geography, dictated the partisan nature or the war in those spaces, these factors were not present in New Jersey during 1780. Thus, I argue that Britain’s pursuit of a partisan-style campaign in New Jersey during 1780 represents a change in military approach as royal officers searched for new solutions to the problems presented by the War of Independence. Most importantly, the increase of attacks on civilian political targets by both American and British forces indicates a merging of war and politics uncommon in eighteenth century warfare.

For Britain, on the grand-strategic level, the intervention of France and later Spain converted the American rebellion into a world war, resulting in a shift in strategic focus from the American colonies to the Caribbean, Europe, and the Indian Ocean. For British commanders in America, this meant a diminishment of forces that led to a strategic decision to concentrate forces against the southern colonies. This shift to a southern strategy has been well examined in the work of scholars, such as Don Higginbotham. What has not been appreciated is a comparable change in thinking at the operational and tactical level as well. For, even as the British sailed for Charleston in early 1780 to expand the war in the South, the royal forces remaining in New York embarked upon a new course of tactically innovative operations that eschewed large-scale campaigning for un petit guerre.

The best evidence of this change in thinking can be found in an examination of William Smith’s writings. Smith, a Loyalist jurist, disagreed with General Sir Henry Clinton, the British Commander-in-Chief in North America, over the latter’s direction of the war during 1779. Specifically, Smith believed that Clinton had been far too conventional in his pursuit of the war, and had not realized alternatives to force General George Washington to give battle. Smith’s own ideas focused on undermining civilian support for the war by targeting the New Jersey and Connecticut militias and damaging the economy by eliminating supply stocks. Upon Clinton’s departure from New York to manage the Charleston campaign, Smith took on a greater leadership role in New York. Smith found a close ally in William Tryon, the leader of New York’s Loyalists. Tryon, too, perceived the war through a political and economic lens, and had earlier advocated a partisan strategy similar to Smith’s.

With Clinton out of the theater, Smith and Tryon embarked upon a campaign of intensified raids against the militia, Whig civilian leaders, and supply stores in New Jersey. Overall, New Jersey suffered from seven major British raids from October 1779 to April 1780. Raids generally consisted of columns of roughly 1,000 infantry. These soldiers destroyed public buildings, took local leaders prisoner, plundered private property as well as public stores, and wore down the local militia through attritional fighting.

The Americans crafted several responses to the British attacks. Washington deployed his Continental soldiers along the border with New York to protect New Jersey communities, and communications between the army and various militia units were improved. Furthermore, Washington directed a counter-raid in January 1780 against the Loyalist base on Staten Island, a target of little military value but great political significance. On January 15, 2500 Continentals led by Major General William Alexander left the Morristown encampment to attack Staten Island. Alexander’s force succeeded in crossing the frozen Arthur Kill, destroying some of the stores present on the island, and withdrawing unmolested.

2 Ibid., 193.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.

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While the Staten Island raid yielded few tangible military benefits, it can be best understood when considering civilian morale and popular political sentiments. By 1780, New Jerseyans had long suffered from Loyalist attacks, more recently joined by British regulars as well. As a center for New Jersey Loyalist exiles, Staten Island must have had a symbolic value to many New Jerseyans as the source of Loyalist depredations. That Washington assented to the militia accompanying the Staten Island raid, despite his negative opinion of the militia’s military value, indicates his appreciation for the attitudes and emotions of the state’s population. Indeed, his orders gave tacit approval to militia reprisals, stating that Staten Island civilians “found in arms must be expected to be treated as enemies, and their effects given up as plunder.” The raid therefore did not constitute a traditional military operation at all, but served instead as a means to maintain civilian morale and support for the republican cause.

Overall, several hundred American regulars and militia suffered death or wounds as a result of the winter fighting, and many more were captured. The threat to civilian communities forced the regular army to devote a large portion of its starving, poorly equipped force to support the forward defense of the state. The Americans’ perceived weakness in New Jersey induced the New York garrison’s commander, Baron Wilhelm von Knyphausen, to attempt a more conventional, though unsuccessful invasion of New Jersey in June.  

