Interview with Dr. Silke Zoller

Casey VanSise: Hello, everyone. This is Casey VanSise, current Thomas J. Davis Fellow at the Center for the Study of Force and Diplomacy (CENFAD) for the 2021-22 academic year. This video is being recorded on November 22, 2021. We are speaking today with Dr. Silke [mispronounced as "Silk-uh"] Zoller, Assistant Professor of History at Kennesaw State University. Am I pronouncing that pretty well?

Dr. Silke Zoller: Yeah, but I usually go by "Silk-ee" [like "silky"].

CV: "Silk-ee." Okay. Well, I will definitely stick with that pronunciation then. So, Dr. Zoller is an alumnus of Temple University, having earned her PhD in History here back in 2018. While attending Temple University, she herself served as the Thomas J. Davis Fellow for CENFAD during the 2014-15 academic year. Previously, she also earned a Master of Arts in Early Modern and Modern History from Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen, Germany. She has also held postdoctoral fellowships at Dartmouth College's John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding, and then more recently at the Clements Center for National Security at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *To Deter and Punish: Global Collaboration Against Terrorism in the 1970s*, which was published by Columbia University Press earlier this year, in July of 2021, and is the main subject of our discussion today. Welcome, Dr. Zoller.

SZ: I am glad to be here. Thanks for the invitation!

CV: Perfect. I figured that I would start off by asking, I guess, what the basic premise of your book is. So could you introduce the subject matter and overall thesis of your book to our audience? For example, could you give just an overview of the period that you cover and what changes occurred regarding terrorism as a political strategy, and [also] basically responses thereto in the Global North over time? Which is the subject of your book as I understand it.

SZ: Yeah. So, I look at the long 1970s, so the period from 1968 to the early 1980s, and what you see there context-wise is this is the first time that you see, like, large-scale global hijackings, you see terrorist attacks or just attacks that seem to be multiplying, as people perceive it in the Global North – so in the United States, in Canada, in Western Europe, in Japan as well. And these attacks are very transnational in scope, so the people

committing them are either members of what they perceive as national liberation movements—so, Palestinians mostly, they see themselves as members of national liberation movements, and they work together with people who support these causes coming out of the leftist movements that radicalized after 1968. And so what happens is that these are very international attacks. These are people who are traveling across borders, who are committing attacks in Europe and then seeking refuge, for example, in the Middle East. So my book—I always say that is sort of the hook, that is the interesting part. My book brings in state officials [and] bureaucrats, who realize that these things are international. And the problem is that you can have domestic antiterrorism programs that you would like, but those stop at national borders. So the people that I look at are talking to one another and saying "what can we set up in the international sphere, so that we can stop these sort of people?" And it turns out that they really focus very much on legal arrangements, on extradition agreements—the idea being that if you have extradition agreements in place, that will either deter further attacks because people will know that they will no longer be able to flee and have safe havens, and you will also be able to punish the people responsible. So that is where the title of the book comes from, this is what they want to "deter and punish" attackers. It does not really work the way that they envision it, because, of course, extradition agreements are for criminals *per se*, and there is always the question with terrorism [about] "what is the political angle?" So the question is, if you have someone who is motivated for political reasons, do you extradite them or not? And the United States and Western Europe mostly say "yes, these are criminals, these are horrible crimes that they are committing," but the states where most of these people flee to, like North African states [such as] Libya [and] Algeria, [or] Lebanon, Syria—these sorts of states are arguing "well, yeah, these attacks are horrible, but these are political actors and we cannot just extradite people and not consider the political aspects." So there is a concentrated effort in the 1970s by the Global North to create an international legal regime that considers terrorism to be a crime and nothing else, but it is really, really hard to put that into practice because it is such a contested matter, because you are broaching issues of globalization and decolonization—and, of course, it is a question of how far you can go with decolonization or wars of national liberation, what is okay and what is not?

