



Roosevelt  
Institute for  
American  
Studies



Universiteit  
Leiden

***War and American Democracy***  
**Middelburg**  
**(The Netherlands)**

**March 17–19, 2027**

**Call for Papers**

In recent decades, historians have moved beyond traditional military history to examine more closely the relationship between military operations, actors, and institutions and the broader fabric of modern societies. In doing so, they have helped foster a thriving and multifaceted subfield often described as the “new military history.” In the United States, such a historiographical turn has been especially important in illuminating the deep and long-lasting impact of war on the evolution of political institutions, social relations, cultural life, and economic structures.

Taking that scholarship as its starting point, this conference seeks to explore the tension between two related but opposing processes in US history: *democratization through war* and *militarization of democracy*. On the one hand, militarism and war mobilization created openings for broader inclusion, giving Americans new grounds on which to press claims for citizenship, rights, and social justice, and spurring efforts to institutionalize the promotion of democracy in US foreign policy. On the other hand, war and military-industrial complexes narrowed democratic life by expanding state power, normalizing coercion, diverting and accumulating resources, and justifying exclusion, repression, and violence both at home and abroad.

This conference welcomes papers that examine these tendencies and contradictions and shed new light on how war and militarism have shaped, across time and space, the very foundations of American democracy.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- **War and the political economy:** analyses of defense budgets, spending, contracting, and the reshaping through military means and ends of the US political economy.
- **State power, civil liberties, and citizenship:** examinations of state power, civil liberties, and the duties and rights of citizens in a militarized society.

- **Military identities:** histories of military servicemembers, veterans, and the negotiation of their identities and political belonging.
- **Race and racial justice:** analyses of racial relations and justice in the context of permanent war and militarization.
- **Gender, sexuality, and social norms:** research on gender, sexuality, and the role of war in the remaking of social norms and hierarchies.
- **Migration, displacement, and mobility:** studies of migration, displacement, and mobility within the United States and as a consequence of war and militarization.
- **Democracy promotion and intervention:** examinations of democracy promotion, through military intervention and occupation.
- **War, environment, and ecological power:** analyses of permanent military mobilization and environmental change, including militarized landscapes and basing, the ecological impact of warmaking and preparedness, as well as the relationship between national security, natural resources, and environmental governance.
- **War memory and democratic culture:** histories of war and militarized memory, commemoration, and the place of war in US democratic culture.

### **Submission**

Please send a 500-word abstract and a brief biographical statement as a single PDF file to [info@roosevelt.nl](mailto:info@roosevelt.nl) no later than **August 28, 2026**. Applicants will be notified of decisions in September 2026.

### **Papers**

Selected participants will be asked to pre-circulate their papers by February 19, 2027. Papers should be 8,000 to 10,000 words, use the Chicago citation style, and be academic in approach while written in clear, accessible, jargon-free language. Selected revised papers will be invited for consideration in a peer-reviewed edited volume.

### **The Organizers**

The Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS) in Middelburg and Leiden University's Institute for History are strategic partners, connected by shared research infrastructure, international networks, and broad intellectual interests, as well as by close collaboration on teaching programs and other academic initiatives. Building on this partnership, William Michael Schmidli and Andrew Gawthorpe (Leiden University), Dario Fazzi (Leiden University/RIAS), and Gaetano Di Tommaso (RIAS) are organizing this conference to foster timely and critical debates on the history of the United States and its place in the world.

### **Accommodation**

The RIAS will cover two nights of accommodation in Middelburg (March 17 and 18) and provide meals during the conference.

**Commitment to Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion**

The RIAS and Leiden University are committed to fostering an inclusive scholarly community. We particularly encourage proposals that reflect the diversity of our field across gender, ethnicity, disability, career stage, and institutional background. We recognize that excellent scholarship comes from diverse perspectives and experiences, and we are committed to creating a conference environment that welcomes and supports all participants.

**Contacts**

For further information, contact us at [info@roosevelt.nl](mailto:info@roosevelt.nl).