Foreigners in Red, White and Blue:
The Historiography of Europeans-Immigrants’ Motivations and Contributions to the Union War Effort during the American Civil War.

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Beginning in the 1980s, the traditional military narrative of the American Civil War centered on the perspectives and deeds of high ranking officers and politicians shifted to the inclusion and interpretation of individual common soldiers. Their connection and separation from the conflict to broader contextual was the foundation of the new historical composition. Defined in the subfield as soldier studies; the scholarship of the war has extended beyond the Atlantic Ocean to Europe with interpreting the experience and contribution of European immigrants. In the introduction to *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers* (2007), historian Aaron Sheehan Dean detailed the historiography of soldier studies. For years, scholars’ research pertaining to primary source material of soldiers was rarely applied in framing individual explanations for participating in the war. It is within the timeframe of the past twenty years, Sheehan Dean explains, that scholars have rediscovered and sought comprehension of soldiers’ experiences by asking pertinent questions connected to broader issues of the war detailed in diaries and letters.¹ This work highlights the scholarship of European influences and involvement on the Union war effort during Civil War centered on the German and Irish—the two largest ethnic immigrants that enlisted for the United States. This shift illustrates the evolving interpretation of soldiers’ studies from 1980 forward.² The historiography of soldiers’ studies has expanded down separate and disjointed paths. The overseas’ connection of European immigrants in the Union armies during the American Civil War centered on influence of the 1848 Revolutions of Europe to the varying motivations of enlistments illustrates the shifting interpretation of the conflict from the United States to the Atlantic sphere.

² Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Introduction, *The View from the Ground*, p. 2.
Scholars of the subfield apply the thought of soldiers as historical actors that possessed the capability to respond and shape their environment; this concentration provided historians the platform to explain abstract ideas and change over time. Central to their role as autonomous historical actors, soldiers thought and acted beyond the scope of their temporary occupation by living dual roles as volunteers and citizens. Identity is essential to understand the perspective and beliefs of soldiers. Reinforced by religious and racial term classifications, ethnic identification was fundamental to the experience of European immigrants that supported the Union war effort. The shift from the traditional military and political centered narrative to soldiers’ studies was influenced by the rise of social history, the legacy of the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam War era of the 1960s and 1970s.3

It is within the scholarly framework of the past two decades where historian began employing the abundance of source material in a systematic way to interpret the experiences of ordinary volunteer soldiers in answering the questions connected to race, nationalism, and slavery. The earliest attempts to understand the historical perspective of the conflict connected regimental records and personal memories to the study major battles from the lens of general officers. The unit histories interpreted the war through a singular viewpoint, and celebrated the reconciliation and celebratory focus of the conflict that did not highlight the individual perspective of common soldiers. The subfield of soldiers’ studies moved from the rise of a social and quantitative history toward analytical and historical interpretations of the conflict. The past two decades allowed historians to answer critical questions defining the war’s meaning and

3 Aaron Sheehan-Dean, Introduction, The View from the Ground, p. 3.
experience to commoners. The rise of new scholarship emphasizing soldiers’ interpretations of the Civil War distinguished soldiers’ separate and connected identities as citizens and combatants to the significant moral issues of the era. Sheehan-Dean notes historian Maris Vinovski’s plea for new applications of soldiers’ research away from campaigns and politics toward emphasis of “the effect of the war on everyday life in the United States” by attempting to answer questions regarding class conflict, ethnicity, and national memory. Sheehan-Dean acknowledges historian James McPherson’s standard text on the ideological explanations that motivated soldiers to fight in the war. Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War (1997) set the strong foundation for the in-depth expansion of the soldiers’ analyses, and presented a platform for scholars to interpret the experiences of European immigrants in the cause of Union.

