

## The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War: A Global History

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**Bericht von:** Katharina Wagner, Universität Jena

Alluding to the famous lecture „What is, and to what end do we study, universal history“ by Friedrich Schiller, the question of why, and to what end do we study, the global history of the American Civil War, naturally had to be raised with our conference taking place in Jena. Participants did thus not shy away from offering new perspectives on seeing the civil war in a global context and from responding to the tendency of some historians to „deprovincialize“ the war and its implications. The papers presented posed questions regarding nation building and its relationship towards the transformation of the character of labour, as well as the economic, political, social and cultural impact of the Civil War around the world. At the same time heightened attention was paid to networks of people and ideas that came to shape the outcome and perception of the American Civil War.

The first panel of the conference was dedicated to the dialectical relationship of nationalism and universalism. RICHARD CARWARDINE's (Oxford) paper shed new light on Abraham Lincoln as both a nationalist and internationalist and revealed that Lincoln became perceived as both by advocating a romantic nationalism fused with „a conviction that the hope of all humankind lay in his country's republican principles and practices.“ AXEL JANSEN (Frankfurt) then discussed the 1863 founding of the National Academy of Sciences and claimed that the law implementing a national academy should not only be interpreted as a symbol of the nation's acceptance of the logic of science, but also as a tool for helping Americans consolidate their emerging nation and national state.

The public keynote address was given by STIG FÖRSTER (Bern), who spoke about „Global Warfare and the American Civil War.“

Förster argued that the American Civil War had not been a global war, but, as its term implies, merely a Civil War between the Union and Confederacy. Although it was an isolated affair, however, the conflict exhibited tendencies of a total war, and can be interpreted as a return to the „people's war“ similar to the Napoleonic wars, albeit under the changed condition of industrialization. In the evening, a reception followed in Schiller's Summerhouse, allowing for debates in historic ambience and giving participants the opportunity to visit the house of one of universal history's early advocates.

The next day, the conference continued with a panel addressing the issue of nation building, war and the question of inclusion in the era of the American Civil War. At first, AARON SHEEHAN-DEAN (Florida) showed how a „rough typology of non-combatant treatment“ emerged during the conflict, but how no explicit policy was developed for it. Furthermore, he revealed that as the North and the South both functioned as autonomous nations throughout the war and were eager to impress fellow nations with their modern state-like behaviour, their military options were severely limited. In her paper „Civil Way Cybernetics“, SUSAN-MARY GRANT (Newcastle) then repositioned the „wounded soldier“ as central to the nationalist forces that emerged in the 19th century. She urged historians not to downplay the corporeal costs that the Civil War produced, and portrayed the 19th century as the age of the emergence of „war machine“ comprising both technological as well as human elements. PAUL QUIGLEY (Edinburgh) thereafter re-evaluated the question of citizenship in the United States in a transatlantic context and demonstrated how wartime needs caused governments to make new demands upon the governed, while material hardships increased the people's expectations of their leaders. Next, ENRICO DAL LAGO (Galway) compared processes of nation building, civil war and social revolution in the American South and the Italian South (Mezzogiorno) from 1860 to 1865, showing how during this time both regions played important roles in the respective processes of national consolidation.

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Panel three discussed the impact of the American Civil War on the global economy and looked at the civil war era through the prism of cotton in different ways. The first panelist BRIAN SCHOEN (Ohio) offered new insights into a familiar theme: that cotton's central place in the modern 19th century global economy critically informed a Deep South sectional identity and contributed to secession. SVEN BECKERT (Harvard) then looked at the American Civil War as one of the most important events in the history of global capitalism. He argued that one of the principle outcomes of the Civil War was the rearrangement of the nation's political economy, which in turn had a dramatic impact on America's place in the world and thus on global capitalism more broadly.

The fourth panel did then address the impact of the American Civil War on the international state system. While most historians agree that the Confederacy's slaveholding status in itself was no barrier to international recognition, ROBERT BONNER (Dartmouth) elaborated on how the Confederacy's perceived „piratical tendencies“ undermined its reputation as a responsible potential sovereign. Talking about international finance and the Civil War, JAY SEXTON (Oxford) subsequently argued that the latter constituted a key moment in the international history of 19th century finance by fundamentally disrupting and altering the existing financial relationships, institutions and the flow of capital. RICHARD BLACKETT (Nashville) afterward analyzed African American efforts to win British public opinion for the Union and was able to demonstrate that even though it is unclear to what extent these efforts influenced British policy at the time, they definitely had a profound impact on British public opinion and helped keep the causes of the war alive in its people's minds.

