

## Writing the Great War



WRITING THE GREAT WAR  
*The Historiography of World War I  
from 1918 to the Present*

Edited by  
Christoph Cornelissen and Arndt Weinrich



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We hope readers will find the result to their entire satisfaction.

*Introduction*

# UNDERSTANDING WORLD WAR I

One Hundred Years of Historiographical Debate  
and Worldwide Commemoration

*Christoph Cornelissen and Arndt Weinrich*



Even one hundred years after it broke out, World War I still interests and energizes public attention. That is true not just of the global community of historians but also of broad segments of a public that is no longer limited solely to just those countries that once waged the war. In fact, the events in and around World War I are now the focus of a broad and worldwide historical-political reflection that seeks to grasp the global manifestations of this totalizing war. It seems as though more recently, with the end of the Cold War and subsequent developments, the perception has sharpened yet again that the world in the years between 1914 and 1918 may have much more to do with our present day than many observers have been used to believing. Take just the current geopolitical situation of Europe and the resurgence not only of nationalism but, in some cases, also of an undisguised chauvinism and one might come to consider that it is always worth the effort to investigate the causes and implications of the historical crises that led to World War I in 1914. The same is true for the circumstances in which the war was waged, and which fundamentally changed the face of Europe as well as of many areas beyond its borders. The desire to understand World War I ultimately represents an

attempt to grasp the twentieth century in its worldwide dimensions. It is consequently anything but a coincidence that the truly global impact of the World War between 1914 and 1918 is currently attracting historians' attention more so than has long been the case.

The history of World War I–related research faithfully mirrors all the twists and turns that have been a part of this dynamic. Hardly ever have there been so many books and articles published as in recent years, not to mention the overabundance of films and other media productions, among which are numerous internet portals about the history of World War I. As elegant witness to this, just take the breathtaking number of works published worldwide in the context of the centenary and the ongoing publication of research contributions. While countless monographs and edited volumes seek to examine individual aspects of the war, its origins, and its aftermath, the authors of the many comprehensive histories (whose scholarly quality is distributed somewhat unevenly) have dared to take on the difficult task of doing justice to the total phenomenon. More often than not, this has been done from within a national history point of view, but there have been quite a few attempts to adopt a global history perspective. Yet there is obviously a limit as to how far any given individual author can go in his/her effort to embrace World War I's complexities with all its far-reaching global, national, and subnational implications and ramifications. So the most credible claim to providing an overview is best found in international collaborative projects, such as *The Cambridge History of the First World War*,<sup>1</sup> published by Jay Winter and translated into several languages, or the Berlin-based online encyclopedia *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*,<sup>2</sup> which is directed by a group of leading World War I historians united by Oliver Janz. Both highlight the high level of the internationalization of current World War I research, and each in its own way brings together research approaches that result in a “total history” of the war.<sup>3</sup>

A noticeable gap in the flood of actual publications is, however, the lack of substantial contributions that endeavor to fit the research itself into a larger “history of historiography” context. In other words, there has been no real attempt to look back over one hundred years of World War I historiography and review the now “historical” controversies, methodologies, and trends. Of course, there is no scarcity of articles cutting a path through the recent historiography of World War I.<sup>4</sup> However, the historical depth dimension, the historicity of the historical research about World War I, has generally been left underexposed.<sup>5</sup> What is true for any kind of historical research is to a special degree true for World War I research: namely, that historical issues, positions, controversies, and the like (indeed even the idea of what it means to be a historian in any given

society) all stand in a close reciprocal relationship to the whole social and political framework as well as to the changing memory cultures in which the historical scholarship takes place. Consequently, leaving the actual historicity of World War I historiography inadequately addressed seems particularly unsatisfying.

This volume claims to close this gap a step or two. Consequently, its objective is not to comprehensively assess all the latest centenary-related research, even though in this regard it does offer some instructive insights. Instead, it seeks to trace out and to contextualize the *trajectories* of the way historical scholarship has engaged with World War I in selected national contexts.<sup>6</sup>

The decision to organize the volume according to national categories—and thus to follow, at least to a certain extent, a national history approach—is justified for two reasons. First of all, there can be no doubt as to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the historians working on World War I in the course of the last hundred years have been *acteurs* primarily in national scholarly cultures and discourse communities. The strong internationalization—indeed, globalization—of research teams and networks is a relatively recent phenomenon compared to the decades of research conducted in primarily national contexts. This is not to deny the fact that the centenary has of course accentuated the recent dynamic in favor of internationalization: the abovementioned *1914-1918-online* and *Cambridge History of the First World War*, both of which have united an impressive international network of scholars (among whom is an equally impressive number of scholars affiliated to a research institution not situated in their country of origin), offer ample proof for this. Likewise, the unprecedented degree to which centenary-related scholarly activities in many parts of the world reached out to foreign historians in order to take into account different perspectives on the war pleads in favor of this argument. In the French case, for instance, among the 2,597 historians, archeologists, social scientists, etc., to actively participate at least once in the last five years in a French academic conference on World War I (a number itself indicative of the magnitude of the scholarly involvement into the French centenary), no less than 822 were foreigners. And roughly one-half of the 73 World War I-related doctoral research projects that are being pursued in French universities at the moment are either dealing (at least partly) with a non-French *sujet* or are transnational/comparative in nature.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, we lack comparably detailed data for other countries. Still, beyond any doubt, we find the same push for internationalization in the German case or in the Anglo-Saxon world, to cite but these two examples. In that regard, it makes perfect sense to term the current generation of scholars working on World War I the “transnational

generation,” as suggested by Jay Winter.<sup>8</sup> This does not mean, however, that the impetus for transnationalization is equally strong everywhere or that scholars all of a sudden cease being part of national academic cultures and contexts. Even today, when the sense of being part of a global scientific community is arguably more developed than ever before, academic careers remain nationally framed in the sense that there are quite a few countries where the recruitment of non-nationals on permanent posts is common practice. Moreover, one might argue that even today the degree of integration of different national scholarly cultures into the global scientific community is indeed quite uneven, and that there are many national cases where there is only a relatively small number of researchers who participate in international debates.

Secondly, and even more importantly, it is the fact that the memory of World War I by and large remains a national memory, which leads us to adopt a national framework. For even when in individual cases the influence of the dominant memory culture over a historical study—at first sight in any case—may not be evident, it is of great significance for the overall direction of the historiographic field. The World War I-related debates and controversies offer extensive illustrative material for this: what emerges is a clear correlation of the relationship of the research intensity with the memory culture status of the historical event. How else could one explain that the researching of World War I, in spite of all its cyclical ups and downs, traditionally is strongly positioned in those countries (for example, Great Britain, Australia, or France) where the war is not only *history* but also—and perhaps primarily—*memory*? It was hardly by chance that it was in these nations that the war continued to be termed the “Great War.” On the other hand, one cannot fail to notice that the research about the war in the countries of Eastern and Middle Europe, which suffered massively during the war years but where the war for various reasons never became a central element of collective memory, lagged behind for a very long time and has only recently started to catch up with Western (or Western Front) historiography.

When we take a look at the big questions and debates that have led historians to cross blades with one another for quite a long period of time, we cannot fail to notice that there, as well, the prevailing national memory cultures are of paramount importance. For example, that the public discussion in Germany about World War I (for decades and also again in the years 2013–14) has concentrated itself nearly exclusively on the question of German responsibility for the war’s outbreak is certainly not to be understood as solely immanent to just the scholarship. Instead, this debate has to be seen as part of a much larger debate that reaches far beyond World War I and deals with the question as to what extent the Ger-

man history of the twentieth century in general should be viewed through the prism of historical guilt. This touches a central *topos* in the Federal Republic's collective memory.

Analogue logics were and still are at work in other countries. There is the controversy as to why the French soldiers kept to their posts until the victorious conclusion of the war—whether it was more so compulsion and repression or in the end a broad identification with the nation at war that kept the *poilus* by their banner. This was as much grounded in the prevailing memory culture as was the British discussion about the “lions led by donkeys” thesis or the “futile war” argument. And this does not even take up those national cases in Central and Eastern Europe, and also in the former European overseas territories, where national independence from the remnants of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires, the Bolshevik revolution, or also the omens of decolonization provided radically different points of reference for scholarly debate.

What should now be clear is that this volume takes seriously the close, although in no way always unambiguous or unidirectional, interrelations between memory culture and historical scholarship. This is in fact reflected in the structure of the individual chapters, which all begin with a historical overview of the role of World War I in the popular and/or political culture of the countries or the geographical entities discussed. The overall picture that emerges is not homogenous, something that lies in the very nature of the subject matter. When it comes to both the intensity and the content of commemorative discourses, the national (or for instance in the case of Belgium, regional) features and characteristics are still so strongly pronounced that one cannot speak even in Europe, let alone on a global scale, of a transnationalization of memory. That does not mean that in the last hundred years there have not been (at least to some extent) considerable convergences in the perception of World War I, especially in the German-French case, where substantial memory-political efforts have been made. Whether this already allows one to speak of a shared memory is something we, however, find highly questionable.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the memory narrative of World War I that has been developed and well-tested in the German-French context views the war as a catastrophe and is therefore at least partly compatible with many other national memory discourses, a fact that explains why the commemorations during the centenary (in a level unprecedented historically) could take on an international dimension. Yet even shared commemorative events cannot, on balance, hide the fact that ultimately quite different things are meant when people speak about World War I. And the further one moves away from Western Europe, especially toward the east, the clearer the limits of the catastrophe thesis can be seen: for countries such

as Poland, the Baltic states, Finland, or the Czech Republic, World War I marks no catastrophe but, instead, the beginning of national independence. And in Russia, a (partial) rediscovery of the war (or rather the years before 1917) is taking place under the banner of the glorification of the soldiers in the czar's army, an inflection that is somewhat at odds with the generally postheroic commemoration of fallen soldiers in Western Europe.

The main body of each chapter has a historiographical section that is divided into two chronological segments: first of all, the developments in the historical research from 1914 through 2000 are laid out, and the second part is reserved for current trends in the research. This division into two parts is motivated by the hope of making it possible for those readers who want to gain quick access to recent World War I historiography to do exactly that.

In view of the diversity, varying emphasis, and dynamics of the scholarly engagement with World War I in the countries discussed here, it is not possible to overlay a developmental grid in which all the national historiographies could in equal measure fall into line. Nevertheless, four common features may be mentioned which in each case do not relate to actually all, yet still to the greater part of the countries discussed in this volume.

The first of these would be the far-reaching historicization of World War I that has surely not progressed linearly nor everywhere the same. On the one hand, the warrant of the following statement remains strong: "The First World War belongs to no one. Not even to historians,"<sup>10</sup> which is how Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, a little more than ten years ago, introduced their reflections on the place of World War I in international historiography. Yet what is also true is that the relative weight of historians in the public debate about the years 1914–18 has over the course of time without a doubt increased enormously and that in the context of commemorations, etc., there is an increasingly great demand for a scholarly (that means, dispassionate and factual) commentary and contextualization of the war. Yet what is even more significant is that national taboos (e.g., in the German case—up until the Fischer controversy—the assertion of German war guilt) have for the most part disappeared, even if there are a few countries where there is still (or again) political pressure (or peer pressure let loose by political pressure) on certain subject matters (for example, in Turkey when dealing with the genocide of the Armenians in 1915).