As this brief narrative shows, even when two armies were not actively campaigning, great violence and destruction could occur whenever British and American forces were in close proximity. American responses to British attacks, including the deployment of Continentals to guard New Jersey towns in support of the militia and the attack on the Loyalist base on Staten Island, indicate military-political awareness comparable to that of Smith and Tryon. More importantly, the nature of raiding warfare, with its plunder, destruction of civilian homes, and killing and capturing of political leaders, demonstrates an unrestricted politization of violence outside of the confines of traditional eighteenth century military norms. Overall, we should recognize that leaders on both sides during the War of Independence came to appreciate the political sensitivities of the civilian population as an important factor in dictating not only strategic decisions such as the shift to the southern theater, but also in shaping the operational and tactical character by which both sides prosecuted their campaigns.

CENFAD’s 2014 Fall Colloquium

By Manna Duah (Ph.D. Student, Temple University) and Silke Zoller (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

This fall, CENFAD welcomed five distinguished speakers to participate in its colloquium series. The talks focused on the latter half of the twentieth century, and highlighted a rich variety of topics and approaches. Speakers discussed the intersection of science and soft diplomacy in the Cold War, the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the connection between decolonization and home rule in Washington, D.C., human rights in the 1970s, and the origins of the G-7 economic summit system.

Audra Wolfe, historian and author of *Competing with the Soviets: Science, Technology, and the State in Cold War America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) gave a talk on Tuesday, September 30. Wolfe’s presentation on “Hearts, Minds, and Labs: Science as Cold War Cultural Diplomacy,” explored the use of science during the Cold War as a tool of cultural diplomacy. Through the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. government played a crucial role in promoting ideas of scientific freedom and professionalism that could flourish only in a democratic society. The agency cast aspersions on Soviet scientists’ research as state-directed research that by definition was not free. The CIA also promoted transnational superpower scientific research cooperation and funded academic exchanges with Soviet scientists in order to encourage them to engage in international and independent research. Simultaneously, the CIA funded classified scientific research in the US.

On October 17, CENFAD and The Dissent in America Teach-In hosted Yair Hirschfeld at the Center for the Humanities at Temple (CHAT). Hirschfeld headed the December 1992 Israeli negotiating team at Oslo that led to Israeli recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the creation of an autonomous Palestinian territory. Author of *Track-Two Diplomacy toward an Israeli-Palestinian Solution, 1978–2014* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press with Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), Hirschfeld spoke on “Lessons Learned from Successes & Failure of the Palestinian Peace-Finding Process.” Hirschfeld argued that “track-

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8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
two” diplomacy, with an emphasis on developing Palestinian economic empowerment, has been useful in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He proposed a six point test for future proposals, arguing that any proposal must contain a narrative all sides can sell to their citizens to create a common national interest in pursuing the negotiation. Track-two activists must acquire an understanding of the constitutional and political cultures involved. Institutions such as Mossad, the CIA and the PLO should be able to work within the proposal, and the leaders of both countries should be able to go along with it. Most importantly, such negotiations should build on and learn lessons from previous negotiations. Hirschfeld’s talk was an insightful insider’s account of track-two activism and the prospects for future talks between the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

On October 21, Andrew Friedman of Haverford College gave a presentation on his new project, “D.C. Between Empire and Decolonization: A Cultural History of the Global Diplomatic Corps.” Dr. Friedman examined Washington’s history during the city’s struggle for home rule and put it into the context of African decolonization. He discussed how African diplomats’ contact with local spaces in the city affected decolonization in their home countries, as well as local politics in Washington. Ambassadors arriving from newly decolonized countries often faced racism and substantial difficulty obtaining real estate for their embassies and housing for their personnel. Simultaneously, African American civil rights activists pursued home rule, and diplomats took great interest in their strategies to combat systematic racism. Together, such experiences helped both diplomats and African-American activists to conceptualize decolonization, imperialism, and its power and racist structures in a city that served as both the center of American empire and a colonized space itself.

Barbara Keys arrived from the University of Melbourne on November 4 to discuss her recently published book, Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s (Harvard University Press, 2014). In “Reclaiming American Virtue: Liberal and Conservative Visions of International Human Rights in the 1970s.” Dr. Keys argued that human rights became a new foreign policy paradigm for the United States in the 1970s because the concept resonated with both the public and policymakers as a way to overcome guilt and poor American morale after the Vietnam War. Writing against a traditional historiography that portrays human rights as a beneficial legacy of the American War was the United States’ invasion of Iraq, Greenberg studies President James K. Polk’s invasion of Mexico. Despite a declaration to “neither deify nor demonize him,” Greenberg presents an extremely negative portrait of Polk. Amy Greenberg argues that Polk’s main motivation for invading Mexico was the expansion of slavery. She also notes that Polk was the United States’ first president to start a war with the aid of false information. In addition to examining Polk’s motivations for the war, Greenberg analyzes the creation of a national anti-war movement. By studying the politics surrounding the war, Greenberg argues the Mexican-American War had profound effects on the United States and irrevocably changed the nation.