CV: Well, very good, and thank you for that overview for our audience, and I was certainly fascinated. I mean, this was a subject that fascinated me already, knowing the limited amount about it that I do. But being familiar, for instance, with Operation Entebbe in the 1970s and [the role of] Israel, and the coordination [among] groups like—well, "Carlos the Jackal," for one, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Revolutionary Cells (RZ) in Germany, and the Japanese Red Army—and the coordination between this kind of milieu of global transnational terrorist networks at this time, which makes it a fascinating period of time to study for looking at the development of global counterterrorism. And it is also a period that I do not think most people recognize—now, granted, it has been a while since I actually did check this, but I recall looking at the University of Maryland's START database, I believe it is called—

SZ: — Yeah. —

CV: —S.T.A.R.T. And, in the 1970s, there was more terrorist attacks—

SZ: – In one week! –

CV: —than there have been in the twenty-first century. Go ahead, I am sorry.

SZ: Yeah. There is about a hijacking per week. There is at least—these are big spectacular attacks. There are embassy takeovers, and these huge hostage situations. So, something that really does hit the media a lot.

CV: Yeah. And that is why I think it is such a fascinating period of time to look into. On that note, I was reading earlier this year as well—you know, for my fifty-book exam [written comprehensive exam], which I completed about two months ago now.

SZ: Congratulations!

CV: Well, thank you! You must know what that is like! But I was reading notable military historian Michael Howard's 2009 edition of *War in European History* at that time, and that was originally published back in 1976, but this was an updated edition for 2009 that included a new epilogue on modern Europe. And one critique that I have had of that, I guess, was that the epilogue that he added on recent European war—it focused especially on US participation, or *European* participation, excuse me, in the twenty-first century, US-led "war on terror." But it omitted so many of these potentially useful case-studies or examples that were antecedents of Western Europe beginning to formulate a counterterror strategy in the 1970s, and omitted all of these things—you know, the Troubles, the Basque conflict, the Years of Lead, pro-Palestinian solidarity terrorism, the German Autumn, the "strategy of tension" that was just going on in general—

SZ: Yeah. And I do think that is partially, probably because of the way that people were interpreting it in the '70s themselves, because you really see when Europeans in particular talk about terrorism in this time is they are framing it as a law enforcement issue, they are framing it as a policing issue, which is why I do not really use the word "counterterrorism" in the title. I use "collaboration against terrorism," because "counterterrorism" implies a sort of militarized view. So you do not really find that term very much in the sources from the '70s. You will find it later in the '80s. That is, part of the whole problem, the whole debate, is that the Europeans are very much thinking, "okay, this is a law enforcement issue, this is a judicial issue that we are talking about and that we are collaborating on," and it is not a military issue. Which later becomes problematic, because then you start using the military more and more, but there is sort of an insistence that remains that this is, in fact, a criminal issue, a law enforcement issue, but then you are using the military against it in ways that, maybe, people were using counterinsurgency tactics in the colonized areas. So there is some transfer there that is uncomfortable.

CV: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, that is definitely a point that comes across in your book, with looking at how things transition in the 1980s coinciding with the Reagan administration in the United States, and the sort of gravitation towards, I guess, more "micro-militarist" approaches, as it were, rather than these more traditional kinds of dealing with things diplomatically and through international law. That is a fascinating aspect of things, and I had a question related to that. I guess I was curious—I mean, one thing that I did not see

as much of in your book was that you were looking more at case-studies from Latin America as well in some cases—and the reason I ask this is because that is sort of my area that I know more about—you mention, for instance, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the role of Cuba at that time, and then, of course, the fact that "Carlos the Jackal" himself, Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, was actually Venezuelan [despite] participating in these attacks in Europe, the Middle East, and so forth. So I was wondering, then—I was curious if you had any insights, perhaps, regarding the role that other Latin American actors or US policy toward Latin America may have played in affecting the development of "collaboration against terrorism" and then eventually "counterterrorism" over time? Because that is an interesting aspect in itself—for instance, Dr. Alan McPherson, who is the current director of CENFAD, [though] I am not sure if he was at the time that you were—

SZ: He came in as I was finishing my dissertation.

CV: Okay, yeah. That is roughly when I thought. But he wrote a book, I think, a couple of years ago in 2019—

SZ: – *Ghosts of Sheridan Circle* –

CV: Right. And that was examining the state-sponsored terrorism against Orlando Letelier, the car bombing in Washington DC that took place. And with Operation Condor going on at that time where there was this sort of overseas assassination of political dissidents and so forth by different South American military governments, and then also Cuban exile terrorism by the likes of Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles to match what the [Cuban state was] doing at this time with certain sponsorship of terrorism, [or] sheltering, at the very least, terror suspects in Cuba at this time. So, I was curious, I guess, perhaps what you had to say how that might have played a role, even though it was sort of on the periphery of the narrative in your book?