James McPherson’s seminal work detailing the motivations of soldiers to enlist and fight in the Civil War is frequently reference by historians the past decade and half. Transcribing 25,000 plus primary source documents, mainly diary entries and letters, McPherson applies the framework of historian John A. Lynn’s work on the French Revolution into three main categories for soldiers’ motivations and participation in the Civil War: initial motivation; sustaining motivation; and combat motivation. Connected to the ideologies of patriotism, duty, honor, and manhood, McPherson succinctly identifies soldiers’ attitudes and emotions for war. During the initial war fervor in response to Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, and the subsequent call by President Abraham Lincoln for 75,000

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6 Sheehan-Dean, “The Blue and the Grey in Black and White”, p. 22. Refer to page 24 at end of paper
volunteers to put down the rebellion by armed force: Union patriotism was foremost factor that motivated men to enlist. Volunteers referenced the Revolutionary War generation of the Founding Fathers, and viewed secession as a threat to republic ideals. The majority of enlistees’ perceived the peculiar institution of slavery fueled the fire that destroyed the framework of liberty. Extinguishing the flames of secession by directly attacking southern aristocracy would preserve the Union and uphold the Constitution of the United States. The moral issue centered on the concern of enslaved African Americans was not the underlining motivation for citizens hostile to the rebellion. Foreign-born soldiers from Europe are underrepresented in the sample of Union enlistees, McPherson states, but there is detail of the broad and individual connections from immigrants to the revolutionary struggles across the Atlantic in the decade prior to the American conflict, and their struggle for liberty in the old country. Irish-Americans that enlisted in the Union drew clear parallels between the Civil War and their failed attempts to achieve independence against Britain at home. In connection to the Atlantic sphere, European aristocrats viewed the Civil War as a threat to American democracy, and believed the disintegration of the Union as confirmation that self-government was doomed to failure. The underrepresentation of immigrants’ specific motivations in McPherson’s work is expanded by scholars’ interpretation and extrapolation of the practical and ethnic motivations for participating in the war.

European immigrants’ enlistments centered on patriotic fervor associated with the majority of Union volunteers, but their distinctive self-definition of combat leadership separated them from native-born Americans. McPherson argues that combat leadership was essential to the effectiveness of a unit; for European volunteers, officers of similar ethnic backgrounds were a

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8 McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades*, p. 16.
major factor. The organization of ethnic units from company to brigade level clearly illustrated the desire of immigrants to fight with men of similar backgrounds led by respected men within the community. Historian William L. Burton argues in his work *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union’s Ethnic Regiments* that organization of ethnic units led by charismatic leaders is the most critical factor in the enlistments of European immigrants for the Union. A high-profile organizer with political or military experience had the influence and the support of their ethnic enclave, and formed units often named after the leader. From a broader context, Burton details common motivation of ethnic soldiers defined by McPherson encompassing volunteers as a whole.

From a practical purpose, defined by McPherson as the traditional means of motivation, both native-born Americans and immigrant enlistees identified themselves as citizen soldiers. Their duty as soldiers was temporary. The war provided the opportunity to seek adventure, and the means to provide employment which did not differentiate them from Anglo-Americans. Burton argues that there was little difference between ethnic and non-ethnic volunteers for their motivations, but their unique sense of identity brought cohesion and the belief that the struggle extended beyond the borders of the United States. McPherson argues that the recruitment and organization of Civil War regiments concentrated on men from the same communities and counties, and the close relationship between peers reinforced their local background. For European centric-units, their pride and honor was connected beyond their regiment, state, and nation as described of native companies and regiments, but to ethnic ties that represented their

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13 McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades*, p. 46.
communities at home and abroad. The distinctive identification and promotion of ethnicity in Union units expands from McPherson to scholarly work concentrating on the experiences and contributions of European immigrants to the Civil War.

The two major European ethnic groups that enlisted for the Union during the Civil War descended from Ireland and the Germanic states. Applying McPherson’s study as a base, Burton describes the process of organizing Irish and German units in the Union armies. Ethnic regiments in the Union armies were classified by three characteristic, details Burton: “one, at the time of its organization, a large majority of its members were foreign born, or sons of foreign-born fathers, soldiers were members of the same ethnic group; two, members of identified themselves and their regiment as an ethnic organization; three, the larger society regarded their regiment as an ethnic organization.” In recruitment, cultural chauvinism, the belief and promulgation that immigrants’ ethnic background made the men superior military recruits, was a commonality used in the early stages of the conflict. Irish heritage centered on their natural ability to fight, especially against the English, and was the racial stereotype successfully employed to induce enlistments. For German immigrants, their love for freedom and superiority of race and culture, was the rhetoric used for recruitment. Language was crucial in reaching potential volunteers, and recruiters responded by the creation of posters in foreign tongue; often, the name of a famous foreign leader written in bold font. Nationalism, for both the Irish and German, connected the men, their families, and communities with the homeland, and their duty to the adopted homeland appealed to ethnic volunteers. The connection to Europe was the continuation of the failed revolutions of the 1850s; the appeal to honor their status as worthy American citizens reinforced