Greenberg’s narrative focuses on the causes of the war and how the conflict ended. Greenberg uses five men as vehicles to explore different perspectives on the war: James K. Polk, Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln, John J. Hardin, and Nicholas Trist. As signaled in the work’s title, Polk, Clay, and Lincoln are well known to most students of American history. Hardin and Trist are not as familiar, but their inclusion allows Greenberg to explore additional perspectives on the war and national obligations. By following these five men throughout the war, Greenberg highlights the conflicting feelings Americans felt about their coun-

CENFAD’s 2015 Spring Colloquia

Please save the date for the great speakers that will be coming to CENFAD this spring!

Mike Neiberg, “Neutral in Thought? Rethinking American Reactions to the European War, 1914-1917” February 4, 2015, 3:30 pm

Maria Hoehn, Movie Screening and Discussion: “Breath of Freedom: Black Soldiers and the Battle for Civil Rights” February 11, 2015, 3:30 pm

Olivier Burtin, “World War II and the Re-Invention of the American Legion, 1940-1945” February 24, 2015, 3:30 pm

Ari Kelman, "A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek” March 18, 2015, 3:30 pm

Chris Miller, "Gorbachev’s Asian Pivot: Lessons from the Soviet Collapse” April 7, 3:30 pm

Jonathan Winkler, “The Historical Roots of the Snowden Revelations” April 23, 3:30 pm

Book Reviews:


By Britnee Smith (M.A. Student, Temple University)

Amy Greenberg’s most recent work, A Wicked War, examines American politics surrounding the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). With a presentist eye on President George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq, Greenberg studies President James K. Polk’s invasion of Mexico. Despite a declaration to “neither deify nor demonize him,” Greenberg presents an extremely negative portrait of Polk. Greenberg argues that Polk’s main motivation for invading Mexico was the expansion of slavery. She also notes that Polk was the United States’ first president to start a war with the aid of false information. In addition to examining Polk’s motivations for the war, Greenberg analyzes the creation of a national anti-war movement. By studying the politics surrounding the war, Greenberg argues the Mexican-American War had profound effects on the United States and irrevocably changed the nation.
Greenberg does not examine the Mexican perspective of the war or the military details of the war. Her focus is the conflicting political narratives surrounding the war in the United States. Greenberg’s analysis, however, results in a few giant leaps of thought. For example, she argues that Clay’s Lexington speech in 1847 changed history and personally influenced Lincoln. Her connections are not as persuasive as they could have been with stronger evidence or analysis. Greenberg’s argument that slavery was pivotal to Polk’s decision to invade Mexico is not supported by detailed analysis. Despite such criticisms, Greenberg brings fresh attention to a war that had profound effects on the United States. In 2013, A Wicked War won the Best Book Award by the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic and the Robert M. Utley Award by the Western History Association. Greenberg’s narrative device of following five men through the war makes her work easily accessible for any type of reader.


By Minju Bae (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

Brenda Gayle Plummer’s In Search of Power is an impressive blend of international, African-American, diplomatic, North American, and African diaspora histories. It is an important monograph about two pivotal decades from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s. In this transitional period, Plummer examines how African Americans navigated between the domestic and international spheres, developing identities and methodologies in relation to white supremacy and the Cold War. Many African Americans imagined diaspora as a means for political engagement. Yet despite these transnational motivations and agendas, Plummer concludes that the nation-state model thrived when black elites and white liberals co-opted black power rhetoric at the expense of a re-imagined world order. The nation-state deflated dreams of meaningful and empowered equality, deepened socio-economic inequalities, and “further diminished the popular ability to resist hegemonic power.”