SZ: So, yeah, Latin America really shows up in the first chapter, sort of in the early chapter, that sets up how the officials think about terrorism, because early US policy against this sort of international terrorism is really shaped by policy towards Latin America, by policy towards Cuba and Latin American leftist groups. So those are the groups that the State Department is labelling as "terrorists." These are groups that have specifically leftist associations. So the US officials are more likely to think of leftist-associated groups as "terrorists" and use that label than they are to use it against right-associated groups, which is why Latin American actors disappear a little bit in the later parts of my chapter and parts of my book, because then people are talking about "terrorists" and what they mean is leftist-associated terrorists. But part of the initial US goal is to prevent hijackers from fleeing to Cuba and to prevent attacks on diplomats in Latin America. In the late '60s and early '70s, there is this slew of attacks on government officials in Latin America, and also businessmen and diplomats. There is US military attachés, US representatives, US ambassadors that are being kidnapped and sometimes killed. And so the very early US policy is to make sure that governments in Latin America have all the options that they can to be able to negotiate for the safe return of their own—of these US State Department representatives. So they are creating policy to protect themselves, basically, [as] the State Department. And so the idea is that if you create these extradition agreements, you can give the government the option to free prisoners or something like that, because if

they disappear and they are arrested later, you can get them back by extradition. And then Latin American governments are also, throughout the ’70s, really important allies in places like the United Nations, because—especially conservative Latin American governments that are doing things like Operation Condor, they have a vested interest in making sure that terrorism is declared a crime without any political context because that makes it easier for them to go after their own citizens. So, ironically, whenever Americans and Europeans are working within the United Nations to pass extradition agreements and make sure that there is no room for protections for political offenders. So Latin Americans are in lockstep with them, and they are saying “yeah, we have got your back on this.” So they form sort of a coherent voting bloc in the ’70s within the United Nations on that.

CV: Well, very interesting, and thank you for expanding more on the role of Latin Americans in your answer! Because that is an important point that definitely come across in your book in other cases. I mean, I do not know if this exact quote appears, but William Odom certainly is a figure [that appears] as one of your sources, his papers, and he was the former NSA head under Reagan and Brzezinski’s—Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former National Security Advisor under Carter, [Odom] was his military assistant before that. Anyway, he stated that from 1978-79, I believe, the Senate was trying to pass an Omnibus Antiterrorism Law against international terrorism, and in every version that they produced, the lawyers said that the United States would be in violation at that time, even though the bill was dealing with air piracy and things like that, which you would think would be a more straightforward matter. But I guess that is an interesting point in time because that is when you perhaps see things transitioning more towards a militarized approach and paradigm for dealing with things. Could you explain a bit how that process came into play, and why governments—national governments started to view a militarized approach as more ideal compared to the previous circumstances?

SZ: Yeah, of course. So in the United States, that is really closely related to the Reagan administration, to that sort of conservative surge in the late ’70s. This militarized approach is around in the ’70s, [and] the Israelis are very, very strongly for it. So they are, of course, using the military against what they consider Palestinian insurgents. They are using deterrence operations against their neighboring states, especially Lebanon. And so the Israelis throughout the ’70s are trying to convince the Americans to come on board with them, and the Americans really do not want to do so publicly. In the late ’70s, they are able to talk more to conservative Americans. What actually happens is Benjamin Netanyahu is a young political activist at this time, and his brother Jonathan Netanyahu is the only officer killed at Entebbe, in that spectacular 1976 rescue. And Benjamin Netanyahu starts this lobbying group called the Jonathan Institute, which reaches out, among other things—this is just an example that I was able to pin down really well—to a bunch of conservative Americans. What the Israelis are able to do is to connect their fear of terrorism to Cold War arguments. So what they are saying is, “oh, these Palestinians are not just these cosmopolitan terrorist actors; they are also receiving backing from the Soviet Union and from Eastern Bloc states.” Which there is some [evidence] for in this time – we do know that Palestinians are, for example, getting some weapons. But there is nothing like the huge support that these conservatives argue