Panels five and six were headed „The American Civil War and Transnational Ideological Currents.“ By examining the efforts of Union agents in charge of propaganda operations in Europe, such as John Bigelow, DON DOYLE (Chapel Hill) illustrated how the interpretation of the Civil War as an „epic battle“ with international significance for the „entire democratic experiment“ came out of

the transatlantic exchange and its impact on the popular imagination. MISCHA HONECK (Washington D.C.) then emphasized that abolitionists of differing backgrounds were drawn together by bonds of companionship, mutual interests and converging print cultures. Thereafter, PAUL FINKELMAN (Albany) discussed how the American Civil War did effectively change the nature of world slavery, followed by LESLIE BUTLER (Dartmouth), who elaborated on the transatlantic contexts of Civil War liberalism by illuminating how liberals on both sides of the Atlantic perceived the American Civil War as an „educative moment of sorts.“ One person actively engaged in the cause of abolition and national unity was the German-born political philosopher Francis Lieber. If one is familiar with his background, however (he had been living in the South for more than 21 years prior to the Civil War), one wonders why he actually entertained such strong liberal and nationalist ideas. HARTMUT KEIL (Leipzig) identified two sources that account for Lieber's activities during the war: namely his German background, that was responsible for his nationalist views, and his experience in the slaveholding South. The last panelist AXEL KÖRNER (London) looked at how Italians' image of America was significantly influenced by works of literature and music. According to him, negative portrayals of slavery as in „Uncle Tom's Cabin“ or Verdi's „Un Ballo in Maschera“ helped mold public opinion in Italy in such a way that American federalism was not regarded as a proper model for the country's own unification.

In the first paper of Panel 7, AMANDA BRICKELL-BELLOWS (Chapel Hill) compared post-emancipation literary portrayals of peasants in the American South with that of freedmen in Russia, demonstrating that Russian and Southern elites responded to the abolition of serfdom and slavery by producing divergent post-emancipation cultural myths. The second panelist, NIMROD TAL (Oxford), dealt with the memorialization of the Civil War in the 20th century, exploring British and Irish Projections of the Civil War from 1870 to 1922. According to Tal, since 1870 the Civil War served both Irish and Britons as an „ideological acid-test,“ by which they exam-

ined Ireland's place within the British Union. NICOLA MILLER (London) then contributed to the conference by discussing the impact of the Civil War on Latin America. Looking at the roots of transmission and the lessons of nation building that Latin Americans drew from the conflict, she sees the Civil War as an oscillation in the history of intra-American relations.

The last panel addressed the issues of slavery, emancipation and racism, that are vital for our understanding of the transnational impact of the American Civil War. At first, ANDREW ZIMMERMAN (Washington D.C.) revealed how the American Civil War was a part of a unique mid-19th-century Atlantic history and an important theatre in the "(second) age of revolution." Considering the relationship of slavery and slave rebellion („the Black Atlantic“) and the workers' uprisings in Europe and the US („the Red Atlantic“), Zimmerman found that abolitionism and communism were indeed deeply intertwined and that the fight against slavery served as an important impetus for formulating critiques of capitalism. NICHOLAS GUYATT (York) then considered the impact of the American Civil War on the Caribbean by testing the prophecies that Tocqueville had made about these islands in the 1830s. As Guyatt shows, Tocqueville's prediction of race war resonated in the Civil War period and influenced the debate about whether to expand to encompass the former colonies of the Caribbean. „From Ormond to Regalia“, a paper presented by ZACHARY SELL (Urbana, Ill.), used the example of the white South Louisiana sugar planter Samuel McCutcheon, who relocated to British Honduras in the aftermath of the Civil War, to illustrate how the structure of slavery and settler colonialism designed by Southern white supremacists was integral to 19th century capitalist production – even after the Civil War. In the last talk given at the conference, EVAN C. ROTHERA (Philadelphia) proposed an interesting new angle for studying the Civil War and its aftermath by analyzing „comparative reconstructions“ and by exploring the presence of competing national mythologies.

The day ended with a trip to Weimar, where Jane Obst pointed out well- and lesser-known

attractions of the city, followed by a joint dinner, proving Schiller's words that the „study of world history“ is „an attractive as well as useful occupation.“

On Sunday, a roundtable discussion, moderated by Jörg Nagler, concluded the conference with some general observations on advantages and disadvantages of doing a global history of the Civil War, as well as suggesting new avenues for future research. In order to illuminate the global implications of the Civil War even better, Jörg Nagler observed, amongst other things, that more scholarly work is still needed on the multinational Union regiments, the way in which the war changed the perception of international migration and migration to the United States, the impact of the economic transition following the Civil War on countries such as Egypt and India and the rarely discussed significance of the British Empire in connection to the event. Furthermore, Jörg Nagler contemplated that historians need to be more precise with the definition of „liberalism“ in a global world and think about the specific connotations of the term.