16 McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades*, 83.
17 Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, p. 44.
immigrant volunteers’ dual loyalties. The war was seen by many from the ethnic enclaves as the platform to train men for the renewed attempt to overthrow the monarchies in Europe. Prominent Irish-Born General James Shield endorsed the concept. Burton’s major argument of motivation centers with McPherson’s explanation of patriotic rhetoric and practical opportunities provided by the war.

The organization of ethnic-centric units led by respected leaders, and their experiences and conduct during the war supplements and directly challenges Burton’s interpretation. The failed revolutions of 1848 led to an influx of European exiles to the United States; estimated at a few thousand by Burton. Referred to as Forty-Eighters, many of the former-revolutionaries became respected political and militia leaders in their communities. Thomas Meagher the Irish-born exile provides a case example for applying ethnic identity to political and military action. A celebrated orator, Meager exploited Irish nationalism by directing the vehement protest and hatred of British rule as a tool to organize and recruit a brigade comprised of New York Irish regiments; nominally, with him as its brigadier general. Support from the local press for Meagher’s famous unit, dubbed the Irish Brigade, influenced the Irish from surrounding states to support the Union war effort. A clear argument was made that participation in the American Civil War provided military experience for the men that would be applied in Ireland following the war. The Irish Brigade gained prominence for their gallantry, conduct, and tremendous losses in the campaigns against the Confederacy as a part of the Union Army of the Potomac. But as their numbers diminished, Irish support for the war effort tumbled. Meagher resigned his commission following the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863 in protest of depletion of his

19 Burton, Melting Pot Soldiers, p.53-54.
20 Burton, Melting Pot Soldiers, p. 9
21 Burton, Melting Pot Soldiers, p. 121.
22 Burton, Melting Pot Soldiers, p. 122.
command, the Irish Brigade was a shadow of its former-self, and illustrated the fleeting Irish enlistment and support of the war. He would be the only major Irish leader to campaign and vote for the Republican ticket in 1864.\textsuperscript{23} President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect 1 January 1863, coupled with institution of the Federal draft, turned Irish Democrats against the administration. Enlistments plummeted notably in New York with its high concentration of Irish-immigrants which did not organize another regiment from 1863 forward.\textsuperscript{24} Further detail on the rise and fall of Irish war support by interpreting additional scholarly work will be documented.

The German experience in the Union armies differed greatly from that of the Irish as they became the lightning-rod of nativist criticism for their ethnicity connected to their battlefield performance. Christian B. Keller work \textit{Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity and Civil War Memory} acknowledges McPherson interpretation of soldiers’ studies, but argues that few historians have specifically analyzed the lives of ethnic immigrants. The expansion of the subfield has focused on Irish contributions to the war, but not German soldiers: the largest ethnic group that enlisted for the Union.\textsuperscript{25} Keller does support McPherson’s and Burton’s arguments of the motivating factors for soldiers of German descent; ties to the old German states, patriotism, economic opportunities, and the continuation of the failed 1848 revolutions. Unlike the Irish, a move toward emancipation as a progressing war aim was supported by German communities; a high percentage of officers in the United States Colored Troops were men of German descent.\textsuperscript{26} Keller argues that Burton does not present a clear picture

\textsuperscript{23} Burton, \textit{Melting Pot Soldiers}, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{24} Burton, \textit{Melting Pot Soldiers}, p. 127.
of life in German units; the latter’s work focused on Germans in the Western Theater of war. The lack of scholarly work on Germans of the Eastern Theater, who outnumbered the Irish two to one, primarily focused on the Eleventh Corps Union Army of the Potomac at the Battle of Chancellorsville, is the basis for Keller’s work.27