is happening. Conservatives are arguing this is a way for the Soviets to actually influence the Cold War by deploying terrorism as a large-scale weapon against the West, and they are using it and breaking all sorts of laws. The idea is that the Soviets are masterminding all sorts of terrorist attacks around the world, which is not happening. The Soviets would love to, but the Soviets do not really want anything to do with a lot of terrorist groups. So it is only if you have *bona fide* leftist credentials that you are often getting Soviet support. But this is the sort of discourse on terrorism: the idea that there is a sort of network of terrorists, a "terror network," and it is a compelling one, it is a scary one. And so when Reagan comes into office, he brings with him a lot of people that adhere to this sort of idea. The top officials have it in their head that terrorism is this Cold War threat. It takes a long time for that to sort of translate into policy, because people in the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency that have been working on terrorism for years and years and years, they know that it is not necessarily the case, that this is a Soviet-directed Cold War threat. But slowly, very slowly, the Reagan administration starts building up, and then finally goes after a state sponsor of terrorists – Gaddafi in Libya, 1986, and that is sort of the turning point for when the United States engages its military against a sponsor of terrorism.

CV: Right. And your point about the Soviets, I mean, I think it reminds me of that probably, possibly apocryphal story of the Soviets—I think it was in one of Thomas Friedman's books—of Hezbollah supposedly kidnapping a Soviet diplomat or something of that nature, and then the Soviets in turn kidnapping Hezbollah militants, and sending body parts in the mail or something of that nature [editor's note: press accounts from newspapers such as the LA Times attest to four Soviet diplomats being kidnapped by Hezbollah in 1985, and facing retaliation from the KGB].

SZ: Yeah. I have heard about it. I do not know if it is true. The problem with the Soviets is that they were really, really good at suppressing any notion that they themselves were having terrorist problems, so I have a hard time getting at those kinds of sources.

CV: Were you able to consult the Mitrokhin Archives or anything of that nature? I did not notice.

SZ: I did not, because I was really looking at the United States and US-allied actors. So they sometimes talked to the Soviets, but the Soviets are far more inclined to be operating in support of the Global South position: the idea that terrorism is bad, but you cannot really resolve it without resolving the underlying political issues – for example, the Middle East conflict. They are far more likely to be supporting that kind of position than they are to be looking at terrorism as purely a criminal issue. So most of my sources are from the United States, from Germany, and from Great Britain as well.

CV: Right. And I did notice that you did have very impressive, multi-archival research looking at English-language sources, but also having the advantage of being German and that you could look at those sources as well. And I believe things from France as well, if I am not mistaken?

SZ: Yeah. I wanted to go to France, but that was the thing that I never quite managed to do.

CV: Okay.

SZ: But the Germans were really meticulous about keeping all of their correspondence with their European neighbors, so I got a little bit of a view into what the Dutch were doing, what the French were doing. Of course, it is through a filter – the Germans were grumbling about the French a lot, so there is a bias there, definitely, that I needed to be careful about.

CV: Sure, yeah. And I guess one other question of mine was obviously looking at this transition from—well, I guess, a first question would be that I thought the parts of your book that you were sort of just alluding to that dealt with how terrorism was politically-defined, and what the sort of political implications of—obviously, terrorist groups in many cases in the '70s wanted to present themselves as advancing a political cause and not principally as just violent criminals on the fringes of society, as it were. But the Global North nations themselves, on a state basis, they wanted to categorize them as criminals, in many cases, that were acting outside the law. And that was a fascinating point in the book. Could you perhaps elaborate more on, politically, how things were defined?