Don Doyle then started the discussion by challenging the validity of the term „age of nationalism,“ that has up to date been employed by many historians to label the mid-19th century. On the contrary, Doyle perceived that era as one in which national identity was much more fluid and in some ways more voluntary. Richard Blackett thereafter advocated that historians search for what he termed the „ordinary people“ are doing and the connections they are trying to make across issues of race and class. Subsequently, Jay Sexton pointed to the importance of political languages and vocabularies, suggesting that in the course of the civil war, the „old language of republicanism“ was giving way to a „new language of civilization.“ Finally, the discussion turned to the question of how global the Civil War actually was. The participants agreed with Aaron Sheehan-Dean's suggestion that global analysis is not always relevant to our understanding of history and that caution needs to be applied when putting events in a transnational framework. MARCUS GRÄSER (Zürich) asked whether the transnational approach should be regarded

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as a means for *explaining* the war per se or rather as a tool for *illuminating* it, and Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton observed that more attention should be paid to the role of religion in the Civil War. Furthermore, since participants in Jena had been exposed to the transnational significance of the Civil War, one should also reflect on the world significance for the Civil War and examine how global developments help to explain how the war even came about.

**Conference overview:**

*Panel 1: The Dialectics of Nationalism and Universalism*

Richard Carwardine (Oxford University): Abraham Lincoln: The Nationalist and the Universalist

Axel Jansen (Universität Frankfurt): The Profession of Science in a National Context: The 1863 Founding of the National Academy of Sciences Globally Considered

Public Keynote Address

Stig Förster (Universität Bern): Global Warfare and the American Civil War

Reception Schillerhaus

*Panel 2: Nationbuilding, War and the Question of Inclusion in the Era of the American Civil War*

Aaron Sheehan-Dean (University of North Florida): Dying for a Nation: Violence and Nationalism in the mid-Nineteenth Century

Susan-Mary Grant (Newcastle University): Civil War Cybernetics: Man, Machine, and the Mechanics of Nineteenth Century Nationbuilding.

Paul Quigley (University of Edinburgh): The American Civil War and the Transformation of Citizenship: Transatlantic Perspectives

Enrico Dal Lago (National University of Ireland, Galway): Nation-Building, Civil War, and Social Revolution in the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno, 1860-1865

*Panel 3: The Impact of the American Civil War on the Global Economy*

Brian Schoen (Ohio University): Southern

Wealth, Global Profits: Cotton, Economic Culture, and the Coming of the Civil War

Sven Beckert (Harvard University): Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War

*Panel 4: The Impact of the American Civil War on the International State System*

Robert Bonner (Dartmouth College, USA): Confederate Piracy, Great Power Diplomacy, and 19th Century International Law

Jay Sexton (Oxford University): International Finance and the Civil War

Richard Blackett (Vanderbilt University, Nashville): African American Efforts to win British Public Opinion for the Union

*Panel 5: The American Civil War and Transnational Ideological Currents I*

Don Doyle (University of South Carolina): Last Best Hope: America's International Civil War

Mischa Honeck (Heidelberg University/GHI Washington, D.C.): Uprooted Emancipators: Transatlantic Abolitionism, the American Civil War, and the Politics of Belonging

Paul Finkelman (Albany Law School): How the American Civil War Changed the Nature of World Slavery

*Panel 6: The American Civil War and Transnational Ideological Currents II*

Leslie Butler (Dartmouth College, USA): Assuming „A Democracy Can Think“: Transatlantic Contexts of Civil War Liberalism

Hartmut Keil (Universität Leipzig): Francis Lieber and the American Civil War

Axel Körner (London University): Slavery and the Civil War. Italian Perspectives

*Panel 7: Contemporary (Self-)Perceptions and Analysis of the American Civil War*

Amanda Brickell (North Carolina, Chapel Hill): Memory and Myth-Making: Post-emancipation Literary Portrayals of Peasants and Freedmen in Russia and the American South

Nimrod Tal (Oxford University): British and Irish Projections of the American Civil War to America, 1870-1922

Nicola Miller (London University): The American Civil War and its Impact on Latin America

*Panel 8: Slavery, Emancipation, Racism*

Andrew Zimmerman (George Washington University): Africa and the American Civil War: Slavery, Migration and Empire

Nicholas Guyatt (York University, England): The American Civil War and its Impact on the Caribbean

Zachary Sell (University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign): From Ormond to Regalia: The Civil War and Sugar Plantations in South Louisiana and British Honduras, 1860-1872

Evan C. Rothera (The Pennsylvania State University): Beyond Comparative Emancipation: Comparative Reconstructions as a Category of Analysis

Excursion to Weimar

Roundtable Discussion and Final Comments

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