A second point deserving mention is the evolution of methodologies and approaches. If classical diplomatic and military histories dominated the field for many years across the board, gradually almost everywhere

social and cultural history approaches were also being, or rather are being, pursued, even though these “changes of paradigm” have not even remotely occurred simultaneously. Certainly, the relative emphasis on the different methodological approaches was at no previous point, or at the moment, everywhere the same: classical military history, for instance, is relatively strong in the Anglo-Saxon area (but also in Russia), while cultural history approaches, which in the Anglo-Saxon world—but also in France and Germany—tend to dominate the field, are less prominent in Eastern Europe. And social or economic history research about World War I is currently (one sees this by looking at recent publications) almost nowhere being conducted systematically, or on a large scale. Nevertheless, one can say that an appreciation of the benefits of a methodological pluralism has gained acceptance.

This spread of new methodological approaches is in large part a result of the advancing internationalization of World War I research. What is meant here by internationalization is of course not (merely) the banal fact that historians are working and publishing on other countries than their own, thereby enriching the scholarly discussion in other countries. In reality this form of interaction is as old as historical scholarship itself and (using an example from World War I) has from the very beginning characterized the international war guilt discussion. Instead, internationalization means the daily collaboration with colleagues from abroad, being engaged in international research networks and projects, and above all the fundamental insight that World War I as a global war can indeed only be globally reflected upon. This does not mean that this insight has adequately been followed up on; further attention to the global and imperial implications of the war and the marginally researched theaters of war still seems to be the greatest desideratum of World War I research. Still, it is a conceptual renewal that is rather consensual.<sup>11</sup>

A final convergence is of an interpretative nature. The significance of World War I is generally today taken much more seriously than it was a few years ago. Surely for some time now there have been theses such as “seminal catastrophe” (George Kennan) or the years 1914–18 as the beginning of the “age of extremes” (Eric Hobsbawm).<sup>12</sup> But what is new is that World War I, in the meantime, is seen as a key event as well in the history of Middle and Eastern Europe or in the former European colonies, being there the “epicenter of a cycle of armed conflict” that lasted until 1923.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, this even calls into question the classic Western European periodization of the war as taking place in the years 1914–18, and simultaneously also plumbs anew the weight of the many military and home fronts. This is exciting and shows how the acceptance of a transnational or in places even a global perspective can change the view

of the larger whole. Above all, however, it shows that the historiographic debate over the first global and total war of human history continues.

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## Notes

1. Jay M. Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). The International Research Center of the Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne, Northern France, served as the project's institutional core.
2. <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/home.html>.
3. Roger Chickering, "Militärgeschichte als Totalgeschichte im Zeitalter des totalen Krieges," in *Was ist Militärgeschichte*, ed. Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010), 301–12.
4. Alan Kramer, "Recent Historiography of the First World War," *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 1 (2014), part 1: 5–27, part 2: 155–74; Roger Chickering offers an almost exhaustive overview of the recent literature on the German Reich during the war years: Roger Chickering, "Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg: Betrachtungen zur Historiografie des Gedenkjahres," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 55 (2015): 395–444. See also John Horne's recent assessment of recent trends in the cultural history of the war: John Horne, "End of a Paradigm? The Cultural History of the Great War," *Past and Present* 242, no. 1 (February 2019): 155–92.

5. The last major effort in this direction was undertaken by Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
6. The countries (and national historiographies) represented in this volume are: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain and its former dominions, India, Italy, Japan, Poland, Serbia, Russia, Turkey, and the United States of America. Inevitably, there are nations and regions that are not covered here, most notably those of the African continent. From the very outset of the project, the editors had hoped to include at least one chapter on African historiographies of the war, but it proved impossible without significantly delaying the volume's publication.
7. See the chapters written by Elisa Marcobelli and Simon Catros in the soon-to-be-published *Quel bilan scientifique du Centenaire?* (Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, forthcoming).
8. See Jay Winter's contribution to this volume, 95–113.
9. On the German-French commemorations of World War I, see Laurent Jalabert, Reiner Marcowitz, and Arndt Weinrich, eds., *La longue mémoire de la Grande Guerre: Regards croisés franco-allemand de 1918 à nos jours* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2017).
10. Prost and Winter, *Great War in History*, 1.
11. See for instance Andrew Tait Jarboe and Richard S. Fogarty, "An Imperial Turn in First World War Studies," in *Empires in World War I. Shifting Frontiers and Imperial Dynamics in a Global Conflict*, ed. Andrew Tait Jarboe, and Richard S. Fogarty (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 1–22.
12. George Kennan, *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order. Franco-Russian Relations 1875-1890* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).
13. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War 1911–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

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Chapter 1

(HI)STORIES AND MEMORIES  
OF THE GREAT WAR IN FRANCE  
1914–2018

Nicolas Offenstadt



The historiography of the Great War cannot be fully grasped, as is generally the case, without appraising the place and social function of the war's memory in society as a whole.<sup>1</sup> In spite of a very strong institutional base, professional historians have always had competition, here, from people who have seen themselves as legitimate narrators of the war. Military people, first and foremost: the generations of those who served in 1914–18 have gradually been replaced by historians with a military background who were not actively engaged in World War I and who still have a considerable foothold in the domain. In the 1960s, the volume about the war (“military operations”) in the series *L'Histoire du XXe siècle* (The History of the 20th Century), edited by the historian Maurice Baumont for the Sirey publishing house, was put in the hands of General Louis Koeltz, who had served in the 2ème Bureau (France's external military intelligence agency) in 1914–18. Roughly at the same time, the great publishing house Fayard brought out the *Histoire de la Grande Guerre* (History of the Great War), written by two officers who had not known that conflict, General Fernand Gambiez and Colonel Maurice Suire. More recently, in the *Inventaire de la Grande Guerre* (Inventory of the Great War) published

by Larousse in 2005 and presented as a form of reference dictionary, out of forty-five authors, eight were officers and seven were researchers in military institutions.<sup>2</sup> Up until the fiftieth anniversary of the war, war veterans (*anciens combattants*) also turned themselves into historians of the Great War by distancing themselves a little from their own experiences in order to broaden their outlook—men such as Jacques Meyer, René-Gustave Nobécourt, Victor Bataille, and Pierre Paul produced their version of a historical assessment of the war. The history of 1914–18 is also a history of militants—a militant, politically engaged history. For a long time, the Russian Revolution and the birth of various communist parties and the Third International have informed the work of communist and left-leaning historians. Nowadays, in a new configuration, it is more generally the soldiers' sufferings and the excesses of military commanders and military justice alike that have been pounced upon by “left-wing” historians, as is made quite explicit by the title of François Roux's 2006 book, *Les Poilus contre l'Armée française* (*Poilus* against the French army). The powerful presence of the Great War in the public sphere, its “public history” dimension (a history written and made for a broad public), also explains the fact that many amateur historians have taken on the subject, thereby making their contribution to its history. In this context, they have capitalized on their knowledge of local terrain, such as the areas of the former front, or emphasized specific war experiences by soldiers from a given region (*poilus* from Normandy, the Vendée, and so on). Local history, which is traditionally strong in France, finds here a terrain of renewal. These many different historiographical voices, which attest to the scope of the challenges involved, are quite naturally punctuated by time frames that go beyond individual and academic schedules. Commemorations here have a considerable power in terms of impetus, as 1964–68, 1998, or 2014–18 have demonstrated in the most illustrative fashion. So to properly grasp the development of French historiography, it is useful to trace, perforce schematically, the main features of French memories of the conflict and the way they have evolved, with a special emphasis on the former soldiers' memory that was so pivotal in the definition of the commemorative challenges and stakes.

## Remembering, Commemorating 1918–2018

Unlike the stereotypical image of a French nation univocally celebrating its *poilus*, not to say victory, the memory of 1914–18 has been immediately constructed in rivalries and commemorative tensions with considerable political implications. It is the war veterans who insisted, in 1922,

on having 11 November as a “day off,” a national holiday, whereas the government initially wanted to have the commemorative ceremony organized on the Sunday immediately following that date.<sup>3</sup> But from then on, that date has been the high point of the memorial calendar. Likewise, the “making” of the Unknown Soldier, now a consensual symbol, has by no means been uncontroversial: promoted notably by a group of right-leaning war veterans, it has been the subject of numerous debates and disputes concerning the location of the tomb, the burial ceremony, and, more generally, the cult that developed around it.

The war veterans, moreover, did not obtain everything they expected in terms of memorial practices, as is illustrated by the fate of the law of 1919 “relating to the commemoration and glorification of those who died for France during the Great War.” The law included five main provisions: the inscription of the names of those who died for France and of the civilian victims in the registers held in the Pantheon, the establishment for each town and village (*commune*) of a register with the names of the *commune*’s combatants who died for France, the erection of a commemorative national monument “of the heroes of the Great War” in Paris or in the surrounding area, the granting of subsidies to *communes* for the “glorification” of the dead, and the introduction of a ceremony per town and village on 1 or 2 November. This last measure, as has been noted, has been transformed by the war veterans with 11 November as its annual high point. But for the rest . . . no grand national monument (Paul Claudel relaunched the project for the roundabout at La Défense in 1955, just before he died, and a relief “to the glory of France’s armies” by Landowski was inaugurated at the Trocadéro in 1956; however, it was far away from the original design, which was scaled back on several occasions), no register throughout the land, and no register at the Pantheon. In 1951, in the *Almanach du Combattant*, a somewhat conservative publication launched by 1914–18 veterans, Georges Pineau, a leading light in the movement, rounded on such a forgetful law: “The State has ‘dropped’ the heroes of 1914–1918.”

The construction of the memory of the Great War is thus less natural than it might seem, for it is also selective. The writing of the national master narrative grabbed the Great War in order to fashion it the way it wanted, in official publications, and in school textbooks too, to a certain extent. The Battle of Verdun, for example, has become emblematic of French “resistance” to the Germans, to the point of appearing to be the Great War’s battle of all battles. On the other hand, the Battle of the Chemin des Dames (1917), which was just as important, has been subject to a shortfall in memory, which war veterans were still grumbling about in the 1960s because it was a slaughter caused by the strategic choices of

the General Staff. The different memorial cultures of the conflict (literature of combatants about the war and of war veterans about what became of them afterward, films, plays, songs, and the like) are interwoven with political, social and historiographical issues, but we cannot go into detail about all that at this juncture. In a nutshell, retracing the developments of the memories and history of 1914–18 since the end of the conflict calls for reminding us about both the competition of memory, the tensions of remembrance, and the strength of the frameworks within which history is written.