SZ: I was really inspired because I read, for my dissertation exam, Paul Chamberlin's book, *The Global Offensive*. So a lot of the violent actors in that era are defining themselves in that discourse of 1968, that discourse of national liberation. And the idea is that, in the '70s, that sort of momentum of national liberation movements and the momentum of decolonization slows down. So, in the '60s, you have countries like Algeria and Cuba that are becoming independent, where national liberation movements and revolutions are overthrowing governments. And so Palestinian extremists and Vietnamese insurgents – these sort of people really believe that they are going to be able to do the same thing. And there is a lot of supporters, especially in leftist milieus around the world, who are using that same sort of idea and ideology, and talking about the fact that colonialism is bad and that one needs to be supporting this liberation. So definition really matters, and the problem with "terrorism" is actually in the definition, is pinning it down. Most of the treaties that I look at in my study are really specific treaties against very individual offenses. So you have a treaty against hijacking. You have one against attacks on airport facilities. There is one against attacks on diplomats. These are able to pass because they are so specific. But the moment that you start trying to regulate "terrorism," the question of definition comes up, and the question is, is it a political offense and how do you define it? The United States introduces a convention draft in the United Nations, for example, after the Munich attack in 1972 – which is probably, if you say terrorism in the '70s, the first thing that most people will think about. And the problem with that draft is that the definition of "terrorism" is really vague. For instance, you have a list – you have hijacking as a terrorism attack, bombing as a terrorism attack, but then you also have any sort of violence for political purposes in which somebody is hurt. And that is very, very vague, and that is actually what stops that initiative in its tracks. It is because all of the countries that have recently become independent states – for example, Cuba and Algeria and a lot of their supporters in the United Nations – are saying, "Hey, wait! If we label all of these things as terrorism, then anything that national liberation movements do in the future, you are going to be able to label as terrorism, because you are using such a vague definition. So we cannot let this happen, because you are handing the opportunity to state like" – I think they talk

about Israel, they talk about South Africa, about Rhodesia – "to label national liberation movements as 'terrorists.'" So defining terrorism is what stops that entire initiative in its tracks, and that has stopped most other initiatives in the United Nations. I think since 9/11, there has been a further attempt in the UN to create a really big convention against terrorism, and they are still discussing it, because definition is the main problem. And then you have little things that are attached to it, especially to the political angle. For example, in the '70s, there is a really big discussion in this terrorism convention about if terrorism is just an "attack against people," or if it is an "attack against 'innocent' people." So all of the recently independent states, the Global South states, they want that word "innocent" in there, because then by definition, they could argue, for example, that a US military attaché who is helping to train officers in counterinsurgency is not "innocent." Whereas the Global North states are saying, "no, we cannot have that 'innocent' word in there, because then you are able to discriminate, and say 'oh, state officials are not innocent; they are valid targets.'" And at the same time, the Geneva Conventions are also being sort of renegotiated, the addendums to the Geneva Conventions are being negotiated. So that is all part of this really large conversation about how far can national liberation movements go, and are we going to treat them as political actors or not. That is a really big conversation, [but] I am getting off on a tangent. But the definition part is really, really difficult, and it is usually what halts most things in its tracks. So the way that Global North states work their way around it is by going after and regulating very precise types of attacks.

CV: Yeah. Well, that is a great explanation. Thank you for that. And then, I guess following from that, how terrorism is defined—I guess I am curious then, what were your thoughts on what other implications your book carries for how we should view and analyze the contemporary "War on Terror," post-2001, not least since the full-scale US involvement in the War in Afghanistan prompted by 9/11 has ended twenty years later? Despite focusing on this earlier period that ends in the mid-'80s, what does your book have to say for how things developed later down the road? Obviously, your book stops perhaps before—you were mentioning, obviously, Operation El Dorado Canyon against Qaddafi—and you end your book, I believe, right around when Reagan declared sort of a "war on terror" in approximately 1984?

SZ: Yeah, around that time. So when he starts advocating for more militarized measures is when I end. For one thing, the definition is the question. The problem if you declare a "war on terror" is, of course, what does that mean? And I think we have seen much more of a conversation recently about "what is terrorism?" Is it only this sort of Middle Eastern type of thing, and what happens when you label something as "terrorism," because it is automatically delegitimizing? And it is very difficult, because if you label somebody as a "terrorist"—I think this sort of idea comes from the '70s, and has sort of continued—the idea in the United States, often, is if you label someone as "terrorist," you do not have to think about their political goals, about their political aims, about the fact that they might be rational actors who are really going for specific aims. And oftentimes, terrorism is a deeply political thing. So, I think my book is trying to remind people a little bit that everyone has got a political agenda, and if you are just going after the crime itself, it is a very specific approach from the '70s and it does not necessarily work. But then, of course, solving the larger

