H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Donna R. Gabaccia. *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. 288 S. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-13419-2.

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Published on H-Diplo (October, 2013)

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Immigrant Foreign Relations

In *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective*, Donna R. Gabaccia offers a bold new interpretation that brings diplomatic history into conversation with U.S. immigration history. While the former has traditionally focused on the actions of elite state actors, the latter has tended to offer social histories of immigrants, their families, and communities. Gabaccia examines instead the âintersection of transnational linkages created âfrom belowâ by immigrants,â or what she describes as âimmigrant foreign relations,â with âAmerican international or foreign policies, created âfrom aboveâ by the federal government.â The result is a sweeping rereading of American history that emphasizes the need to understand immigration and the United States in global perspectives. As Gabaccia states, âImmigrants, much like diplomats and State Department officials in Washington, are deeply concerned with the world beyond U.S. bordersâ (p. 1). In addition, âno one understands better than immigrants the continuing power of national governments to draw borders and to set rules for crossing them. Immigrants experience the power of nation states in an extremely intimate fashion, sometimes on a daily basisâ (pp. 2-3).

Gabaccia offers several intriguing insights in her study of American immigration and foreign relations. First, she expands the chronological timeline of most immigration histories. Instead of beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, with the arrival of the âfirst waveâ of immigrants from western and northern Europe as well as Asia, Gabaccia starts with the colonial and early Republic periods to emphasize the ongoing connections that âAmericansâ had with the world. Her biographical account of Crevecoeur, author of the famous Letters from an American Farmer, reveals how his own life was at odds with the proclamation that the American is a ânew man ... who leaves behind him all his ancient prejudices and mannersâ (p. 28). Instead, Crevecoeur, like many other Americans of the early Republic period, lived in multiple countries, held multiple citizenships, and had kinship and economic ties across various borders. Although Crevecoeur helped to articulate an ideology of American exceptionalism and American isolationism, his

life experiences, Gabaccia argues, is more representative of American immigrant experiences. Crevecoeurâs letters reveal how transnational âAmericansâ were from the beginning of the nationâs history.

A second main argument that Gabaccia makes is the close connections between migration and American foreign policy, particularly American empire. First, she points out how Americans have migrated elsewhere in search of souls and markets and have frequently pressured the U.S. government to protect their interests. In other words, U.S. empire follows emigration. Second, the imperial behavior of both the American people and the U.S. state frequently led to economic, political, social, and military disruption and dislocation. In turn, this American presence abroad fostered migration to the United States. In other words, immigration follows empire. Third, American imperialism fosters xenophobia and immigration restriction. Gabaccia suggests that the tendency of Americans to impose their cultural and political values on other lands ironically generates fears that immigrants to the United States will likewise act as invaders rather than assimilators. She points out how the high tide of immigration exclusion legislation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coincided with the dawning of American empire. In other words, American fears of immigrant âothersâ may in fact be based on fear of Americaâs own imperialist selves.

A third significant contribution of Gabacciaâs book is her multifaceted understanding of the U.S. state. One of the bookâs main arguments is that immigration policy over time became domesticated, i.e., legislated by Congress. Gabaccia points out that historically, immigration was more directly connected to trade and bilateral agreements negotiated by the executive branch of government with other nations. For example, when Californians initiated various efforts to restrict immigration from China and the rights of Chinese immigrants, their efforts were thwarted by the provisions of the 1868 Burlingame Treaty, which promoted commercial trade by promising reciprocal âliberty to travel, trade, and reside freelyâ in the United States. (p. 133). Although these negotiated treaties trumped states' rights movements, immigration restriction eventually became the subject of federal legislation, with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Immigration Act of 1924, and so on. Gabaccia highlights the irony that perhaps a democratically elected Congress, which is focused primarily on domestic issues and constituents, may be less capable of managing immigration than the president and his appointed officials. The executive branch, charged with conducting diplomacy, had the preview to consider immigration in the context of foreign policy concerns. In fact, Gabaccia argues that immigrant political constituencies at times found better allies in the presidency and the State Department. Compared to Congress, the executive branch of the federal government was more willing to grant exceptions (paroles and amnesty) and advocate for admission of select groups (particularly refugees fleeing Americaâs cold war enemies) outside of congressionally designated immigration quotas. Gabaccia suggests that returning immigration to the realm of international affairs and hence the executive branch of government may be a better solution than the current congressional impasse around immigration.

Foreign Relations is a rich and provocative book that is written by a seasoned scholar with deep knowledge of immigration history. She finds innovative ways to reinterpret immigration and U.S. diplomatic history by bringing the two fields into conversation with one another. She deftly weaves biographical, economic, and political approaches to understand migration patterns into and out of the United States, state management of national borders and imperial projects, and political mobilizations to open and contract borders. Gabaccia also does not shy away from controversial interpretations. *Foreign Relations* should be widely read and debated, not only among scholars and students but also among politicians and the broader public. I question whether Gabacciaâs call for executive branch activism will necessarily generate better immigration policies. However, I readily agree with her critique that a domestic-only approach to immigration is bound to fail. As Gabaccia points out, an exceptionalist and isolationist understanding of American history ignores the transnational dimensions of American people and U.S. politics.

Citation: Judy T. Wu. Review of Gabaccia, Donna R., *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective.* H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. October, 2013.

URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=39667