## 1919–1939: The Burden of Mourning

### *Memorial Centers*

For public institutions, during the postwar years, remembering meant coming to terms with the massive bereavement and mourning that weighed on French society as a whole. This included finding a way to express and acknowledge the particular mourning of those thousands of crushed bodies that had not been found. It was in 1916 that the idea seemed to emerge of honoring one soldier as a symbol for all those *poilus*. The sense of loss was so massive that new kinds of commemorations seemed called for, in France and elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The project assumed a parliamentary dimension in 1918. Several members of parliament agreed to propose the burial of one soldier in the Pantheon, a place of republican memory since the 1880s. Journalists and right-wing and far-right militants refused the site as the last resting place of the Unknown Soldier, too republican in their eyes, just as they rejected the merger between the inhumation of the Unknown Soldier and the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic (1920). Press campaigns were undertaken in favor of the Unknown Soldier's burial beneath the Arc de Triomphe. In 1919, this latter site received a large wood-and-plaster cenotaph that was used for the funereal evening gathering preceding the Victory Festival and the huge procession of 14 July. The final choice of the Arc de Triomphe for the burial of the Unknown Soldier ushered in the patriotic dimension of mourning and sacrifice. It also showed the central place held by the Battle of Verdun in the political commemoration of the Great War. It was in the city's citadel that the eight coffins were put together, brought from different battlefields, in order to designate the one unknown to be transferred to Paris. Different rituals surrounded the selection ceremony and added to its solemn character. The seven others are still at Verdun,<sup>5</sup> buried in the Faubourg-Pavé cemetery, thus constituting an additional place of memory for the city, and one that is still very carefully maintained today. If the Unknown Soldier symbolizes all those who died during the

war, “the child of a whole people in mourning,”<sup>6</sup> and those missing in action in particular, he is also a specific icon of the combatant memory, like a guardian genie in the postwar period and beyond. “The Unknown Soldier is ours, comrades,” proclaimed the *Almanach du Combattant* in 1922. So from 1921 onward,<sup>7</sup> the Unknown Soldier became a central and essential place symbolizing the memory of the war. But as Antoine Prost underscores, that soldier is just one “among others, probably the most prestigious, but not the only one.”<sup>8</sup>

### ***Public Places of Remembrance***

The war altogether reshaped the public space of remembrance. It is possible to single out three main forms in this respect. The first, from the time of the war itself, was linked to the erection of plaques, monuments, and places of memory along the front lines of 1914–18, in the northeastern part of the country. In a second phase, there was the movement to erect monuments to the dead—war memorials—throughout the land, colonies included. Lastly, the national territory was filled with memorial inscriptions referring to the Great War. They are everywhere: on buildings, in streets, in railway stations, in cemeteries, and on war memorials. Rather than recalling well-known data, let us here take a somewhat detailed example. Nowadays, the small village of Sainte-Paule, perched amid vineyards in the Beaujolais region, with its golden stones and such distinctive hues and topography, has some 250 inhabitants, down from 372 in 1914, many of them winegrowers. The village seems to have hardly changed since the Great War, but the war’s traces are conspicuous for such a little place. As everywhere, there is a war memorial, here located in front of the communal cemetery. On one of the column’s sides are listed the places where the village’s children fell (Alsace, the Marne, etc.), while on another side there is an inscription saying that the memorial was erected in 1921 “with the generous help of all the inhabitants,” as was often the case. The communal archives confirm as much, because they hold the subscription accounts book: some people subscribed individually, in their own name, others as “households” (*maisons*). The monument here was undoubtedly a matter involving all and sundry. In other places, however, there may have been general, religious, and political disputes about the sense and form of the monument.<sup>9</sup> At Sainte-Paule, communal and departmental grants complemented the subscription. It was in 1919 that the process was launched with the appointment of a mixed committee made up of village councilors and war veterans. The side of the memorial facing the village bears the names of the dead and the place where they died. There are twenty-one of them. All this is common enough. What is less so is the attention paid to the soldiers missing in action whose

bodies have never been found. The monument in fact includes a “Missing in Action” (*Disparus*) category, which has four names. Furthermore, in a Catholic region, a rather original inscription reads, “Lord have pity on the unknown soldiers who lie nameless in the cold, bare fields.”

### ***Bodies and Bereavement***

The small cemetery at Sainte-Paule is also an interesting epigraphic source. One inscription expresses, again, the importance of those soldiers missing in action: “In memory of her son Antoine Lachal missing in action for France at Souain on 4 September 1914 at the age of 32. Dear child, you lived to love us. I would [*sic*—she meant ‘will’] live to weep for you. Your mother.” Here it is the mother talking about her unmarried son, a winegrower. Such words of mourning and family suffering are to be found on another grave—and they are plentiful. Joannès (Jean-Marie) Marduel died on the Macedonian front in September 1918. The family was apparently either unable or did not wish to have the body repatriated, and the inscription decorating the grave in Sainte-Paule is one that, in a way, replaces the body. In all the countries engaged in the conflict, the issue of how to handle the remains of the fallen was raised. Should they be left in the cemeteries and graves in the front zone, or should they be repatriated? Many discussions, on differing scales, dealt with these questions here, there, and everywhere. In France they culminated in a law in 1920 that authorized families—if they so desired—to transfer the bodies of their nearest and dearest slain in the war to a cemetery that suited them, all paid for by the state. The state’s financial commitment was huge at that time, and the institutional and railway arrangements introduced were considerable and sophisticated: the state was responsible for all the various stages, from exhumation to final burial, including the coffin.<sup>10</sup> It would seem that some 30 percent of deceased combatants identified thus had their bodies transferred. The case of Levallois-Perret illustrates this general process with its many variations. It was in fact in liaison with this repatriation that the local war memorial itself was conceived. It overlooks a crypt in which Levallois soldiers repatriated to the communal cemetery were all brought together. In accordance with the law of July 1920, 270 Levallois families requested that bodies be transferred. Some 151 soldiers were thus reburied, up until 1926, in the crypt, as we are told by the municipality. But the Great War is a history with no end, and repatriations, like searches for those missing in action, continued for many more years, giving rise to various legal extensions.<sup>11</sup> The Levallois archives hold several individual transfer bulletins for the 1930s. After the war, the search for the missing went on, and was the object of an official and methodical organization.

The strategy for centralizing and creating a symbolic space encompassing graves and monument was not unanimously accepted in Levallois. Some families wanted the soldiers to remain in the burial plots they had chosen for them. Once again, places of mourning were liable to become places of conflict. The artilleryman André Auguste Thernisien was killed near Margival in October 1917. His widow wanted to keep her own burial place, and wrote as much to the mayor:

I have just indirectly learnt that the bodies of soldiers . . . will be removed and put in the vault of the so-called Memory monument. This is truly distressing, not to let them rest where they have been taken to, because they have truly dearly earned this tiny piece of land by sacrificing their hearth and their children. And after a whole week of work, Sunday was for me and his two children a gentle pilgrimage to lay flowers on that beloved grave, whereas now it is the grave for everyone. . . . I thought that this monument would be erected to the memory of all those poor unfortunate men whose families have never known what had become of them, and not for our men recognized in every grave. I accept your decision, Sir, but I wish to keep the body of my husband for myself alone in a separate grave.<sup>12</sup>

But let us get back to Beaujolais and Joannès Marduel. As has been studied by Tanja Luckins for the mourning of Australian families, the remoteness of theaters of operation ushers in a whole set of mourning practices and habits, which make up for the impossibility of traveling to soldiers' graves, when they exist. Here, the Marduels affixed an inscription at the top of the family grave, as if surveying it:

To the memory of Joannès Mardeul who died for France at Thessaloniki on 24 September 1918 at the age of 26. O dear child whose immense love was our joy and all our hope. One day you left beautiful France, never to see it again. Mortally wounded, you succumbed to honor as a martyr. Sleep in peace in that distant land. Sublime soldier whose cruel death broke our hearts.

In addition to the expression of suffering and absence, the rhetoric here is patriotic. The inscription that accompanies the less labored evocation of his brother, Jean Antoine/Tony, who also died—another wartime casualty—of typhoid fever, is written in a similar style. Unlike his brother, Tony was married, so it was his wife and children who spoke to and for him. The inscription refers to the father and husband that he was, dying a victim of duty. “We shall live to weep for you.” The Marduel family is a family of well-off farmers and winegrowers who did not hide their affluence<sup>13</sup>—they purchased Russian loans and went off to Paris to see operettas—which probably made it possible both to have such in-

scriptions engraved and also to display their bereavement in the public place of the cemetery. As well as such relatively lengthy rhetorical evocations, the small cemetery at Sainte-Paule, like so many others, houses graves that indicate those who died in the war by the description of the deceased as “died for France” (Paul Alix), to which was sometimes added the place, which had an evocative effect for one and all; thus: “Died for France at Notre-Dame de Lorette Pas-de-Calais” (Jean-Pierre Chatoux, killed in combat during the great Artois offensive of 1915). Last of all, here as elsewhere, a war veteran, Jean-Marie Chavant, who died in 1932 aged fifty-four, has as his epitaph “*Mutilé de guerre*” (injured and disabled ex-serviceman), a reminder of how much the memory of the conflict, in mind and body alike, produces powerful identities, here a primary one, because nothing else is said about him.

So this simple cemetery illustrates both the breadth of the funerary inscriptions of the Great War in the most modest of public places and the variety of these words of memory, from a simple reference or mention to nothing less than funeral eulogies engraved in stone. It also gives us an idea of the space of the development of mourning occasioned by the Great War, which, on a hitherto unknown scale, implied the absence of bodies, either missing in action and vanished or remaining more or less voluntarily in the war grave cemeteries close to the battlefields.