The experiences of Forty-Eigthers Franz Sigel and Carl Schurz, the most popular and respected leaders of the German communities in the United States as a whole, are a microcosm that reflected American nativism, and the united ethnic response to perceived injustices. Paralleling the rise and fall of Thomas Meagher, Sigel and Schurz prominent political roles representing German communities contributed to their rapid elevation to high commands in the Union armies. Keller aptly describes this connection, stating, “German Americans interpreted the war through the eyes of their ethnic soldiers and their leaders”, and more succinctly with Sigel who was “viewed as the preeminent leader of German America and a symbol for German communities to the Union cause.”28 This indissoluble perspective through the experience of their ethnic units and leaders affected German communities and soldiers in a broad spectrum. German unity afforded Anglo-Americans an easy target to attack the group as a whole. Burton argues Sigel’s advancement was an attempt by the Lincoln administration to support the Union cause, but his checkered performance as a commander reflected the power of political influence on the war.29 Sigel resigned command of the Eleventh Corps in January 1863 produced strong rebuttals by the German press. Germans believed his forced resignation as the unwarranted attack on German soldiers and communities in support of the Union. It was Franz Sigel that compelled “thousands of our young Germans to answer the call to duty” remarked an editor in

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29 Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, p. 211.
Philadelphia. Their unyielding support of Sigel and the German dominated Eleventh Army Corps would come to haunt German communities, the soldiers, and their vaunted leaders following the Union debacle at Chancellorsville in May 1863.

Confederate Thomas “Stonewall” J. Jackson’s famed flanking assault on the Union Army of the Potomac’s right flank occupied by the Eleventh Corps at Chancellorsville on 2 May 1863 triggered the physical and mental destruction for Germans soldiers and their communities at home: a breakdown they never fully recovered from. The response from Anglo-Americans—the press and soldiers in the Army of the Potomac—was immediate. The Eleventh Corps, referred disparagingly as the “damned or flying Dutchmen” was blamed for the Union defeat, and Army’s retreat from offensive operations against the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. For German soldiers and their supporters at home, the unrelenting assault on their honor elicited angry rebuttals from their press and the men of the German corps. Ultimately, German-Americans believed anti-assimilation to Anglo-Americans ideals was the proper course. By scapegoating the German soldiers in defeat, including recriminations by their native commander Oliver O. Howard, the native-born public and soldiers uplifted their morale for the ensuing grand victory at the Battle of Gettysburg in July. For Germans, their mixed performance at the climactic battle in Pennsylvania combined with their repudiation at Chancellorsville marked the zenith and the immediate tumble for their support of the war. Adversity did provide Germans the motivation to rally behind their beleaguered Eleventh Corps; many believed nativism as the underlying cause for their criticism. It was combination of anti-German sentiment and the need

30 Keller, Chancellorsville and the Germans, p. 22-23.
31 Keller, Chancellorsville and the Germans, p. 76.
32 Keller, Chancellorsville and the Germans, p. 77-78.
33 Keller, Chancellorsville and the Germans, p. 91.
for a scapegoat at Chancellorsville that accelerated the opposition and criticism of German soldiers.\textsuperscript{34}

The consequence of the German soldiers’ condemnation at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg thwarted attempts by the ethnic communities at home for total Americanization. Keller argues that Germans’ enthusiasm for support of the war, and unbounded assimilation was altered by the criticism received following the battles. Germans questioned their place within American society, and concentrated and united on their ethnic ties as a result.\textsuperscript{35} Keller arguments refutes Burton’s interpretation that quick and absolute assimilation was sought by ethnic soldiers—notably the Irish and Germans. Burton’s position centers on the loss of ethnicity in regiments as the war progressed—replaced by the basic desire for survival—and that group cohesion based on ethnicity was more important to leaders than the enlisted men within the ranks.\textsuperscript{36} Also, the majority of Germans and Irish enlisted in regular American volunteer regiments where geographic community and friendships outweighed ethnicity.\textsuperscript{37} The creation and existence of ethnic regiments challenged nativism, Burton argues, and ultimately destroyed the sentiments as foreign-born soldiers sacrificed in blood for the United States. Political turned military leaders stressed assimilation in the decades following the war.\textsuperscript{38}