In Search of Power marks an important historiographical intervention, utilizing an extraordinary amount of archival research to produce a careful, internationalized, African-American history. Plummer, who has written extensively on the influence of race on U.S. foreign relations, rejects the artificial boundaries of the histories of Civil Rights-Black Power era, diplomacy, decolonization, and the Cold War. Instead, she presents an informed and complex narrative that integrates bottom-up and a top-down stories – what she calls a “hybrid history” – looking at state officials and elites, in addition to voluntary associations, colonial leaders, and activists groups of many cities, countries, and continents. Departing from the narrative of how domestic legal equality became an emancipatory moment, Plummer argues that decolonization illuminated the path toward racial equality for many. Effectively addressing her aims in internationalizing African American experiences and politics, Plummer’s book is about the ‘era of decolonization.’

Plummer organizes In Search of Power chronologically, and her nine chapters capture the ways African Americans imagined their place in the diaspora and a broader Cold War political world. Armed with an incredible array of archival materials, Plummer includes diverse perspectives from the United States, Canada, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. In chapters 1 and 2, colonial struggles for independence inform African American modes of liberation from the shortcomings of liberalism. In chapters 3 and 4, Plummer discusses the rise of conservatism and commitment to the free market, setting the stage for the following chapters. Chapter 5 displays the contradictions of Great Society liberalism and colorblindness, particularly with President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s foreign policies. In this chapter, Plummer provides an interesting study of U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic. African-American activists’ language of racial binaries became difficult to graft onto the political contexts of the Dominican Republic, the Nigerian crisis, and elsewhere. This outlook is evident in Plummer’s study of the contribution of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to the global conversation about the Vietnam War, alerting readers to think about how African Americans dynamically positioned themselves. In many instances, African Americans used and imagined conflicts in Africa and other Cold War fronts to address American issues of racism. Many African-American students,
activists, and scholars assumed an international perspective on American racism, which is a central discussion of chapter 6. While many elites espoused liberal ideas to effect social change and upward mobility, students of Black Power organizations sought community control. In chapters 7 and 8, Plummer examines the interrelatedness of the black working class, unionization, ideology, electoral politics, “black capitalism,” and Cold War conflicts. Plummer determines that, while the civil rights establishment had been able to secure some legal reforms, the long-term winners were those on the right.1 And finally, chapter 9 explores the questions of food, hunger, and foreign aid in the 1970s. The language of humanitarianism prevailed over ideas about equality and civil rights.

Plummer ends her book in the year 1974 to depict an “unsettled” endpoint of the continuing process of decolonization and the persistence of statist and free market liberalism.2 While the era of decolonization was a period of heightened transnational interactions, increased international circulation of ideas, and the growth of states committed to the rhetoric of equality and human rights, decolonization was also a reversible process through the preservation and celebration of the nation-state and colorblindness. In Search of Power is a complex work, with many subplots and an extensive list of chapters that can be difficult to follow. Regardless, it is a successful and ambitious study. Plummer navigates the perspectives and policies of presidential administrations, colonial leaders, SNCC members, other activists, and community leaders, all within a geopolitical world of fluid exchanges and transactions. Plummer argues that this period witnessed the strengthening of the nation-state model, rather than its decline, leading instead to the demise of meaningful empowerment of people, “leaving millions still searching for power.”3–5


By Stephen Bentel (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

In Shattering Empires, Michael Reynolds makes the compelling argument that competition between the Russian and Ottoman empires in the Caucasian borderlands ultimately led to the downfall of both regimes. Reynolds claims that historians have for too long viewed these borderland conflicts through a nationalist lens, and while he believes that this view is useful, he states, “a problem does arise when the focus on nationalism and national identities obscures the impact of other dynamics.”1 Instead, Reynolds chooses to focus on the geopolitical factors that led both the Ottoman and Russian state actors, as well as Armenian, Kurdish, and Georgian non-state actors, to behave in certain ways during the early years of the twentieth century. Reynolds attempts to write against the narrative that strong ties to inborn national identities led to the breakup of these great land empires, instead claiming that these strong national identities were the results of the imperial collapse.2