## From World War II to the 1980s

### *The Competition of Heroes*

Even if they were traversed by numerous conflicts and claims, the memories of the Great War borne by the 1914–18 war veterans undoubtedly had great legitimacy prior to World War II. In 1944–45, however, the figure of the heroic combatant of the trenches, then standard-bearer of the fight against oblivion and for peace, risked being relegated to the background by new heroic figures, that of the Resistance fighter, or the combatant for the operations of 1944–45. Even if the figure is rarely promoted, there is also the soldier of 1939–40. In the *Almanach du Combattant*, in 1950, a fictitious dialogue about the place of 1914–18 war veterans clearly asserted this form of competition among heroes: “And it would seem that the time has come for the 1914–18 elders to play the role of ‘veterans.’ I can see you coming, you belong to the category of those who would really like it if people no longer talked about those who waged the war. This is a language that we have become accustomed to hearing since the Liberation. Tell me about the Resistance fighters; but not about the combatants.”<sup>14</sup> We can thus see an increased number of speeches and appeals from veterans of the Great War who are explicitly part and parcel

of this competition between heroes: either to sweep it away in the name of unity or to recall their memorial existence in the face of the risks, real or alleged, of relegation. One of the rhetorical dimensions of this competition between heroes emphasizes that those of 1914–18 were victorious; another extends the notion of “resistance” to the Great War. At times, rivalries were played out in families and family memories. François Ridel, the singer with the Massilia Sound System group and composer of a song about his great-uncles in the war, recounts the “competition,” to use his own word, between his father, a veteran of 1940, and his grandfather, a veteran of 1914, which marked him.<sup>15</sup>

### ***A Period of Lower Intensity***

In a more general way, it appears quite clearly that the 1950s were a low moment for the position of 1914–18 in the public sphere. Between 1945 and 1958, World War I–related cultural and scholarly production of all sorts was less important than before and also less significant compared to what was to come in the 1960s. Commemorations sometimes seemed to lack ambition.<sup>16</sup> If we are to believe the *Almanach*, the thirty-fifth anniversary of Verdun in 1951 was a “forgotten anniversary,” with no coverage in the press, unlike in the years after 1918: “Gone into oblivion.”<sup>17</sup> This lesser interest in 1914–18 was undoubtedly explained by the shadow of World War II, as was noted by François Mauriac in *Le Figaro Littéraire*: “But the Great War no longer belongs to a recent past, the protagonists in the drama have almost all left the scene. . . . What we still call ‘the Great War’ disappears beneath the muddy tide of 1940.”<sup>18</sup> Others were all too inclined to follow that line of thought.<sup>19</sup> *Poilus’* notebooks and war memories did not sell and did not interest many people, in the view of several publishers. We may gauge the contrast with the present-day period, since the 1990s, when the most prestigious publishing houses have been publishing the writings of 1914–18 soldiers, often unknown, sometimes with major success. We will come back to this later on.

It would nevertheless be an oversimplification to define the memory of 1914–18 during the 1950s as an old subject for aging war veterans. At times, the memory of the war could still resonate strongly with important political and social issues, particularly during the Algerian War. Take, for instance, the “scandal” Stanley Kubrick’s *Paths of Glory* brought about in 1958<sup>20</sup>: the film recounts the judgment and execution of soldiers for “cowardice in the face of the enemy” after a failed attack (based on a novel by Humphrey Cobb and real stories of French soldiers executed by firing squad). Opposition to the film was so heated that it could not be shown in France, but discussion about the work’s merits were rife in the press. The various arguments brought to the fore many stories about the

Great War: combatants and their families attest to as much.<sup>21</sup> If the truth be told, what made Kubrick's film matter the way it did (and this is also true for the *Notebooks* of Abel Ferry, a war veteran and minister in 1914, which were published at the same time [1957]), was the fact that France was at war: the French army sent young, conscripted Frenchmen to Algeria. Critics of that policy stepped up the number of parallels between the two periods, for example around the relations between civilian powers and military powers, in order to make their case.

### *Pains in the Neck and Old Jerks*

As time passed, the disappearance of the war generation took up more and more room in the various discourses about the conflict. What was obviously a matter of concern, over and above nostalgic dimensions and harking back to the past, was the question of how the memories of the war could be passed on to the next generation. At the end of a 1964 book about the fate of soldiers in the Great War, Pierre Bourget asked himself rhetorically: after the death of the “‘last man’ at Douaumont . . . nothing?”<sup>22</sup> These concerns were expressed in a context where the slowly disappearing generation of *anciens combattants* resented what it considered the absence of well-deserved public recognition. Unsurprisingly, criticisms of and poking fun at the war veteran spirit are painfully felt by those aging men of 1914. In her novel *Numéro Six*, Véronique Olmi describes a war veteran, who was a doctor and reactionary, through the voice of his loving daughter reading his war letters: “May ’68 saved me. You wept, when students called *poilus* assholes. You had fought for children who were spitting gleefully in your face. That was your second defeat after Emile’s death [his brother who was killed close to him].”<sup>23</sup>

In the context of the growing politicization of the 1960s, the critical and amused eye of some of their contemporaries in a way ratcheted up the anxiety caused by the disappearance of traces. Several journalists and publicists went so far as to criticize World War I commemorations. Maurice Sieklucki, chairman of the Federal Union of War Veterans, was saddened to see war veterans being ridiculed and disparaged as militarists: “They don’t understand, they can’t understand.”<sup>24</sup> The figures of the Great War rebels struck a chord with the antimilitarism of the late 1960s. Take for instance the case of future Action Directe leader (Action Directe was an ultra-left-wing group that employed violent means of action) Jean-Marc Rouillan, who began his activism in Toulouse. His memories of those times conjure up many references to rebels of the past and cases of disobedience in the Great War: “We had seen *Paths of Glory*, Stanley Kubrick’s censored film, and we had read the rare books about mutiny and fraternization with the enemy in the trenches, and needless to add, from

my early childhood, I knew everything about the adventures of corporal Vincent Moulia. . . . Our fraternization with the Reds was meant above all to preserve that collective and hunted memory. We combined it with our rejection and our uprisings.”<sup>25</sup> Far from clinging to a form of inner exchange with the past, the militancy of those young people of Toulouse took on the provocative form of painted inscriptions, associated with the burning of French flags prepared for the occasion, at the War Memorial on Boulevard d’Arcole on the eve of 11 November 1970. On that same day, just after de Gaulle’s death, and elsewhere, too, as in Tours (“dead for nothing”), several war memorials were “sullied by protestors.” This memorial chord of political criticism grew weaker in the 1980s. But at the same time and in the same context of political activism, the voices and the testimonies of popular soldiers emerged in the public sphere, when in the previous years most of the publications came from the upper social milieu. The success of the notebook of Louis Barthas (a barrelmaker of southern France), edited in 1978 by Rémy Cazals in a series dedicated to promote the “voices” of people “from below” in a rather militant perspective, was followed by numerous publications of texts and letters written by “ordinary” soldiers (*Années cruelles*, 1983; *La Plume au fusil*, 1985), which means it was not only the elites whose capability and intention of writings proved quite “natural.”<sup>26</sup> In a more general way, this interest for the war experiences of ordinary soldiers paved the way for the rediscovery of World War I memories in a new political context.

## Returning Memories: The 1990s

### *The “Derniers Poilus”*

In the 1990s, in many different forms, the presence of the Great War in the public sphere actually increased, something that was marked at the end of the decade, in 1998, by an important speech from Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, at Craonne in the Aisne department, that triggered a controversy about the memory of 1914–18 and the memory of war refusals in particular.

The figure of the “last *poilus*,” the last living World War I veterans, spread in the public domain in general and in the media in particular. In 1995, an initiative introduced by the government awarding the Legion of Honor to 1914–18 veterans who did not have it gave them a certain topical attention. It was also at the local level that the cult of the “last *poilus*” would be organized, as was attested by an enormous amount of regional press articles putting forward the local veterans. In this regard, the 2000s represented a turning point: the “last *poilu*” category became the main term for relating to the veterans, and, above all, a form of countdown

was triggered in newspaper headlines and article headers. From then on, the “last *poilus*” became nothing less than media icons. This attention culminated in the national funeral ceremonies and tributes for the last of the lasts, which started to be projected in 2005. These national commemorations brought together three distinct commemorative traditions: the tradition of national funerals and the republican Pantheon admission ceremonies, the funerals of the leading World War I generals in the interwar years, and the already mentioned cult of the Unknown Soldier. In 2007, however, this initiative clashed with the reluctance of the last two *poilus*, Louis de Cazenave and Lazare Ponticelli, who had no intention of receiving the honor of a national funeral. Instead, they preferred, as they explained it, to remain loyal to their comrades who had not been sufficiently honored, a line of thought that is reminiscent of Georges Pineau’s discourses in the 1950s. Lazare Ponticelli, who lived to become, from January 2008 up to his death in March 2008, the very last *poilu* and as such received much media coverage, ended up changing his mind and accepting a form of national homage. The staging and success of the “last *poilus*” symbol indicates, first and foremost, that, for our contemporaries, the Great War is still a resource period in the face of uncertain collective horizons of expectation. The figure of the “last *poilus*” also permits ecumenism: in a rare display of unanimity, both right and left have promoted and endorsed the idea of a national funeral ceremony, with each side insisting on the narratives and values that suit them most (courage versus criticism, patriotism versus pacifism, etc.). The last *poilus* have thus become national memory icons in a period when, in a more general way, the Great War is stirring up a great deal of interest among French people.

### ***Various Forms of Memory Activism***

The fact that, during the early 2000s, World War I became a literary *sujet* of some importance plainly attests to the growing relevance of the war’s memory in the public sphere. In 2004 alone, major French publishing houses published ten novels whose plot was set in a WWI-setting—with a special emphasis *poilus*’ war experiences—or centered around memory issues. Most were written by authors belonging to the generation of grandchildren or great-grandchildren. That same year, Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s film *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (*A Very Long Engagement*), a tale of disciplinary repression during the war adapted from the novel by Sébastien Japrisot, attracted an audience of more than four million! The Great War in France is thus a great deal more than history. It stirs up an interest that is evident in the many different cultural productions. In addition to films, books, comic strips—take for instance the great success of Jacques Tardi—and plays, there are contemporary rock and pop songs (by Miossec

and Indochine, for example). Countless associative activities are taking place in the former front zone. Associations, often staffed by volunteers, are maintaining the patrimony, recreating it, organizing visits and lectures. In many ways, they are stepping in for the state, which is—at least from their point of view—somewhat faltering when it comes to preserving the Great War’s vestiges. There are also plenty of amateur historians and genealogists taking up histories of their ancestors during the war, even in some cases editing their notebooks as fully-fledged books or posting them on the internet. In a word, far from being merely a scholarly subject, the 1914–18 war has, over the past thirty years or so, become nothing less than a major social and cultural activity, which reached its climax during the centenary.

This interest is part and parcel of the development of patrimonial associations and the vitality of local history, stimulated by the spread of higher education, which is turning out ever better trained individuals. A twofold series of factors is involved here. The first stems from the specific features of the Great War, which affected the entire population (eight million people were mobilized). Everyone can include their “family history” in the “Great History”: individual destinies find their way into the collective struggle and go beyond the ordinary horizons of the regional environment. This family inclusion in collective history is helped by the dominant images of 1914–18 today: the *poilu* appears first of all as a victim of the terrible conditions of war, or as a battlefield hero, or both. There are very few other collective experiences on the basis of which memories can build so many positive figures. The second series of explanations for this revival of attentiveness to the history of the Great War goes beyond the conflict itself. Interest in the past is fueled by the blurring of collective horizons in France, with the fading of grand narratives and the projects associated with them: the fall of state communism, the liberal turning point of social democracy, and so on. In a nutshell, our societies are without any doubt in a new relation to memory and history. Among the dramatic periods of history that resonate with contemporaries, World War I clearly rings out loudly.