In contrast, Keller argues the sense of betrayal felt amongst the German communities and soldiers following Chancellorsville, and responded with the rise in ethnic consciousness.\textsuperscript{39} Keller specifically mentions Burton’s argument of diminishing ethnicity in units and the rapid move toward assimilation by providing contrary evidence. Keller cites two Pennsylvania German

\textsuperscript{34} Keller, \textit{Chancellorsville and the Germans}, p. 104-105.
\textsuperscript{35} Keller, \textit{Chancellorsville and the Germans}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{36} Burton, \textit{Melting Pot Soldiers}, p. 153.
\textsuperscript{37} Burton, \textit{Melting Pot Soldiers}, p. 175.
\textsuperscript{38} Burton, \textit{Melting Pot Soldiers}, p. 228.
\textsuperscript{39} Keller, \textit{Chancellorsville and the Germans}, p. 123.
regiments (74th and 75th Volunteers), and their successful attempts to Americanization by resisting the appointment for native officers to command the depleted ethnic regiments. Non-German officers were removed from command, and the promotions of enlisted native-born Americans was block. The active roles of the German officers demonstrated the importance for the continuity of ethnicity in their regiments. German leader Carl Schurz did promote German acculturation, but his promotion and defense of assimilation transformed over time; not the rapid proclamation argued by Burton. Keller details a concise chronology of the German experience at the home front, on the battlefield and post-1865, stating, the “increased ethnic consciousness in the first two years of the war, the battle of Chancellorsville and expanding nativism, followed by German indignant and attempts at unity in response, and then a pluralistic celebration of German ethnicity in the postwar decade that stressed the benefits of remaining German to immigrants.” From the broad perspective of interpreting soldier’s studies, the motivations and experiences of ethnic soldiers connected beyond the Atlantic Ocean to Europe.

For historians of the Civil War era, the correlation for the American legacy of 1776 has been well founded, but natives and foreign-born immigrants linked the tangible and pertinent European revolutions of 1848 directly to support their motivations and defense for participation in the war. Supporters of the Union applied the legacy of 1848 to support the United States by comparing southern aristocrats who built their power and influence by the defense and perpetuation of slavery to European monarchies. It was through the trans-Atlantic dialogue centered on nationalism and democratic governments where native-born Americans and

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immigrants connected their defense of the country to the failed revolutions in Europe. Historian Andre M. Fleche’s major argument centers on the struggle to maintain a republic government in the United States that was viewed as a continuation over the legacy of 1848, and the definitions of nationalism; the viability of revolutions in the United States connected to the Atlantic sphere. The 1848 revolutionary rhetoric was disseminated to Americans by the influx of exiles to the country in the years following the failed attempts to overthrow the European monarchies. Fleche attempts to shift the Civil War narrative from the broad American-centric interpretation propagated by such works as Ken Burns’ documentary The Civil War to a larger global context that underlines the importance of European revolutions in connection to the conflict.

The influx of Forty-Fighters intertwined with the sectional crisis of 1850s laid the foundation for either the support of Union or secession in the coming decade. Fleche argues American interpretation of the 1848 revolutions fractured along sectional lines when European immigrants participated in political domestic debate. Forty-Eighter exiles Thomas Meagher of Ireland, Karl Schurz and Franz Sigel from the German states, became permanent residents in their adopted country, and represented the ideals of 1848 for their ethnic enclaves and as well for native-born Americans. Seconding Burton’s estimation of the slight number of Forty-Eighters to the larger percentage of immigrants uninvolved with the failed revolutions, Fleche does attest to the power and influence of the leaders in comparison to their low numbers. Militia companies comprised and led by prominent exiles, including the “Meagher Republic Grenadiers”, reflected immigrants’ strength in martial experience; many of the units formed the basis for ethnic

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44 Fleche, The Revolution of 1861, p. 4.
volunteers units in the first years of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{48} By connecting their experience to Europe, ethnic groups from Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Hungary, used the legacy of 1848 to urge broad social reform in American society. In time, a renewal for revolutionary efforts across the Atlantic would be promoted.\textsuperscript{49}