Reynolds’ work is primarily arranged in a chronological fashion, beginning with the Young Turk Revolution and ending with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. He details the Russian and Ottoman responses in the Caucasus to the Balkan Wars, the coming of World War I, the February and October Revolutions in Russia, and finally the collapses of both empires. Throughout the early chapters, Russia seemed poised to take advantage of Ottoman weakness, demonstrated through the Balkan wars, and expand its empire southward. In order to do this, the Russians just needed enough time to organize their military to a level where a victory over the dying “sick man” would be feasible.3 As the Ottomans recovered from the Balkan wars, World War I broke out, and the Ottoman empire needed to choose a side. Initially, it seemed that aligning with its main adversary, Russia, would lead to a potentially stable borderlands region, but ultimately the Ottoman leadership decided that Germany was a more attractive ally. Reynolds’ narrative suggests that the Ottomans had made a wise choice. After the fall of the Tsar, it seemed quite likely that the Ottomans could expand into the Russian Caucasus, or at the very least create a buffer zone between the two states.4 Germany, however, turned out to be for the Ottomans a less than desirable ally. Germans viewed peace with the new Russian government as more important than the realization of their Ottoman partners’ territorial aspirations. Not long after the Germans concluded peace negotiations with the Russians, however, the war ended and the Ottoman Empire was shattered by the victors.

Reynolds’ writing adds contingency and suspense to a story that readers already likely know the end of. He shows that at all times there were real possibilities for the Caucasus and for both imperial regimes that ultimately were went unmet.

This work is incredibly well sourced, using archival holdings from Turkey, Russia, Germany, and the United Kingdom, written in four languages (Turkish, Russian, German, and Georgian), and it provides a balanced account between Russian and Ottoman points of view. Even though Reynolds apparently had more Turkish material to work with, readers will not feel cheated of the Russian perspective. While presumably a lack of language skills and perhaps a dearth of archival sources representing these people hindered the insertion of Kurdish and Armenian voices into the narrative, Reynolds makes great efforts to show how actors from these groups were active agents in shaping their destinies. It adds depth to the historiography of nationalist movements, the ends of empires, and the First World War era. It inserts nationalism into the historiography of the collapse of the Russian empire and brings Ottoman and Russian historiographies into a closer conversation. This book is recommended for scholars interested in any of these fields.

2 Ibid., 13.
3 Ibid., 262.
4 Ibid., 343.
5 Ibid., 349.

2 Ibid., 9.
3 Ibid., 38-39.
4 Ibid., 218.


By Manna Duah (Ph.D. Student, Temple University)

Marie-Jeanne Rossignol is a French historian of the so-
cial, cultural, intellectual Atlantic World. The Nationalist Ferment is an English translation of the 1994 French language publication, Le ferment nationaliste, which won the Organization of American Historians’ 1994 foreign book prize. In this paradigm-setting classic, Rossignol explores the ideological and intellectual underlining of the United States’ behavior towards other nations from 1789 to 1812. Her research grows out of works on French nationalism, in response to current debates on the nation. The Nationalist Ferment puts these ideas of nation into perspective by introducing American nationalism to the range of analysis.

Rossignol argues that foreign policy shaped American nationalism from 1789 to 1812. She defines nationalism as the construction and affirmation of nation, sculptured by elites and spread to the citizenry through a cultural revolution.1 American nationalism fit within the spectrums of nationalism as defined by European writers: nationalism as self-defense and nationalism as a xenophobic phenomenon.2 In the United States, economic and territorial expansion fostered nationalism as self-defense. The exclusionary nature of nationalism also permitted national conversations on identity to ignore minorities. Though the executive branch directed the state’s international relations, Rossignol illustrates that America’s entry into the international stage happened at a time when its citizens evinced high enthusiasm for foreign events. High literacy rates allowed foreign policy to enter the realm of public discourse. The typical American voter in 1812 was thus a white male for whom the nation was a promise, and a reality. This prototype believed in a coming expansion of the United States, was economically liberal, and looked to Great Britain for recognition and affirmation of national identity.3 To Rossignol, foreign policy in the nineteenth century was thus not the reserve of the state, but of the citizenry, who defined nationhood and citizenship through their negotiation of America’s international affairs.

This thesis marks a valuable intervention into American diplomatic history as Rossignol places foreign policy at the center of the evolution of American nationalism and nationhood. Traditional history has focused on domestic dynamics in explaining the foundations of nation. Nevertheless, Rossignol’s attempt to challenge elitist diplomatic history by focusing on American identity as forged by the citizenry constitutes one of the weakest parts of her argument. The writings of opposition leaders, sermons of New England ministers, and articles in regional newspapers may represent how people outside of the government played an integral role in the process of nation building, but this public still consisted of upper and upper middle class white men. Rossignol’s pool of sources may be wider than diplomatic and state documents, but her actors do not change much. This critique is worth noting only because Rossignol sets up her narrative as a counter to elite history, and as a narrative of public engagement in policy.