It is too early to draw definitive conclusions about the war’s centenary (2014–18), but it seems that the last four years can best be understood as a confirmation of the existing commemorative and memory dynamics and patterns: during the French centenary, a massive engagement of the state (with at least one major commemorative ceremony—but more often than not several of them—involving the president of the Republic being organized by the official *Mission du Centenaire* each year) intersected with an even more impressive memory activism “from below” (with thousands of media, pedagogical, commemorative, cultural, and scholarly

projects being organized throughout the entire country). On the whole, the important media coverage and the no less important (public) funding probably combined to open up new audiences (especially in generational terms). Beyond any doubt, one of the distinctive and new features to emerge during the centenary period has been the ambition to develop a global and international commemorative discourse, without, however, abandoning national narratives that came to the fore on many different occasions. On a bilateral level, it was in particular the French-German dimension that was very present across the centenary. In many regards, the new monument of Notre Dame de Lorette embodies the “transnationalization” of memory: the names of all the fallen soldiers in northern France, friends and foes alike, are engraved in alphabetical order on the walls of the huge Anneau de la mémoire. The monument was inaugurated by President François Hollande in November 2014. Given the centenary’s importance, it is not surprising that the centenary is itself becoming a research topic.<sup>27</sup>

The contemporary historiographical arguments that we are about to broach overlap and intersect with these many different areas of interest in the war.

## Historiographies

### Interwar Years

In this period, and, first and foremost, in its initial phase, the history of the war was synonymous with diplomatic and military history: prewar diplomacy and the diplomacy of the summer of 1914, more or less secret negotiations during the conflict itself, explanations of strategic and tactical choices, and the unfolding of battles seen from the point of view of the commanding generals, have attracted historians’ attention. Quite often, the historical *acteurs* themselves claimed to provide a valid historiographical narrative. Journalists and men of letters described the war, backed up by varying degrees of research. Gallimard thus published in 1936 a very imposing *Histoire de la Grande Guerre* by former war correspondent and literary critic Henry Bidou, who had already written a battlefield travel guide. Bidou had found a historian’s legitimacy by taking part, under the editorship of Ernest Lavisse, in the *Histoire de France contemporaine* (vol. 9 *La Grande Guerre*): here, in seven hundred dense pages, everything is seen from the military and political decision makers’ perspective.

National narratives often lay at the heart of the argument (*pro domo* plea, “lessons” to be learned for the good of the country, etc.). This dimension was further heightened by the choice of themes. If we look at

the World War I bibliography of the interwar years, studies about Verdun, once again, are at least four times more numerous than those about the Chemin des Dames. The intermingling of political and historical issues also led to giving a central place to the question of “responsibilities” for the conflict. In an impressive scholarly work about the mechanism of the 1914 crisis, Pierre Renouvin accuses the Central Powers of bearing the main responsibility for the war’s outbreak.<sup>28</sup> In response, pacifist intellectuals (Gustave Dupin, Félicien Challaye, René Gerin) did their utmost, in a nearly Dreyfusard manner, to demonstrate that the thesis positing sole (German) responsibility did not hold water, accusing, in particular, the general mobilization of the Russian army. In working on the origins of the war, pacifists, for their part, fought against international tensions and sought to display and dismantle the warmongering lies of the past.<sup>29</sup> These issues were the subject of many public debates, and militants attached much importance to them. Here, first and foremost, 1914 was a publicly discussed subject with tremendous political implications.<sup>30</sup> The same was the case with the history of the working-class movement and the revolutions during and just after the war, much studied by militants, one such being the trade unionist Alfred Rosmer, who, since the beginning of the war, had been part of the “minority voices” opposed to the war and to the “union sacrée.”<sup>31</sup> Through its systematic criticism of the imperialist war, the new Communist Party also produced a whole set of articles, texts, and pamphlets about the history of the war, all the more so because many intellectuals had rallied to their cause (see in particular the Clarté series).

Senior officers, for their part, defended themselves, offering insights into the way operations were conducted, putting forward their legitimacy as skilled military practitioners in the process, whether those involved were great leaders like Philippe Pétain, who wrote *Bataille de Verdun* (1929), or lower-ranking generals like Jean Rouquerol, who described the offensive of the Chemin des Dames (1934). Maxime Weygand, who took part in the 1918 negotiations beside Foch, published a book titled *11 Novembre*, which described the armistice and then the celebration of the Unknown Soldier (1932) in a very patriotic and antipacifist spirit.

In many cases, professional historians, teaching at the university or in charge of the secondary curriculum, were also war veterans, two such being Pierre Renouvin and Jules Isaac. The figure of Pierre Renouvin thus acquired stature: a war veteran who had returned home an amputee, a man of order who became one of the most influential figures of French contemporary history, and a professor at the Sorbonne for more than thirty years (1931–64). When the war ended, he was appointed curator

of the Bibliothèque-Musée de la Guerre (War Museum Library, the future BDIC), where an immense documentation was brought together. To begin with, Renouvin played an institutional role of prime importance, not only with his chair but also in the *Revue d'histoire de la Guerre mondiale* and as editor of the *Revue historique*. In addition to this, he also supervised the publication of French diplomatic documents. A large part of his own work also focused on 1914–18 and the political and diplomatic aspects of the war. Among other things, he offered an important reflection about the way the French executive and legislative institutions evolved during the war years.<sup>32</sup> As already mentioned, he also linked historiography and politics by defending the French position on German responsibilities. Last of all, he supervised the works of those who, through their positions, extended the institutional importance of the Great War after World War II.

The voices of simple soldiers and the various social challenges and movements appeared only rarely in this initial historiographical moment, which ran from the 1920s to the 1950s. Once again, Renouvin's *oeuvre* is a case in point: although being a World War I veteran himself, he never paid much attention to what ordinary soldiers might have to say about the conflict.<sup>33</sup> Combatants' experiences were thus above all delivered in the form of testimonies, a genre among whose authors members of the social elites were overrepresented for obvious reasons. When firsthand accounts of the fighting were integrated into a broader narrative, this was first and foremost done by the *poilus* themselves. Two books stand out in that regard. The first one is Jacques Péricard's colossal book on *Verdun*, published in 1934. Péricard, a war hero and right-wing militant, had called upon the testimonies of simple soldiers who had taken part in the various battles in the Verdun region and in particular in the battle of 1916. These were fully incorporated in his narrative (Péricard lists them at the end of the volume) without, however, gaining any priority over the description of the overall events. The second one was the book by Jean Norton Cru, another war veteran and a professor of literature who, in order to establish the "truth" of testimony, became involved in a considerable critical work yielding an acute analysis of combatant authors. *Témoins* (Witnesses) (1929) was an "analytical and critical essay about the memories of combatants written in French between 1915 and 1928." Applying the methods of the French *école méthodique*, Norton Cru compared and counterchecked sources, ascertaining the level of "truth" of any given *témoignage*. The result was a truth hierarchy of sorts, with Norton Cru classifying the soldiers' testimonies "by order of value." Some of the greatest successes of the day, Barbusse's *Le Feu* and Dorgeles's *Les Croix de bois*, were listed among the "mediocre" titles in the school of truth.

Writers who were denounced for their tall stories and their effect-seeking defended themselves vigorously, and the debate became heated. Behind quarrels about details, broad issues were played out: Where was the truth of testimony to be found? How was the experience of the front to be transmitted? The various controversies also brought to the fore the classical opposition between literature and history. Arguments about the scope and relevancy of combatant testimony went on and on.<sup>34</sup>

### From World War II to the 1990s

In the 1960s, the history of the Great War benefitted from the development of economic and social history, and from more attentive ways of looking at average, low-level combatants and civilians that emerged in the context of a period marked by the powerful presence of Marxism in intellectual and political debates.<sup>35</sup> The works of historians thus focused on the link between the state and the economy, the emergence of a mixed economy, the interaction between capitalist interests and public policies, and social struggles. Quantification (of elements of discourse and people, etc.) was widely used. The working class and its role in industrial mobilization played an important part in the works, all the more so because the subject was linked to the revolutionary openings of 1917–19.<sup>36</sup> Then Jean-Louis Robert embarked on his research about Parisian workers during wartime.<sup>37</sup> Anthropology and social sciences started to enrich all this work: with the help of a statistical processing of registers and rolls, private sources and oral investigations, Jules Maurin offered a large monograph about the soldiers of Languedoc from the prewar period to the end of the conflict.<sup>38</sup> In particular, he showed the social differentiation of losses of life and the soldiers' low ideological involvement in the conflict. In a more classical tradition, Georges-Henri Soutou was, for his part, interested in the goals of economic war through broad comparative research, in France, England, Germany, and the United States.<sup>39</sup> As far as Germany is concerned, his study corrects some of Fritz Fischer's theses as to the continuity of German war aims from the second half of the nineteenth century to World War I. As for the French case, he insists, on the contrary, on the continuity of strategic goals between 1871 and 1919.

It behooves us to note the powerful impetus provided by the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Great War in 1964–68. Historiographic production, at that time, abounded, and a variety of subject matters were covered. Due to the development of television in general and history on television in particular, World War I enjoyed quite a media presence at that juncture. Yet, the anniversary also showed the extent to which traditional battle history, in particular around the heroic diptych of the Marne

and Verdun, was still significant. That was also a time of publications of testimony from personalities (Fayolle, Maginot), as well as more ordinary soldiers (Louis Planté). Above all, the fiftieth anniversary represented in many ways the apotheosis and swan song of war veterans as historians of the war they endured fifty years earlier. Many were those who, beyond their own experience, retraced a battle or provided an overall view of the conflict or one of its aspects.<sup>40</sup>

Gradually, with the full-scale spread of higher education during the 1970s, the Great War became a central subject of university-based research, when, at the time of the fiftieth anniversary, journalists and men of letters had still been dominating the field. In this way, chairs at the Sorbonne were obtained by Guy Pedroncini (1978, after having been senior lecturer from 1969 to 1972), whose research focused on Pétain, the high command, and the mutinies of 1917; Antoine Prost (1979); and then André Kaspi, whose university career started with a thesis on American assistance to France in 1917 (1988 for his chair).<sup>41</sup> Supervised, like Prost, by Renouvin, Jean-Jacques Becker became professor at Nanterre in 1985 after having been senior lecturer there, with an acclaimed thesis on “the opinion” in 1914, which did away with the idea that there was general enthusiasm for mobilization.<sup>42</sup> This university and institutional centrality of the Great War was also notable in following generations. At the Sorbonne, Jean-Louis Robert, whose studies on the workers’ movement during World War I have been mentioned earlier, took over from Antoine Prost. The post of director of the Centre of Military History at the University of Montpellier (III) went to a Great War specialist, Frédéric Rousseau.