Historian Mischa Honeck’s work \textit{We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists After 1848} connects and expounds from Fleche with scholarly focus on radical Germany influences with the abolitionary sentiment in the United States prior to the Civil War. From the European perspective, Honeck’s connects the application from the American and French revolutionary legacies of 1776 and 1789 to 1848, and how citizens of the United States viewed the events across the Atlantic as the affirmation for republican ideals. American abolitionists linked the revolutions of 1848 and Europeans’ attempt to break the chains of monarchial rule to the struggle to end human bondage in the United States.\textsuperscript{50} The continuation and expansion of slavery was the greatest concern to German Americans. Extending from Honeck’s course, Fleche interprets the secession crisis following the election of Abraham Lincoln as a clear example of the 1848 legacy to the Civil War.\textsuperscript{51} South Carolina’s secession and subsequent attack on Fort Sumter provided Germans definitive proof that the southerner aristocracy was attempting to subdue republican ideals for freedom and equality; the revolutions of 1848 reignited from the Atlantic to the United States. German Forty-Eighters called for revolution.\textsuperscript{52}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] Fleche, \textit{The Revolution of 1861}, p. 25.
\item[49] Fleche, \textit{The Revolution of 1861}, p. 28.
\item[52] Fleche, \textit{The Revolution of 1861}, p. 44-45.
\end{footnotes}
Honeck compares and contrasts the experiences of Irish and German immigrants to the United States. The Irish were accepted as a practical surplus of labor in growing northern industrial factories; Catholicism and nativism of Irish behavior triggered a longer route toward citizenship. Germans’ Teutonic descent attributed to a wider acceptance from native-born Americans with the belief that assimilation could be easier achieved than the Irish.53 This notion changed during the war as Irish fighting prowess and success overshadowed the contributions of German volunteers. In connection to both Burton and Keller, Honeck notes German American unity and fierce defense of their ethnicity when nativist sentiment was directed at an individual or the community; this harmonic resistance to attacks strengthened during the war.54

From the military perspective, Fleche’s work correlates with Burton and Keller. The role of Forty-Eighters in the organization of ethnic regiments is highlighted, specifically the importance of 1848 sentiment for motivating European immigrants to enlist in the Union armies. German Forty-Eighter Carl Schurz, second in command of the Eleventh Corps at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, believed the Civil War was the cataclysmic exhibition of the world’s revolutionary mission.55 Fleche acknowledges Irishman Thomas Meagher’s struggle to support the Union war effort over his belief in southerners’ self-determinism which connected to Irish experience against the English, but eventually drew his sword for the United States. Meagher promoted the belief that a reunited country posed the strongest threat to British rule in Ireland.56 European immigrants were not monolithic in their support of the Union; Irishmen enlisted in both armies, and the Union combatants opposed the war when it prolonged.57

53 Honeck, We Are The Revolutionists, p. 18.
54 Honeck, We Are The Revolutionists, p. 20-21.
Germans did not enlist in the Confederacy in large numbers, and became disheartened from nativists attacks. But when viewed from a broader connection, Fleche states strongly that “Union’s foreign-born rank and file embraced an interpretation of the war that linked the fighting to America to the promise of freedom in Europe.”  

Historian Susannah J. Ural notes the wealth of Civil War soldiers’ studies centered on individual and community context connected to the war, but too remarks on the lack of comprehensive study of immigrants. The essays in *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity in America’s Bloodiest Conflict* edited by Ural details the contributions of outside groups to the narrative of the war. Ural also mentions in the introduction McPherson’s *For Cause & Comrades* as the foundational text of soldiers’ studies, but the lack of explanation of ethnic motivations for war has expanded the interpretation of the subfield. Ural acknowledges the political influence of the Irish and German constituencies—1.6 million Irish and 1.3 million German—living in the country at the start of the war in 1861 was keenly recognized by President Lincoln. The appointment of Thomas Meagher and Franz Sigel as political general officers and representatives of their ethnic communities, as mentioned by Burton, Keller, and Fleche is noted in the introduction as well. Two chapters from the text extrapolate and connected the context of Union immigrant historiography: Stephen D. Engle’s “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union, and the Construction of a Wartime Identity” and “Ye Sons of Green Erin Assemble: Northern Irish American Catholics and the Union War Effort, 1861-1865” by Ural.

Paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln’s message to Congress in July 1861, Engle’s expands the President’s description of the war as “essentially a People’s context” to detail German-

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60 Ural, Introduction, *Civil War Citizens*, p. 4-5.
Americans and immigrants connection to the conflict.\textsuperscript{61} Enlistment of foreign-born and European immigrants in the Union armies presented an opportunity for Anglo-Americans to interact with men of varying ethnic backgrounds. Whether nativism sentiment was reinforced or lessened, Americans of native birth recognized that they served in culturally diverse armies, states Engle. Few native recognized the pluralistic diversity of German communities; Keller’s detail of nativist attitudes toward the German volunteers affirms Engle’s point, but the ethnic communities separated to religious, class, and employment enclaves as well. Natives did view Germans as a whole, and as an ethnic group they retained the strongest individuality compared to other Europeans.\textsuperscript{62} German Turners, 1848 exiles, expressed their patriotism to the adopted homeland by enlisting in large numbers after President Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers following the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter. Estimated between 5,000-6,000 enlisted men, the Turner’s invoked the legacy of 1848 for support of the Union.\textsuperscript{63} An estimated 180,000 to 216,000 Germans served in the Union forces—the largest constituted group of foreign-born soldiers.\textsuperscript{64} Engle mentions Keller’s contribution for understanding the diversity of the German communities, specifically the rural farmers of Pennsylvania that migrated to the region in the eighteen century who had little connection to the recent immigrants of the 1850s. Engle also expands the diversity of the German communities with Burton’s \textit{Melting Pot Soldiers} and the observation that the majority of the volunteers were not radical or intellectuals of the 1848 sect,

\textsuperscript{62} Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union”, p. 12-13.
\textsuperscript{63} Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union”, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{64} Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union”, p. 19.
but comprised mainly of the Pennsylvania Dutch type from rural background or the common laborer of larger cities.\textsuperscript{65}

Identity through ethnic ties, and the Civil War as the platform to affirm republic values to the homeland and America were crucial for motivating German enlistment in the Union forces. On the patriotic front, German enlistees hoped military service “really proved that they are not foreigners, and they know how to protect their new republican homeland against the aristocracy of the South” argued Turner General August Willich.\textsuperscript{66} Engle argues that ethnic soldiers of varying background were possessed with a new sense of freedom in the United States, and were bound to the success of the Union that correlated with the work of Fleche and Honeck.\textsuperscript{67} Crucial to affirming ties of ethnic identity, as described by Burton and more so Keller, “the names of Franz Sigel, Carl Schurz, and John Fremont were as important to the Germans in this cause as Jefferson, Hamilton, and Madison had been to the War of Independence.”\textsuperscript{68} This creates a dilemma in the interpretation of ethnic soldiers’ studies as the narrow focus on influential leaders conforms diverse groups within foreign-immigrants as a monolithic entity. But, the Germans and Irish elevated their leaders to reflect ethnic dynamics as whole therefore it is difficult to separate the men from the groups they represent.

Susannah J. Ural’s essay “Ye Sons of Green Erin Assemble: Northern Irish American Catholics and the Union Effort, 1861-1865” expands and connects the experience of the immigrants from Ireland to the scholarly work detailed. 150,000 Irish-Americans and immigrants from Ireland enlisted in the Union armies during the war. Similar to the makeup of regiments across the board, the majority of Irish volunteered in non-ethnic regiments, but mirrored the

\textsuperscript{65} Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union”, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{66} Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union”, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{67} Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union”, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{68} Engle, “Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union”, p. 17.
experiences of their German comrades; Irish centric-units were well-known and promoted as distinct non-native regiments. James Mulligan’s Irish Brigade, Michael Corcoran’s Legion, and Thomas Meagher’s Irish Brigade, specifically the latter, were the most renowned representatives of Irish fighting spirit and material in the Union armies. The Irish soldiers’ service record is well documented, Ural states, but the question of why some participated while others refused enlistments in Federal service remains a debate. Ural mentions and expands on William Burton’s argument that the Irish Americans and immigrants volunteered for a number of reasons. The Fenians, an Irish nationalist and brotherhood organization, enlisted in support of the Union to gain martial experience for a renewed assault against English rule in Ireland. Irish Catholic leaders also supported the war effort in line with the Fenians by connecting the revolutionary struggles across the Atlantic to the attempted subversion of the American union. Ural describes the connection to Ireland and defense of the United States as the Irishmen’s dual loyalties.