Rossignol argues that foreign policy acted as the catalyst for partisan debates among the ruling elite. Despite regional or economic divisions, the Federalist and Republican parties represented the same socio-economic groups in Congress. The peculiarity of American nationalism was that it lacked grounding in a common past and heritage, unlike European nationalism.4 Through foreign policy, Americans rallied around the common goal of economic and territorial expansion. Jefferson’s 1800 presidential victory ushered in a new social and political perspective in which government was at the service of the citizen with whom it shared foreign policy objectives. The War of 1812 became the endpoint for the making of American nationalism by upholding sovereignty and uplifting national feeling. Rossignol argues that the revolution formed a collective memory that served for early America as a source of national identity, and foreign conflicts helped shape this identity.5

Rossignol’s work, while an important contribution, does not convince that 1812 was the moment foreign policy shaped a nationalism that trumped partisan and sectional divisions. Her choice of 1812 as not just an era of partisan cooperation, but also the moment of a unified national identity is particularly problematic because national identity and the government’s power remained contested. This shortcoming may be a function of her choice of sources. Rossignol is also not an Americanist, and the fact that she is engaging mainly with French historiography shapes the questions she examines.

Rossignol’s methodology and use of evidence is very much a product of its time. She acknowledges how the turn in international history toward adopting subaltern strategies affected her choice to incorporate Native American and black slaves into early American foreign policy historiography.6 Thus, while she challenges Eurocentric bias in studies of American foreign relations and argues convincingly that Indian relations until 1812 should receive more attention, she ultimately fails to give native peoples a voice. What Rossignol presents is what elites thought, planned, and decided about Indians. Indians are as silent, perhaps even more so in this account, than in other works concerned with Indian Affairs.

I recommend this book for a graduate class on early America, nationalism, or foreign relations. While not necessarily a dense read, students need to have a basic understanding of the background to the events Rossignol discusses, to grasp the nuances and intricacies involved.

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2 Ibid., x.
3 Ibid., xxii.
4 Ibid., 196-197.
5 Ibid., xix-xx.
6 Ibid., xvi.

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CENFAD News & Updates

Faculty

Beth Bailey is on research leave this year, with a fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies, working on a book about how the U.S. Army worked to handle the “problem” of race during the Vietnam era and the decade that followed (or from roughly 1965–1985). She has been spending a lot of time in archives, especially at Carlisle and at the National Archives at College Park, and finding excellent sources, from race relations training films to IG investigations to policy statements on the use of cultural symbols to negotiations with off-post communities in the U.S., Germany, Korea, and beyond. Richard Immerman and Dr. Bailey submitted their edited collection, Understanding the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to NYU Press this fall. The volume pulls together distinguished scholars, and is based on a conference they held through CENFAD in fall 2013.

David Farber gave a keynote address in November 2014 to the Political Science Section of the German American Studies Association on the history of conservatism in the United States. In related news, he also published a long article on American political conservatism in the French journal, Politique Americaine 23 (Fall 2014).

Last spring Petra Goedde presented a paper about Cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova and the gender battles of the Cold War at a conference in Berlin, Germany. In June she joined other Temple faculty, alumni, and graduate students at the Annual SHAFR
conference in Kentucky. In September she took up the position of Associate Director at CHAT, Temple’s Center for the Humanities. She continues to be active in SHAFR, serving on two committees and beginning a three-year term on the SHAFR Council this coming January.

Marvin Wachman Director Richard Immerman followed his hectic schedule of lectures last spring in connection with the publication of his The Hidden Hand: A Brief History of the CIA with an equally hectic summer collecting and revising the essays initially prepared for CENFAD’s conference in fall 2013. He and Beth Bailey completed their introduction and submitted the manuscript for their co-edited Understanding the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan this past fall. Concurrently, Immerman’s “The Politics of Intelligence Reform,” came out in The Politics of Major Policy Reform in Postwar America, which Jeffrey Jenkins and Sidney Milkis edited for Cambridge University Press. Immerman is particularly pleased with this year’s CENFAD colloquium series, which has deservedly attracted large and enthusiastic audiences.