problem is also not easy. It is like, "oh, maybe terrorism will stop if we solve the larger Middle East conflict" – yes, you just have to solve the Middle East conflict. And then there is also, of course, the legal conundrum angle, in that terrorists are not combatants. That is one of the things that I discussed in the '70s, is what legal status do terrorists have. The idea is, if you are extraditable, you are an ordinary criminal. We also saw in the "War on Terror" that, I think, [George W.] Bush called the terrorists illegal or illegitimate combatants, or something like that. And so the problem is, if you are deploying the military against someone but you are not giving them combatant status, then you get into all sorts of legal gray zones, which I think we saw in the "War on Terror" in really problematic manners. Like "how do you treat people like that [and] what sorts of rights do they have?" And so just being aware of what language you are using and how you are thinking about terrorism, I think is important, because we make so many assumptions, or at least a lot of people in the general public do. And I am hoping that my book can help make people aware that these assumptions are happening, because then you can maybe just open your mind and consider other options.

CV: Right. I mean, I really thought your writing was very accessible for, potentially, not just members in the academic community but also people in the general public as well. I commend you on that accomplishment.

SZ: That is quite a compliment. Thank you!

CV: And obviously, it brings to mind—in 2008, Seth Jones and Martin Libicki published a monograph for the RAND Corporation at that time, "How Terrorist Groups End." It was looking at from 1968, when your book begins, to 2006, obviously later than your book, but [it showed] that military force had only been responsible for ending terrorist groups in, I think, seven percent of the cases that they examined, compared to more typical anti-crime policing and intelligence techniques, integrating terrorist groups into the political process, or, in rare cases—ten percent of cases, I believe—it was because the terrorist groups, or what were considered terrorist groups, achieved an outright victory in the conflict. So, yeah, I mean I think your book sort of brings that study to mind, and examining the implications of what we are labeling as terrorism and what the most—depending on how we define it, what the most effective responses to it are. So I really appreciated that aspect of your book. And I also wanted to get into, perhaps, *The Washington Post* article that you wrote recently on May 27, right before your book was published. For viewers that want to look it up, that was entitled "The Swift Response to the Belarus Plane Hijacking Signals a Historic Shift." In that article, you were looking at the case of the Ryanair civilian plane that was grounded by Belarusian authorities under false pretenses earlier this year, and the European Union's response to the detention of Roman Protasevich, but more importantly, the grounding of a civilian airliner to basically arrest him in Belarus. And it seemed topical, of course, given the recent attention on Alexander Lukashenko's migrant policy, and the tension with Poland and the European Union. Could you go into perhaps a little more detail on your article and your reasons for reaching the conclusions that you did?

SZ: Sure. So, I was very surprised, because usually what happens—the main organization that is responsible for aviation regulations around the world is the International Civil Aviation Organization

(ICAO), which is a branch of the United Nations. People do not hear about it a lot, and things in the ICAO usually moves slowly. That is one of the main things that I saw in my own research as well. Once they started negotiating a convention on hijacking—the ICAO negotiates some of the earliest conventions that others then use, and sort of copy and paste the language into their own conventions. Things are slow. It takes a really long time to get everyone on board, and a lot of the things they do are completely on a voluntary basis. And I was shell-shocked at the fact that the European Union was acting so quickly, because international civil aviation is governed by bilateral treaties and by multilateral treaties – so if you want to do things, you have to talk to a lot of different people. So the fact that, suddenly, people were moving very quickly is something that is very unusual. The question is, then, are we going to see more of this in the future, and are we going to see more action against people who are maybe blatantly not regarding ICAO rules and standards.

CV: Well, very fascinating. And yeah, I definitely commend that to readers, and congratulations also on getting published in *The Washington Post*.

SZ: Thank you!

CV: But, yeah, I definitely thought that was an interesting article that brought up some more contemporary things that your book is germane to, despite focusing on this earlier period.

SZ: Yeah. Airline security is an interest of mine. I am currently trying to work on an article figuring that out, and I keep being drawn to it, especially when I am standing at the airport, thinking "oh, this again," and sort of seeing the history of how this develops is a side project of mine.

CV: Wonderful. Well, I look forward to potentially seeing that materialize into a new work of research.

SZ: Hopefully. We will see.

