



US Centre Summer Research Grant

Recipient name: Mina Rigby-Thompson

Project title: Between Two Allies: US Policy Towards Greece and Turkey during the 1974 Cyprus Crisis

Summary of project:

My research explores the Cyprus crisis not as a peripheral regional issue, but as a significant conflict within the history of American foreign policy that was influenced by, and helped to shape, the dynamics of the 1970s Cold War international system. The reality of the Cold War complicated the Cyprus crisis, but there were also local, national, and regional factors that long pre-dated the Cold War which the United States government did not account for in its handling of the conflict. Many scholars have explored how Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's view of international relations almost solely through a bipolar Cold War lens played a significant role in how they handled American foreign policy, often to their detriment as the landscape of the Cold War changed during the 1970s. My own proposed research will engage with this existing body of scholarship, however I will be looking at the changing nature of American foreign policy through the lens of the Turkey-Greece-Cyprus conflict and longstanding tensions.

Summer Research Trip

The Phelan United States Centre Summer Research Grant allowed me to travel to California to spend time in the Richard Nixon Presidential Library, which was an essential step in my overall research process. In preparation for my trip, I spent a significant amount of time searching the Nixon Library online collections to download all of the relevant material that was already digitally available and spoke with archivists to get advice about my proposed list of materials to look at in the archive. While this was my first trip to one of the American Presidential Libraries, I spent a significant amount of time at the National Archives at Kew to strengthen and solidify my archival process so that I could make sure that my time in California would be as valuable as possible.

During my week in Yorba Linda, California, I was able to scan over six thousand pages of documents and while I will be reading and taking more extensive notes on these documents for quite some time, I have already found a significant amount of information that will be invaluable for my dissertation. I have already started working on new chapter drafts of my dissertation that incorporate materials from the Nixon Library.

I was primarily focused on various collections within the National Security Files and was able to find a lot of very valuable information on how policymakers understood the role of Cyprus within the broader American foreign policy agenda during the 1970s. I was able to track internal working papers and draft documents from junior employees in the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency and observe how these changed over time and how senior policymakers reacted to this knowledge and information.

The Nixon Presidential Library has an accompanying museum dedicated to Nixon's life and presidency and while this was certainly not as important as the work in the archives, it was a great pleasure to take lunch breaks in the outdoor section of the museum and explore some of the exhibits. The overall experience gave me new insight into how the Nixon Library has chosen to present his life and presidency, what they have chosen to highlight, and even how they discussed challenging topics, such as Watergate. It was also incredibly helpful to be onsite in the archives and be able to work with the archivists and ask questions and have discussions in-person rather than over email—the archival staff at the Nixon Library were so helpful and welcoming and it made my research experience such a positive one.