Dr. Jay Lockenour has returned from serving a year as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the United States Air Force Academy to be chair of the History Department at Temple University. This last year saw the publication of his contribution on Germany to Peter Stearns’ volume on Demilitarization in the Contemporary World (University of Illinois Press) and plenty of interest in World War One. We hope to see more news on the Ludendorff project soon.

Gregory J. W. Urwin spent a month in England last summer conducting research for his future book on the social history of the 1781 British invasions of Virginia. Temple University supported this research with a Summer Research Award. While in England, Urwin published “I Have Wanted to Go See You for a Long Time”: Notes on the Friendship of Johann Ewald and John Graves Simcoe” in Volume 17 of The Hessian: The Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association. On November 5, Urwin presented the 57th Harmon Memorial Lecture at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Urwin’s invitation from Lieutenant General Michelle D. Johnson, the academy’s superintendent, called the Harmon Lecture a “prestigious series” that “provides a unique opportunity for Academy cadets and faculty to experience firsthand the finest work in the fields of aviation and military history.” Urwin drew on his current book research to speak on “Abandoned to the Arts & Arms of the Enemy: Placing the 1781 Virginia Campaign in its Racial and Political Context.” More than a thousand cadets and faculty members attended the lecture in Arnold Hall. Urwin’s remarks have been published in pdf format on the web site of the Air Force Academy’s History Department: http://www.usafa.edu/dfh/harmonmemorial.cfm. As President of the Society for Military History, Urwin has also been consumed with preparations for its 2015 annual meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, and the publication of a white paper that he commissioned on the place of military history in American academe.

Steven Elliott attended the annual seminar on the American Revolution at Fort Ticonderoga in September, giving him the opportunity to present his research on “Civil-Military Relations in Revolutionary-War New Jersey” to a crowd of 150 academics, independent scholars, and history enthusiasts. In October, he attended a workshop on Military History and the Digital Humanities at Northeastern University, co-sponsored by the Society for Military History and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The workshop focused on applying network analysis and geographic information systems to the study of military history.

Carly Goodman is enjoying her first semester as a CHAT Graduate Associate Fellow, and is getting a lot out of the biweekly seminar. Since stepping down as Davis Fellow at the end of the last school year, she has been on the go. Thanks to a series of travel research grants, she was able to conduct research in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Wyoming in the papers of several policymakers. She has also presented her work at conferences in Kentucky; Kyoto, Japan; and Colorado. There’s no place like home.

Thomas A. Reinstein is the 2014 recipient of CENFAD’s Sergeant Major William F. Berger Prize Endowed Fellowship for War and Society. He recently received the John F. Kennedy Library’s Marjorie Kovler Research Fellowship as well as a Moody Research Grant from the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, and is looking forward to visiting both libraries to perform research for his dissertation.

As a first year M.A. student, Brinee Smith is currently exploring research topics for her thesis. She attended Chestnut Hill College’s 2014 Legacy Series Conference: “The Legacy of World War I” on November 14 and 15 with Ian Sykes, a fellow Temple M.A. student. She also presented her undergraduate research, “Disorganized Government, Organized Crime: An Examination of Philadelphia during National Prohibition (1920-1933)” on September 18 to Professor Cathy Rosen’s undergraduate Criminal Justice class at Temple.

Silke Zoller is enjoying her work as the Davis Fellow at CENFAD this year, and has vowed to keep up the flood of emails she sends to everyone. In the summer, she presented her research at the SHAFR Annual Meeting in Lexington, Kentucky. The panel she organized and took part in was about state perceptions of and reactions to terrorism. She just passed her comps, and is happily compiling information for her dissertation prospectus.

Graduate Students

Manna Duah is working on finishing her second year in the PhD program. She presented her paper on “Migration and Identity in Ghana” at the March 2014 James A. Barnes Conference. She is looking forward to working over the winter break on two papers on activist interventions into American policy making toward Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. She hopes to have a busy spring semester attending a few graduate student conferences and starting her comprehensive exams reading.

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Friends & Alumni

Matt Fay (M.A., 2014) recently agreed to join the Niskanen Center as a foreign and defense policy analyst. The center is a libertarian think tank officially launching in December 2014. It is named in honor of William Niskanen, who previously served as chairman of the Cato Institute, chairman of Ronald Reagan’s Council of Economic Advisors, and chief economist for Ford Motor Company. Dr. Niskanen began his career as a defense policy analyst at the RAND Corporation and was one of the “whiz kids” at the Department of Defense under Robert McNamara. Matt’s work will focus on defense spending. Needless to say, he is very excited about the opportunity.