CV: And I guess that brings up an interesting point. I wonder, overall, what sort of contributions—we have been over this in various ways already, but just in general, how do you see your work as sort of enhancing or contributing to the historiography on these matters, or where would you like to hopefully see scholarship go based on your contributions?

SZ: I see myself as part of a conversation about the history of terrorism and counterterrorism, [about which] there is not necessarily a lot of historical research. There is a lot of political science research on terrorism; there is not a lot by historians, because, of course, historians are really aware of the fact that this is a highly politicized term, that it is used in different ways. So historians will write about insurgencies, they will write about wars, they will write about urban riots – they will talk about the same things, but they will not frame it the same way. What we have seen in the past five years, I would say, is that there is a group of historians that are starting to write about the history of terrorism and counterterrorism, and they are writing about the ways in which people in the past used those terms to frame their actions. So I see myself as joining that conversation, and making, maybe, the work of those scholars a little more accessible to the public, building a bridge, maybe, and saying these ideas about insurgency, about national liberations, about decolonization, about terrorism – they are all interlinked. And terrorism is one of

the ways in which people are talking about it, so by making terrorism and counterterrorism the central category of analysis—you have to be careful because, of course, this is the way people are talking about it, [but] that does not necessarily make it reality. But by showing that this is the way people are framing their thoughts and ideas, you bring all these bigger issues to a general audience, and getting people to think about the fact that these big picture, catchy slogans have really complex, nuanced backgrounds. And if I can do just a little bit for that, I am hoping it works. The way I was trying to work my book is I am just looking at bureaucrats who are sitting around a table and talking, so I have to put in "terrorist attacks" just to lure people in.

CV: Yeah. Right, and I definitely appreciate this project of bringing intellectual history, as it were, to bear on these topics that are typically in the purview of political science, particularly yourself as someone who was affiliated with CENFAD, and was formerly the Davis Fellow here. I guess that is a great opportunity to segue into that, because I did want to ask you as well about your experiences during your time as the Davis Fellow, and how you thought they might have contributed to your academic and professional career trajectory? And then also if you received any other CENFAD opportunities, and in any case, how do you feel that working with CENFAD may have benefitted your professional and research interests overall?

SZ: Yeah. I loved my time at CENFAD. It was amazing! And I also received several CENFAD research grants: I got the Wachman Award, the Votaw Award. There were a couple of things that I was able to do. So, at that time, I had—I need to make sure that I am dating this accurately—I was just putting together my project, and I did end up doing my dissertation in a way that is maybe not ideal, in that I saw a subject that was interesting and started researching it, and really did not know what the thesis would be coming out of it, which is not—I do not really recommend it to anyone. It worked out for me, but it could have gone the other way as well. So, for one thing, being the Davis Fellow allowed me to talk to a lot of people about my work, and to talk about other people we were inviting to the Center – for example, I was able to talk to Tim Naftali, who wrote one of the early studies on US counterterrorism and one of the only historical studies—there are not that many around, and I was able to bounce a lot of ideas off of him. He was very patient. So I was able to do that, and just talk to a lot of people. Also, just at CENFAD events, I was able to meet people who had sort of the same interests. I got to talk to Dr. McPherson about sort of the Latin American angle, and he later kindly agreed to be in book workshop for my book manuscript, so I was able to pick his brain about his ideas. So that was the one thing, just having that community of scholars was very, very helpful. And then, of course, the research awards allowed me to go places and do things that I otherwise might not have been able to do. So I was able to go abroad and spend a summer doing research. I went to Germany, and then later on, I went to the United Kingdom, but mostly I was in Germany. I looked at the federal archives there, I looked at the Foreign Office's archives, and CENFAD really gave me that support to look at those archives, and I also looked at a couple that I might not have been able to otherwise. So there is—in the 1970s, the United States had a pilot union, the Airline Pilot Association, so I went to Detroit and looked at their records. That was really interesting because it brought in a perspective that I really might not have had otherwise. And I went to a couple of other

places. So just being able to do that research was really good. I think one of my first publications was in *Strategic Visions* as well. So I had, I think—I do not even know, I think it might have been 2016 or 2017—I had a short piece. So that was also really good that they were willing to publish me.

CV: Well, very good. Was this an article or a book review?