Undoubtedly, the Great War was a world war. Yet, this dimension is not to be found in due proportion in French World War I research. As a matter of fact, the attention French historians have paid to other belligerents is quite uneven. For example, Great Britain and Austria-Hungary have never given rise to major French works. There is a certain interest in the United States and war in the 1970s and 1980s, often seen through the prism of “international relations studies,” before that interest faded.<sup>43</sup> Lastly, colonial war experiences have led to important works, which, however, tended to start from the actual terrain of colonial history.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Great War through the Lens of Culture?**

For about twenty-five years or so, cultural history has been experiencing a growing popularity among historians. This area of research is becoming increasingly diversified. The rise of this historiography has to do with questions peculiar to the historian’s discipline and the more general

movements of contemporary societies. For 1914–18, it goes hand in hand, among a group of historians gathered around the Historial of Péronne (Somme), with an argument of methodological rupture, which sees itself as an operation of historiographical revision under the aegis of “cultural history.” This meant placing the representations of World War I-contemporaries and in particular the way “cultural mobilizations” operated squarely in the center of the research agenda. The title of the book published in 2000 by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *Retrouver la guerre*, neatly typifies this viewpoint. The authors argue that earlier generations of researchers did not pay enough attention to the importance of culture in the maintenance of hostilities, thereby minimizing soldiers’ and civilians’ identification with the nation at war. Against historiographies deemed to be too close to the historical *acteurs*, it would be necessary to review the various viewpoints and break with the arguments of 1914–18 soldiers, the significance of which we have seen, and with that of their memories. The historians referred to have developed their proposals to re-read the history of 1914–18 based on a museographical undertaking on a large scale, the Historial de Péronne (opened in 1992), which stimulated the contemporary presentations of the conflict. Bringing together historiography and museography, the museum represents an important stage in the new policy involving the patrimonial development of 1914–18 sites linked to territorial cultural development. So, it is pertinent to consider the historiographical propositions being discussed here as part of a dynamic situated at the crossroads of the renewals of cultural history, revisionist endeavors being conducted on the history of the French Revolution (around François Furet) and on other terrain, and broader political and cultural trends.

The term “culture of war” is the matrix of the interpretation proposed by the historians of the Historial de Péronne. It describes “a corpus of representations of the conflict crystallized in a veritable system, lending war its deep-seated meaning,” a corpus rooted in “hatred” of the enemy and shared by the populations of the different belligerent countries. It is the culture of war that, say its advocates, explains the violence and longevity of conflict. Added to this is a wave of religious fervor, where the idea of crusades is being revived.<sup>45</sup> These overall viewpoints are accompanied by an understanding of new research subjects. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, for instance, worked on rape occurring in wars and on children during the war, the latter a theme further researched by his student Manon Pignot.<sup>46</sup>

Audoin-Rouzeau also wrote on the phenomenon of mourning, without, however, claiming any representativity, because these “narratives of mourning” are above all those of educated elites, familiar with writing. The historian’s intent here is to “grasp as closely as possible . . . the heart

of the pain left by the great wave of 1914–1918, once this has ebbed . . . , understand the bereavement, and the private dimension of loss.”<sup>47</sup> Nowadays this approach of history of sensibility, or history of the intimate, is followed by several works, not always taking much into account the social backgrounds as a key context.<sup>48</sup>

The cultural approach encourages works on every possible medium. Nicolas Beaupré has extensively worked and published on war literature,<sup>49</sup> and Laurent Véray has proposed an analysis of World War I films. In *La Grande Guerre au cinéma*, he intermingles overall views and zooms in on certain important films showing how we move from “the glorification of combat to the denunciation of the horror of the trenches.”<sup>50</sup> There are now plenty of works on the pictorial and visual representations of the war, too many to cite all of them.<sup>51</sup> The notion of “*sortie de guerre*” extends these lines of thinking. Bruno Cabanes thus examined demobilization in its technical dimensions (five million soldiers had to get their civilian lives back), here ending with a success of administration. He also analyzes in detail two major experiences for those soldiers who lived through them: going to and staying in the provinces recovered, and the occupation of the Rhineland.<sup>52</sup> Far from clichés about wondrous finds, Cabanes draws up a subtle picture of the contact between French troops and the people of Alsace-Lorraine. The occupation of the Rhine’s left bank, a form of “war after the war,” gave rise to a “growing tension” between French soldiers and the population, marked by the famous propaganda campaign launched by the Germans against the colonial troops, studied by Jean-Yves Le Naour.<sup>53</sup>

The proposals of the historians of Péronne did not give rise to consensus. Some historians rejected them head-on (Rémy Cazals, Frédéric Rousseau), others in less radical ways (François Cochet, Antoine Prost). They questioned the sources used (or not) to build the notion of the “culture of war,” observing a large choice of documents often written behind the lines and by the elites of the day. Nothing in any of these cases can serve as proof on a sufficiently broad and representative scale, which embraces populations examined in series over a significant period of time (the length of the war, at least). Recently, Nicolas Mariot has offered new findings backing up criticism.<sup>54</sup> By studying the letters and notebooks of forty-two intellectuals who went to war as foot soldiers or with a lower rank, Mariot concludes that ideological involvement in conflict does indeed depend on the individual’s social situation (a point that has been emphasized in the case of the German Empire by Benjamin Ziemann and Nicolas Patin<sup>55</sup>). Those intellectuals rightly lamented the fact that the working classes whom they observed at the front failed to share their ideals. Over and above that issue, Mariot shows that intellectuals did not

mix with the peasants, craftsmen, and workers with whom they rubbed shoulders. For their part, specialists in combatant testimony note that hatred of the enemy was rarely expressed among soldiers at the front after the first few weeks of war: as for the crusade idea, it was not part of the common vocabulary of most soldiers.

For many, the history of the “culture of war” is a history that also minimizes political stakes and power struggles. More generally, it is true that, in the 1990s and 2000s, the political history of the conflict was not much studied. Bruno Cabanes’s book about French soldiers at the end of the war illustrates this tendency. He does not situate the return of combatants in the social and political conflicts of the years 1919–21. The notion of “patriotic consent” has also been widely discussed. In its actual conception: to consent, you must have the choice. The fact is, of course, that conscription does not permit such a choice. Nicolas Mariot has then argued that it was presumptuous to derive from an act (the fact of not rebelling, for example, and “doing one’s duty”) a belief (that of belonging to a cause, through a heightened sense of patriotism in this instance). Nothing makes it possible to move directly from an analysis of apparent patterns of behavior to beliefs rooted in those persons involved. Studies carried out on voluntary service (Jules Maurin, Frédéric Rousseau) show further that, after the initial engagement of 1914, the decrease was quite clear, and that the vast majority of those volunteering for service chose combat duties as far removed as possible from trench warfare, by gradually refining their survival strategy.

In a more general way, it has been underscored that the behavior and beliefs of soldiers at war could not be the object of any monolithic explanation, and with time this commonsense viewpoint attracted wider attention. Frédéric Rousseau emphasized that it is important to embrace a “bundle of factors” in order to understand soldiers’ motivations, for example the major part played by comradeship and the small group, that “local” solidarity which is not national.<sup>56</sup> The term “culture of war,” though widely used in historiography, has been called into question around the actual method making it possible to bolster the notion. How can a “culture of war,” i.e. a specific cultural dimension, be shared by all populations, even in differing degrees, and even with great nuances? First of all, as we know, the split between being behind the lines and at the front provides some structure in the representations and behavior of one and all. Antoine Prost, who has a balanced position in this debate, has effectively highlighted this difference. Then to have such a decisive role in the all-encompassing nature of the conflict, the “culture of war” should have retrieved, from the people involved, the other cultural matrices. The fact is that the internalization of the demands of the conflict cannot

ignore all the other forms of allegiances (political, religious, local, affective, etc.), some of which do not go well with all-out war. Otherwise put, for the soldiers, “the uniform does not abolish identities.”<sup>57</sup>

What is more, the historicization of the “culture of war” also poses problems. Since when were societies imbued with such a culture? It is often said that it would erupt in 1914, here attributing a decisive role to the German “atrocities” during the invasion, and their representations, among the Allies in particular, in order to polarize identities, then throughout the conflict subsequently.<sup>58</sup> But how are we to grasp that a culture was “crystallized” from the early days of the war, when the very nub of the culture resides in the fact that it is a makeshift cobbling together of varied elements that are consolidated in the long term? Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau nevertheless notes that the “culture of war” should be set within a broader chronological frame that, in particular, takes into account “its roots in the previous century.” It is not hard to see the difficulties here: either the “culture of war” is incorporated in the long term, and in this case it is hard to understand what turned it into a driving force in 1914, or the “culture of war” “appeared” in 1914, and in this case the term “culture” is inappropriate for describing such a brutal phenomenon. In the heat of these debates, 2005 saw the formation of a research group on the Great War, partly in reaction to the “culturalist” turning point already mentioned. The Collective for International Research and Debate on the 1914–18 War (CRID) brought together researchers from varied backgrounds: some came from social history (Rémy Cazals), others from the social sciences (Nicolas Mariot is a specialist of political sciences), and others still had been nurtured on history/social sciences or on socio-history (André Loez and we ourselves). These professional researchers have been joined by historians whose research is not the main activity. But what is involved is in no way a “School of Constraint”—this point needs stressing—as opposed to a “School of Consent.” The CRID 14–18’s brief was thus also to encourage a broad exchange, even beyond academia, even more so given the fact that the Great War has continued to stir up questions in a public that is far wider than history professionals.<sup>59</sup>

These debates have been based on—and have also stimulated—works on movements resisting the war. André Loez completely reused the file on the 1917 mutinies.<sup>60</sup> Equipped with solid social science tools, he first showed that the mutinies, and the mutineers, were part and parcel of a political context open to the possibilities perceived and used by the actors involved. He also underscored the strength of the movement, all the more so because the risks taken by those who were involved in it were very considerable. The actions of the mutineers, analyzed in detail, make it possible to conclude that the movement was “a massive refusal of war

taking many different forms.” Beyond this, many works have shown the extent to which the *poilus* were forever setting up strategies of avoidance and ways of dodging and sidestepping things in the face of the constraints of trench warfare. Charles Ridet has proposed an overall view of the matter of “shirkers.”<sup>61</sup> These men, who were rightly or wrongly accused of wanting to avoid their duties by running away from dangerous postings and positions, gave rise to countless denunciations and press campaigns. Here, Ridet sees nothing less than an “obsession” in France at war, where the notion of equality in the face of the “blood tax” powerfully structured mentalities. Unlike the hasty ideas that can be read on this subject, truces and tacit agreements, and other “minor gestures of non-aggression,” were repeated practices of the trench war on the different fronts, which often affected the soldiers. The fraternizations of Christmas 1914, consisting of meetings in no-man’s land around exchanges involving a drink, or a smoke, or food, undoubtedly had a particular scale on the Anglo-German front, but those moments of peaceful contacts between one camp and the other existed before, after, and right up to 1918, depending on various intensities and periods of time and taking on many different forms. All the practices on which we have here shed light attested to “a great capacity of resistance to warmongering words.”<sup>62</sup> Already in 1977, Antoine Prost’s thesis had shown the importance that war veterans placed on commemorating the arbitrariness and excesses of military justice; we have had a closer look at the trajectories of that memory over a century,<sup>63</sup> while several books, adopting differing viewpoints, have greatly developed the functional mechanisms and challenges of courts martial and execution squads.<sup>64</sup>

It is not a question of overpromoting actions that are only one aspect, among many others, of combatant practices, but rather of emphasizing that they do not tally with the image of soldiers full of hatred and ready at any moment to get into a fight. Nor is it a matter, here, of contrasting a historiography of refusals and avoidance tactics with that of “consent”—we must again stress this point—but of showing, in the various practices, how the soldiers organized their different types of conduct without necessarily relating them to general ideological phenomena.