Irish support for the United States and President Lincoln’s evolving war policy foundered with the start of the conflict’s second full year: 1863. General Meagher’s belief that Irish soldiers’ sacrifice in battle, notably his famed Irish Brigade in the Virginia and Maryland campaigns in 1862, was not enough to satisfy American political leaders and the public. Meagher’s struggle to replenish the depleted regiments of his brigade added to impression that the Irishmen fought against the Confederates to their front and “an army of implacable conspirators in the rear.”

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President’s war policy was irreparably broken with the official issue of the Emancipation Proclamation the first day of January 1863. The Irish associated the abolition of African Americans as the direct challenge to their ability to obtain employment in a free market.\(^7^4\) Lincoln published the proclamation less than a month after the Army of the Potomac’s disastrous defeat at the Battle of Fredericksburg in Virginia. Meagher’s casualties exceeded 45%, and was compounded with the Irish Brigades’ horrific bloodletting at Antietam in September 1862. The United States as an asylum for Irish refugees, and the decimation of the men with military experienced ended the plan for a renewed revolution back in Ireland.\(^7^5\)

Irish sentiment for the President Lincoln’s administration reached a bloody zenith in New York City the summer of 1863. Irish involvement in the draft riots of July 13-17 against Federal conscription, emancipation, and Union war policy implicated perceived Irish savagery for native-born Americans.\(^7^6\) Similar to their German comrades in arms, the American public viewed the Irish with mistrust and contempt. The dual loyalties for the Irish, heightened after nativist sentiment following the draft riots, compelled many to oppose the war. Enlistments of Irishmen in the final two years of the year declined. Those that joined or reenlisted in the Union armies were motivated by the large bounties over patriotism to the war effort.\(^7^7\) The Irish were viewed as treacherous for their support of former Union General George B. McClellan in the 1864 presidential election against Lincoln. Amplified by Lincoln’s assassination the following April, native-born Americans associated the Irish with southern rebellion and treason that lasted years following the war.\(^7^8\) Ural does stress the importance of interpreting the Irish’s shifting support of

\(^{7^5}\) Ural, “Ye Sons of Green Assemble”, p. 116-117.
\(^{7^7}\) Ural, “Ye Sons of Green Assemble”, p.125.
\(^{7^8}\) Ural, “Ye Sons of Green Assemble”, p. 126-127.
the war effort that connects to their struggle in Ireland as the pluralistic entities within a larger ethnic community. The scholarly lens incorporates the larger Atlantic sphere to small diverse groups in the United States, but connected by their identity as Irish-Americans and immigrants.\textsuperscript{79}

The discipline of Civil War era scholarship continues to expand and evolve. Aaron Sheehan-Dean details the significance of new social history on the conflict’s thematic applications. From developing and answering the questions centered on slavery, race and emancipation to the shift in focus for soldiers’ studies, the maturation of the subfield accelerated in the 180s. By studying the context of the Vietnam War through the lens and experiences of American soldiers, Civil War historians reexamined soldiers’ primary source materials that emphasized their ability to shape their own histories. Their function as historical actors reflects individual and community experiences, including ethnicity, and connects to the broader contextual narrative of their time.\textsuperscript{80} The scholarship of European immigrants in the Union armies progressed from James McPherson’s study of soldier’s motivations to a focused investigation of Irish and German soldiers. The war’s connection to the Atlantic sphere illustrates the continual expansion of Civil War scholarship beyond the borders of the United States. New generations of historians, Sheehan-Dean believes, will seek to answer news questions focused on overlooked areas of the conflict’s scholarship: the future of Civil War scholarship continues to evolve.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} Ural, “Ye Sons of Green Assemble”, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{80} Aaron Sheehan-Dean, \textit{The View from the Ground}, “The Blue and the Grey in Black and White: Assessing the Scholarship on Civil War Studies”, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{81} Sheehan-Dean, “The Blue and the Grey”, p. 25.
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