SZ: Uh, I wrote book reviews at first, which was good for getting that practice in. And then I also had an article, a short article about the idea that national liberation ideology was coming in and at the same time, you had hijackings, and you were trying to develop anti-hijacking programs. So it was sort of the conglomeration of that.

CV: Well, now I would love to read that, having read your book and seen your other work, so thank you for bringing that up! So then, I guess I was wondering, perhaps more generally, what made you perhaps choose Temple University out of all the possible institutions you could have gone to—I mean, was it this focus that they had on diplomatic and military history relative to a lot of other institutions? How did that sort of inform your work later on?

SZ: Yeah, it was. I was applying from Germany at the time, so I was looking for schools that were particularly focused on diplomatic history, because that is what I was interested in, and military history. So, Temple—the idea of living in Philadelphia was very attractive to me—and then once I got there, I thought that the way that I was not just pushed into a diplomatic history quarter was great. I was able to talk to a lot of different professors about their sort of ideas, and to make sure that I was not just writing about diplomats doing diplomatic things or military officers doing their thing. I was able to draw a lot of connections. That was great. And while I was looking for my project, I was trying to play to my strengths and think, "okay, what sort of things can I do that I would be good at?" And since I am bilingual, I have access to the German archives much more easily than somebody who is not bilingual. So I figured, okay, I would like a project where I am able to use these different sources and different languages. And I was interested in the '70s. So then I started looking at records on terrorism, and I initially realized that Americans were talking about terrorism in very martial terms, but they were talking about it from the '80s forward, and Europeans were talking about it from the '70s onward in very law enforcement terms. So I thought, "okay, there is a really big difference here – let me dig a little bit further into that." And then I went down this rabbit-hole, and Dr. Immerman, my advisor, was great. He let me go all over the place, but he always made sure to keep me in line and say, "Remember, you need to focus. You are on one track. You need to write your dissertation." So there was a really good balance, I thought, at Temple of focusing the diplomatic history and the military history, but also being open to other things and getting that support that I needed.

CV: Well, wonderful. From my own experience, I would absolutely agree thus far. And I was wondering, then, did you have anything else that you wanted to add or contribute about your book or your work in general? Obviously, you alluded to where you are going with things next, but did you have anything else to add?

SZ: I am just—right now, I have been very busy. I get to develop a course on the history of terrorism that I am teaching next year, so it is interesting. I would always just say for anyone, I was very lucky, I was able to

research to my strengths and play to my strengths, and that has been so beneficial for my career. And what I really also enjoyed at Temple which I have not really brought up—well, only a little bit—is I was able to work in an interdisciplinary way, so I was a [Center for the Humanities at Temple ("CHAT")] associate fellow, one of the short-term fellows at the Center for the Humanities. So I was able to present my work to others who were not historians, and who really pushed me to make the work more accessible and to make it interesting. And I think if you have a subject that can be interdisciplinary, there are also so many more opportunities for you out there. Which was really helpful to me – being able to market myself as someone who was able to speak to political scientists and sociologists and language experts, that was very helpful for my career. So I think Temple does offer the opportunities for that. Both of the fellowships that I had were at interdisciplinary centers. So that was good thing. If one is able to present their research that way, it can be a really big boon.

CV: Yeah. I would love to engage with that more than I have thus far. And yeah, I think that is a really great point about the value of interdisciplinarity and how Temple University can facilitate that for history students and others.

SZ: Yes. Plus, also, CHAT has coffee.

CV: Yeah. That is always helpful!

SZ: I do not know if the quality has improved, but that hit of caffeine was very helpful many times throughout my time as a graduate student.

CV: Well, very good. And I appreciate—I guess this is probably a good place to draw our interview to a close, but I really appreciate you taking the time, Silke, Dr. Zoller, to present for our audience and introduce your book to our audience, as well as your other work and your time at Temple. So, thank you very much for agreeing to take the time out to do this!

SZ: Thank you! I was delighted at the opportunity!

CV: And I know it was a little bit spur of the moment, but I am glad we were able to do this!

SZ: Yeah, definitely!

CV: And that this will appear in the upcoming edition of *Strategic Visions*.

SZ: That will be exciting. I enjoy *Strategic Visions*!

CV: Perfect. Well, thank you very much, Silke—"Silk-ee," I should say!