

Mark E. Neely Jr. *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007. Pp. 277, illustrations, notes, bibliography, acknowledgments, index. Cloth, \$27.95.)

Mark E. Neely's latest book investigates "whether the American Civil War can accurately be characterized as brutal—'grossly ruthless' or 'unfeeling' in its conduct, 'cruel' and 'cold-blooded'" (3). He somewhat surprisingly answers no, especially when compared to other conflicts, such as the Crimean War, which produced more fatalities in only half the time. The Civil War's violent guerrilla actions, the use of incendiary shells, and Philip Sheridan's 1864 Shenandoah Campaign did not mark the beginning of a new era that foreshadowed the total wars of the twentieth century. Instead, Neely argues that recent scholarship, heavily influenced by Michael Fellman's *Inside War: The Guerilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (1989), has exaggerated the conflict's destructiveness. White Northerners and Southerners accepted some restraints on warfare, at least when fighting other "civilized people." When they fought other peoples, however, or whites who fought like "barbarians," they used much harsher tactics. This fact leads Neely to argue that his book is ultimately "about racial beliefs as a major determinant of behavior in the era" (5).

Neely employs both an international and comparative perspective to answer his question. He devotes two chapters to the Mexican-American War and France's support of Emperor Maximilian in the 1860s to develop his ideas. He repeatedly notes the many atrocities that American volunteers committed against civilians during the Mexican War. While some of this resulted from lax discipline and a desire for vengeance for incidents such as Goliad and the Mier Expedition, American racial perceptions of Mexicans were the major factor. French forces behaved similarly twenty years later, especially once the Mexicans resorted to guerilla warfare. Maximilian's so-called Black Decree of 1865, which condemned to death any combatant or those who assisted them, epitomized this. The decree, issued at the peak of the emperor's power, resulted in between 11,000 and 40,000 deaths. The author notes that it would take hundreds of Fort Pillow Massacres, the Civil War's most infamous killing of prisoners, to equal this number (106). Beyond this, Neely cites Lincoln's 1863 Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction with its lenient "ten percent plan," issued under similar circumstances to Maximilian's decree, to note the great difference between France's 1860 war and the United States's.

Reminiscent of Joseph Glatthaar's work on Sherman's March to the Sea, Neely also reexamines Sheridan's 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign. A careful reading of the sources suggests that Sheridan was not nearly as destructive as is often portrayed. In fact, he described this aspect of the campaign as "delicate," because it was designed to prevent Confederate forces from obtaining provisions, not to punish civilians (128). Following Ulysses S. Grant's orders, Union troops did not devastate the corn crop, thereby leaving subsistence for civilians, nor did they destroy their property. The only cases where Sheridan's men exceeded this were in areas such as the Luray Valley where they fought John Mosby's guerillas and the civilians who supported them. According to Neely, the Union cavalry's main goal in the Shenandoah Campaign was not destruction, but rehabilitating their military reputation. This behavior sharply contrasts with warfare against the Plains Indians. Here U.S. forces repeatedly resorted to widespread burning of the prairies and the killing of women and children, most notably at the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864. Interestingly, Neely asserts that the Civil War did not intensify the brutality against Native Americans. If anything, it may have had the opposite effect because it caused some observers to recognize the military's cruelty towards the Indians.

Some of the author's most convincing evidence of "civilized" and "barbarian" warfare, sometimes carried out simultaneously, is found in his examination of combat in Missouri. There, Confederate marauders, such as "Bloody Bill" Anderson and William C. Quantrill, waged a violent campaign against both civilians and Union soldiers. General John McNeil and other lesser-remembered Northern officers responded in kind by executing hostages, most notably at Palmyra in September 1862, and prisoners who violated their paroles. Still, when regular Confederate forces returned to the state two years later during General Stirling Price's raid, they showed no inclination to retaliate and treated Union prisoners well. Northern forces did the same, although they pursued the marauders who accompanied Price with a vengeance. This lack of retaliation against prisoners also appeared in the later stages of the war, when Northerners began to learn about the horrors of Andersonville. Although the Senate debated a retaliatory policy against Confederate prisoners of war, Neely dismisses this as mere political rhetoric, partly designed to undercut attempts to negotiate an end to the war. He credits Lincoln for limiting the war's brutality and not allowing it to degenerate into wanton carnage aimed at civilians and prisoners, although he never officially announced this as a policy. Neely concludes by writing that

what is notable about the Civil War is not its violence but the opposite: “the remarkable restraint of the people and the president who had organized and mobilized such vastly powerful and potentially destructive armies” (197).

Overall, Neely presents a strong case, but at times it seems forced, such as when he parses the war’s fatalities compared to other conflicts, such as World War II. The book’s organization also poses some problems. The author moves forward and back in time throughout the book and within individual chapters, and he includes a number of personal asides. At times, this tends to break the book’s flow and dilutes its arguments. Still, *The Civil War and the Limits of Destruction* is a thought-provoking work that is sure to generate additional research and debate.

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G. Terry Madonna. *Pivotal Pennsylvania: Presidential Politics from FDR to the Twenty-First Century*. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 2008. Pp. 126, illustrations, notes, bibliography. Paper, \$14.95.)

In this book the ubiquitous Terry Madonna offers the timely and fascinating story of modern presidential politics in Pennsylvania. Even though Pennsylvania has only ever produced one president, James Buchanan, it has become important in presidential general elections since Franklin Roosevelt. Today, it is a basic axiom of Electoral College math that whichever presidential candidate wins two out of the “big three” states—Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Florida—wins the White House. Pennsylvania is a focus for presidential campaigns because it is big (21 electoral votes) and a swing state (for the past three decades the margin of victory has been less than ten percentage points). In recent presidential politics the Keystone State is reminiscent of the nineteenth century before the civil war, in which Pennsylvania was for the most part in the hands of the Democratic Party and was known as the “key stone in the democratic arch.” The Democrats today have not won the Presidency without Pennsylvania since Harry Truman in 1948. In that same period, however, only Republicans Richard Nixon (1968) and George W. Bush (2000, 2004) have won without the commonwealth’s electoral votes.

The first part of the book covers the New Deal realignment in Pennsylvania’s presidential politics. The 1932 election was the beginning