## Recent Research Tendencies

### Deeper Investigations

Today, the internationalization of research, which has definitely not come full circle, is leading to a relative standardization of questioning and methodologies. Numerous thematic fields broached by historians of

France thus intersect with the international output. So it is henceforth common currency to broadly question the role of the historian in the actual making of history, the interaction between his present position and his ways of working, as has been illustrated by the publication in French (but swiftly translated into English) of the historiographical volume authored by Jay Winter and Antoine Prost.<sup>65</sup> One of the particularly convincing features of the volume is its ambition to systematically link the historiographical analysis of World War I to the social and memory contexts in which it takes place. Recently, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, for his part, has tried to define the effects of war on his family, finally including himself in the end of the sequence, providing a personal version of the apprentice's narrative of a historian, and hiding neither his subjectivities nor his feeling of clumsiness.<sup>66</sup>

As in other subfields of the discipline, the history of the Great War today plays to a great extent with scales. That is to say, that the general questions about the conflict find answers in analyses that vary the breadth of the frame depending on desires and needs. Some historians thus focus on individuals and couples who talk beyond their own history, like the deserter turned transvestite to hide himself studied by Fabrice Virgili and Danièle Voldman.<sup>67</sup> The works inspired by gender studies, however, are still limited. The city also appears like a fertile and renewed area of observation for societies at war, as is attested to by the program run by Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert about capitals at war, and Elise Julien's dissertation about war memories in Paris and Berlin.<sup>68</sup> These interplays of scales often encompass similar issues. There is the general issue, expanding on the questionings of the 1990s, of the ideological and cultural mobilization of societies, which was tackled in studies on propaganda and the construction of war references and arguments. Jean-Yves Le Naour, for instance, questions the religious charisma of Claire Ferchaud, a modest countrywoman from Loublande (Deux-Sèvres), part of the reactionary tradition of La Vendée: in 1916, she announced herself as a bearer of messages from Christ crucial for France's victory. There was no dearth of enthusiasm, like that displayed by those pilgrims who betook themselves to the family farm to meet the heroine of a combative Catholicism, sometimes even forcing the door to see her.<sup>69</sup>

The history of economic mobilization has been looked at anew by François Bouloc, who studied "war profiteers" both from the viewpoint of representations, political customs, and the construction of the category and from that of practices.<sup>70</sup> He then shows how productive it is to overlap these different aspects by, in particular, underscoring the fact that industrialists and manufacturers did not espouse the practices of their patriotic public commitments. They greatly impeded the creation of taxes

on war profits (1916). With the work of Laura Lee Downs on the gendered division of labor in the metallurgical industry,<sup>71</sup> this is one of the rare recent research projects that incorporate the new approaches to economic history. Various research and publication projects conducted in the context of the centenary have, however, further accentuated this trend: in the last couple of years we have seen some major conferences being organized by institutions that did not have a World War I-related research activity prior to the anniversary but that—like, for instance, the Institut de la Gestion publique et du développement économique or the Comité pour l’histoire économique et financière de la France—took advantage of the centenary and enhanced our understanding of the war’s economic and labor history.<sup>72</sup>

Generally speaking, historians are today attentive to the wide diversity of war experiences, to borrow an expression that well describes contemporary orientations marked by the input of anthropology and renewed military history. Needless to say, there are the experiences of combatants henceforth being dealt with from every angle, including the most private ones, and those hardest to discern: motivations, comradeship, leisure pastimes in the trenches, and sports. The variety of civilians’ experiences gives rise to ever larger works, especially in occupation zones, such as in the work by Philippe Salson about the occupied Aisne department, with more subtle and differentiated ways of dealing with the relations between occupiers and occupied.<sup>73</sup> Forms of resistance to the war, which also put into perspective different degrees of identification with the enveloping discourse of national defense, still have a significant place in recent books.<sup>74</sup>

More and more, the Great War is understood as being part of a larger timeframe. This involves, on the one hand, an emphasis on the evolution of memory and its commemorative use, sometimes right up to the present day.<sup>75</sup> Many monographs are still being devoted to forms of mourning, national cults, and war memorials, as well as to presenting war in museums. On the other hand, there is the more delicate question as to how the Great War is connected with the wars that preceded it and those that have followed it. To give but one example, the development of 1914–18 studies today prompts us to question in new ways the wars of the early twentieth century—the Russo-Japanese War, the Balkan Wars—following a research protocol established in World War I studies.<sup>76</sup>

## Renewals

One of the striking renewals of the last few years involves getting away from the national framework to re-question other forms of belonging and

identification. This is especially the case with regions, long regarded as a matter of local erudition, or the framework of general monographs. Regional identities, those “small homelands,” are today being analyzed as an integral part of the conflict’s history, for the specific features of war experiences that they can produce, and for the upheavals that they suffer, but also for specific memories they give rise to. These works focus above all on regions with strong autonomist traditions: Alsace, Brittany, Corsica, Languedoc.<sup>77</sup> The wartime history of the various colonies and French territories also benefits from this trend with the centenary providing an additional impulse.<sup>78</sup> Not unconnectedly, the construction of figures and reports, in particular figures of losses, are being re-questioned from a more or less constructivist angle.<sup>79</sup> The connection to a larger scale is made in the book by Carl Bouchard, who studies a corpus of French letters sent to Woodrow Wilson: they demonstrate the extent to which the president of the United States represented a symbol of hope for average Frenchmen and -women.<sup>80</sup> More generally, works are more and more attentive to the question of the writing process and scripturality.

Among promising renewals, we should also mention less anthropocentric questionings. This is where the effects of the war on the environment come to the fore.<sup>81</sup> Historians also seek to develop a global environmental history of the Great War (Tait Keller) and to deal with the ecological impact of the conflict, both on nature and on human representations. This approach is not limited to the Western Front but encompasses all kinds of ecological consequences of the conflict, due to the economic exploitation of the African colonies, Asia, and America.

In the same vein, the historian Eric Baratay, with the help of ethology, is trying, as far as is possible, to get people to understand what the experiences of animals have been in war, “just as historians have learnt to do for the vanquished, the conquered, and the anonymous.” In his book, we follow animals from their departure, leaving their familiar master, for example, to heroization (for at least some of them during the conflict), and then to oblivion, which has been their lot after the war. Animals caught up in the conflict, without directly participating in it, like wild beasts or roaming cats, are also taken into consideration.<sup>82</sup> The approach chosen makes it possible to grasp the complex picture of animals’ lived experiences, which differed depending on their origin and their own history prior to the war. For example, horses living in relative solitude, with a peasant or craftsman, suffered more from being mobilized and integrated into a military collective than those whose past had accustomed them to the group, while for certain stray dogs, wartime conditions are better than what they knew beforehand. The study also takes into account the different ways human interaction with animals has been framed in different

national contexts. Environmental questions are of course related to human-animal interaction in various other ways. Take for instance the consequences of the war on hunting (in some parts of Africa for instance, the lack of hunters, who are mobilized, eases the pressure on wildlife).<sup>83</sup>

Another subfield of World War I-related research that has received a considerable boost in the last couple of years is archeology. As a matter of fact, the archaeology of the 1914–18 war is becoming more and more professionalized, its questions becoming more refined, and its methods of investigation (parasitology, dendrochronology, radiography, etc.) multiplying.<sup>84</sup> Its results are not always as spectacular and conducive to advances in historical knowledge (about soldiers' everyday life, their equipment, funeral practices, etc.) as (some) archeologists would sometimes argue, but it is undoubtedly playing an important role in the different memorial, educational, and museographical contexts connected with the 1914–18 demand mentioned earlier. More generally, the questions of the artifacts and objects continue to be treated by historians, but not always using the many available tools of the social sciences to understand the relationships between humans and nonhumans.<sup>85</sup>

The political history of the conflict still remains secondary in contemporary debates, or else it is dealt with in the manner of a traditional political history not always connected with the historiographical field of the Great War. We should nevertheless make mention of the works of Romain Ducoulombier.<sup>86</sup> The historian's intent is to propose an overall re-reading of the birth of the Communist Party, whose strength is based on two overlapping perspectives that, hitherto, often remained separate: the history of war experiences in 1914–18 and the solidly rooted tradition of the history of the working-class movement. Needless to say, there is nothing new about showing that the Communist Party was “born out of the fire” of World War I, or to insist on the importance of its war criticism in its making, but there is something innovative in studying, as Ducoulombier does, “socialist France in uniform” and emphasizing the renovating aspirations of French socialism outside of the historical circumstance of the Russian Revolution. The questions of diplomacy, peace processes, and the construction of peace ideologies also seems to raise new interests, especially in the context of the centenary of the Versailles Treaty.<sup>87</sup>

## Projects

After this general survey, it might seem that the history of the Great War has been largely exhausted, tilled by many furrows that have intersected a great deal. If the truth be told, this is a superficial impression. The fact is that contemporary involvement in cultural history has also contributed

to a shrinking of the area of investigation. As a result, military history, which has been relatively neglected, can be revisited on the basis of new questions, well tried and tested from a broader viewpoint—for example, auditory history, sounds at war and sounds of war.<sup>88</sup> The great battles in the conflict, like the war at sea, have in truth been little studied with regard to today's issues. There is still a lot to be said about the battles of 1915, the combats of 1918, and even about Verdun, even if, for the latter, there have been some recent advances.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, the narratives that have transformed the battles into memory, the ways in which they have been lent meaning at the time and afterward, and the ways in which they have been included in a general narrative of the war still merit whole studies.<sup>90</sup> The Eastern Front, a whole swathe of the Great War, despite the thesis of Francine Roussanne Saint-Ramond about the *poilus d'Orient* and despite the many calls of the historians to shift the focus in this direction, is still the poor relative of historiography in France for different and in particular archival and linguistic reasons.<sup>91</sup> Still, a very successful exhibition at the Musée des Invalides, with a catalog, brought the theme to the spotlight in the last months of the centenary.<sup>92</sup>

The relational dimension at the front should probably still encourage new investigations: relations between people (the gender notion should help progress to be made here) but also between people and objects, whose role is redefined in the war context. All forms of male bonds merit new investigations based on corpora that are not limited to literary texts. More than twenty years ago, Michel Foucault had properly sensed both the importance of and the yawning historiographical gap represented by these relations: “Outside one or two ideas about comradeship, soul brotherhood, and some very fragmentary testimony, what do we know about those emotional whirlwinds, those passionate tempests that there might have been at those particular moments?” He adds that people were held together “by an affective fabric, probably. I do not mean that it was because they were in love with each other that they went on fighting. But honor, courage, not losing face, sacrifice, getting away from the trenches with your friend, in front of your friend, all that implied a very intense emotional frame.”<sup>93</sup> A frame that historiography has begun to explore, but which is still probably one of the most important and open projects helping us to grasp the world of trenches and the deep-seated marks it has left behind.