Michael E. Lynch (Ph.D., 2014) completed his dissertation, “Sic ‘Em, Ned’: Edward M. Almond and his Army, 1916-1953,” in May under the direction of Dr. Gregory J. W. Urwin. Michael is employed as a research historian at the Army Heritage and Education Center of the Army War College (AWC). He recently
presented a paper at a conference on the history of Army personnel reductions, and is writing the synthesis chapter for an edited volume of essays on the same subject. He has been invited to join a panel from the American Psychological Association Conference in 2015. Michael serves as faculty mentor for two AWC Fellows, and is directing an AWC resident student research project. He is now preparing to teach an elective course at the AWC titled, “Challenges of Command in the American Civil War.” In his spare time, Michael is an endurance athlete and has completed nine races this year on behalf of his favorite charity, Fisher House. These races included two marathons and three triathlons, the last of which was the Princeton Ironman 70.3, a half Ironman. He continues to train for triathlons. Michael is also an active scout leader, serving as Advancement Coordinator for BSA Troop 173, Carlisle Barracks. Finally, Michael was honored in May to be named the Carlisle Barracks (PA) Civilian Employee of the Year for 2013, and in November as the 2014 Federal Employee of the Year by the Central Pennslyvania Federal Executive Association.

Christopher Preble (Ph.D., 2002), vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, recently co-edited A Dangerous World? Threat Perception and U.S. National Security (Cato Institute) with John Mueller. The collection of essays grew out of a conference held a year ago at the Cato Institute. Dr. Preble also published feature-length articles in the American Conservative, Cato Policy Report and Reason (not online), over twenty op eds, including in high profile outlets such as the New York Times, Washington Post (Online), and the National Interest (Online), and a book chapter, “Leaving Unipolarity Behind: A Strategic Framework for Advancing US Interests in the Indian Ocean Region,” in Peter Dombrowski and Andrew C. Winner, eds., The Indian Ocean and US Grand Strategy: Ensuring Access and Promoting Security (Georgetown University Press, 2014). He presented at a conference in Venice, Italy, and is currently pursuing studies into cases of defense conversion in the United States. Having written about Brooklyn Navy Yard, DuPont’s Eleutherian Mills in Wilmington, Delaware, and Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin, Texas, Dr. Preble hopes to expand his research in the coming year to include further case studies.

David J. Ulbrich (Ph.D., 2007) is currently an assistant professor of history at Rogers State University in Claremore, Oklahoma. He also continues to teach part-time for Norwich University’s online M.A. in Military History program.

Together with Temple alumnus Matthew S. Muehlbauer (Ph.D., 2008), Ulbrich co-authored Ways of War: American Military History from the Colonial Era to the Twenty-First Century (Routledge). This book received very positive reviews on H-Diplo and the Michigan War Studies Review. It is now also required reading for all cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Muehlbauer and Ulbrich have been interviewed by Temple alumnus Bobby Wintermute (Ph.D., 2006) for “New Books on Military History,” as well as in the French military affairs journal, Défense et Sécurité Internationale. Looking to the future, Muehlbauer and Ulbrich are collaborating once again on a new anthology, The Routledge Global History of War and Society. Ulbrich has also begun writing a co-authored textbook, Amphibious Warfare: An Interpretative History (with Mark Fissel). Both these new projects are under contract.

Ulbrich lectured at the National Museum of the U.S. Navy, the Naval Academy, Marine Corps University, the Army War College, North Jersey Navy League, and Contemporary History Institute at Ohio University. Last year, he was invited to present his paper, “Marine Corps Doctrine and the War with Japan,” at the 2013 Chief of Army History Conference held at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra, NSW. This paper subsequently appeared in the conference proceeding titled Armies and Maritime Strategy (ed. Peter Dennis).

Ulbrich’s other scholarly activities include co-editing the “War and Society in North America” Book Series at Ohio University Press (with Ingo Trauschweizer). Ulbrich is also book review editor for the new peer-reviewed journal U.S. Military History Review, which appears online for the first time in late 2014.

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Strategic Visions

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