Another area of World War I history that French historians should have a fresh look at is the colonial history of the war, which has not been renewed quite the way it should have been in the last decade or so, by making the most of the conceptual advances of postcolonial his-

tory: referring to relations of domination by adopting a more symmetrical viewpoint, putting the mechanisms of domination at the center of historical analysis, and, most importantly, considering the colonial dimension as a central feature of French history of that time should provide new insights. It is by no means a coincidence that American historiography, accustomed as it is to raise head-on ethnic and racial challenges, has filled this gap with several works about French colonial troops.<sup>94</sup>

Generally speaking, a renewal of any kind should involve a thorough analysis of the way class and milieu determine practices and experiences instead of focusing on types of discourse that have already been analyzed all too well. It is too early to come forth with definite conclusions on the historiographical impact of the centenary, but it seems safe to say that, if we look at the huge number of World War I publications, many owe their existence to publishers' somewhat opportunistic choices and should not leave a lasting imprint on the historiography of the war. To be sure, there are now more state-of-the-art syntheses and compendia than before. Those general works deal with the Great War as a whole<sup>95</sup> or provide an overview over different aspects, e.g. World War I combatants or civilians. Some try to innovate in narrative and scope, encompassing the world at war.<sup>96</sup> A tremendous number of exhibition catalogues brought new material and new insights into local contexts and should prove very useful for studies to come. Many new themes of the civilian and front experiences are now largely treated, for instance: sciences at war, medicine, and alimentation.<sup>97</sup> The centenary did also see the publication of different inventories and research guides that should be useful for historians working on the conflict.<sup>98</sup>

There is still a lot to discover about the return of war veterans to civilian life, about the burden of traumas in their family lives and their lives as fathers and lovers, about their sociable conduct and their patterns of behavior, and about their professional strategies in the abovementioned memorial context.<sup>99</sup> Anthropology and sociology will be a vital help here. The traces and memories of war in the public place have often, and not without reason, focused on war memorials and grand commemorative monuments (e.g. those marking the Verdun battlefield). Here again, a more general occupation of the public place by the Great War, and its more modest traces, might give rise to general studies, whether we think of funerary inscriptions in cemeteries (like ancient and mediaeval epigraphs) or street plaques (some inventories are already available for the Anglo-Saxon world<sup>100</sup>). We would thus see in a much more detailed way how contemporaries have wanted to make sense of the conflict, both in broad corpuses and in broad spaces.

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## Notes

1. We are borrowing here from a certain number of analyses made over many years about the historiography of the Great War, published in particular in André Loez and Nicolas Offenstadt, *La Grande Guerre, Carnet du Centenaire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013).
2. Louis Kloetz, *La guerre de 1914–1918: Les opérations militaires* (Paris: Editions Sirey, 1966); Général F. Gambiez, Colonel M. Suire, *Histoire de la Première Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Fayard, 1968); François Lagrange, ed., *Inventaire de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Universalis, 2005).
3. Since 1977, we have been privy to Antoine Prost's considerable work about the French war veterans: Antoine Prost, *Les Anciens Combattants et la société française, 1914–1939*, 3 vols. (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1977).
4. For what follows, see Jean-François Jagielski, *Le Soldat inconnu: Invention et postérité d'un symbole* (Paris: Imago, 2005); François Cochet and Jean-Noël Grandhomme, eds., *Les Soldats inconnus de la Grande Guerre: La Mort, le Deuil, la Mémoire* (Saint-Cloud: 14–18/Soteca, 2012); and Prost, *Les Anciens Combattants*, 3:35–38.
5. Jagielski, *Le Soldat inconnu*, 93–95.
6. According to Roland Dorgelès, *Almanach du Combattant [From now on A/C]* (1970): 85.
7. "Le Poilu inconnu," A/C (1922): 15.
8. Prost, *Les Anciens combattants*, 3:38.
9. See on this, Daniel J. Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), introduction and in particular 215ff.
10. See the work of Béatrix Pau, *Le Ballet des morts: Etat, armée, familles; s'occuper des corps de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: La Librairie Vuibert, 2016).
11. Communal archives of Levallois-Perret, 2 H 2.
12. *Ibid.*, 2 H 4, war victims, exhumations.
13. Interview with Michèle Viland, granddaughter of Jean-Antoine Marduel, Sainte-Paule, 21 August 2007.
14. "Les anciens de 14–18 doivent-ils se résigner à n'être que des 'vétérans'?" A/C (1950): 5.
15. Telephone conversation, 8 December 2008.

16. Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre, un essai d'historiographie* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2004), 30.
17. *A/C* (1951): 164.
18. François Mauriac, "Race de Corneille," *Le Figaro littéraire*, 14 December 1957.
19. See the journal *Guignol*, 19 March 1958.
20. We might add that William Faulkner's extremely ambitious work *A Fable*, with 1914–18 as its setting, was translated by Gallimard in 1958.
21. On the film and its reception, let us refer readers to Nicolas Offenstadt, *Les fusillés de la Grande Guerre et la mémoire collective* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2009), 124–28.
22. Pierre Bourget, *Fantassins de 1914* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1964), 269.
23. Véronique Olmi, *Numéro six* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2002), 97.
24. *A/C* (1976): 21.
25. Jean-Marc Rouillan, *De Mémoire* (Marseille: Agone, 2007), 87, 206.
26. Louis Barthas, *Les carnets de guerre de Louis Barthas, tonnelier, 1914–1918* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1978); Rémy Cazals et al., eds., *Années cruelles* (Villelongue d'Aude: Atelier du Gué, 1983).
27. See the complete research program of the Centenary Observatory, retrieved 30 August 2019 from <https://www.pantheonsorbonne.fr/autres-structures-de-recherche/observatoire-du-centenaire/>; see also Sylvain Antichan, Sarah Gensburger, and Jeanne Teboul, eds., "La commémoration en pratique: Usages et appropriations du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 121–22 (2016): 5–66; Valérie Baudouin, Philippe Chevallier, and Lionel Maurel, eds., *Le web français de la Grande Guerre: Réseaux amateurs et institutionnels* (Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris Nanterre, 2018).
28. Pierre Renouvin, *Les origines immédiates de la guerre* (Paris: A. Costes, 1925).
29. Significantly, the title of Mathias Morhardt's book about the origins of the war published in 1924 was titled *Les Preuves*, like Jaurès's book on the Dreyfus affair.
30. As is shown by an oral inquiry that we carried out in 1990–91 among pacifist war veterans of the 1920s and 1930s, whose answers are now to be consulted in *La Contemporaine* (Nanterre).
31. Alfred Rosmer, *Le mouvement ouvrier pendant la guerre* (Paris: Librairie du travail, 1936).
32. Pierre Renouvin, *Les formes du gouvernement de guerre* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1925).
33. Benjamin Gilles, "L'expérience de la guerre dans ses interstices: Pierre Renouvin et la création du fichier 'Psychologie du combattant,'" *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 100 (2010): 14–20.
34. See Frédéric Rousseau, *Le procès des témoins de la Grande Guerre: L'Affaire Norton Cru* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2003); and Leonard F. Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
35. See the success of *Vie et mort des Français 1914–1918* by André Ducasse, Jacques Meyer and Gabriel Perreux, well highlighted by Prost and Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre*, 31–33, 245–46.
36. Annie Kriegel, *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier français 1914–1920: Aux origines du communisme français* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1964).
37. Jean-Louis Robert, *Ouvriers et mouvement ouvrier parisiens pendant la Grande Guerre et l'immédiat après-guerre: Histoire et anthropologie* (Paris: Thèse Paris 1, 1989); this research was partially published later under the title *Les Ouvriers, la Patrie et la Révolution. Paris 1914–1919* (Besançon: Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon/les Belles lettres, 1995).

38. Jules Maurin, *Armée, guerre, société: Soldats languedociens 1889–1919* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982), for a historiographical overview of the work, see our preface, with André Loez, to the new edition of the work, 2013 by the same publisher.
39. Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'or et le sang: Les buts de guerre économiques de la Première Guerre mondiale* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).
40. In addition to those mentioned in the introduction, see, for instance, Job de Roince, *Charleroi 1914* (Rennes: Union nationale des combattants, 1967); Gabriel Perreux, *La guerre de 1914–1918* (Paris: Hachette, 1964); Gabriel Perreux, *La vie quotidienne des civils en France pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Hachette, 1966); Paul Galland, *Histoire de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: G. Durassié et Cie, 1965).
41. Guy Pedroncini, *Les mutineries de 1917* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967); André Kaspi, *Le temps des Américains: Le concours américain à la France 1917–1918* (Paris: Institut d'histoire des relations internationales contemporaines, 1976).
42. Jean-Jacques Becker, *1914: Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977).
43. In addition to the works of André Kaspi cited before, see Denise Artaud, *La question des dettes interalliées et la reconstruction de l'Europe, 1917–1929* (Paris: Diffusion H. Champion, 1978); Yves-Henri Nouailhat, *Les Américains à Nantes et Saint-Nazaire, 1917–1919* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972); Yves-Henri Nouailhat, *France et Etats-Unis: Août 1914–avril 1917* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1979).
44. Gilbert Meynier, *L'Algérie révélée: La guerre de 1914–1918 et le premier quart du XXe siècle* (Paris: Droz, 1981); Marc Michel, *L'appel à l'Afrique: Contributions et réactions à l'effort de guerre en A.O.F. 1914–1919* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982).
45. Annette Becker, *La guerre et la foi: De la mort à la mémoire, 1914–1930* (Paris: A. Colin, 1994).
46. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *L'enfant de l'ennemi 1914–1918; Viol, avortement, infanticide pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Aubier, 1995); Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *La guerre des enfants: 1914–1918, essai d'histoire culturelle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1993); Manon Pignot, *Allons enfants de la patrie: Génération Grande Guerre* (Paris: Seuil, 2012); in a comparative perspective: Manon Pignot, *L'appel de la guerre: Des adolescents au combat, 1914–1918* (Paris: Anamosa, 2019).
47. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Cinq deuils de guerre, 1914–1918* (Paris: Noésis, 2001).
48. Clémentine Vidal-Naquet, *Couples dans la Grande Guerre: Le tragique et l'ordinaire du lien conjugal* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014); Dominique Fouchar, *Les poilus et leurs familles après 1918* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013).
49. Nicolas Beaupré, *Ecrire en guerre, écrire la guerre: France, Allemagne, 1914–1920* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2006).
50. Laurent Veray, *La Grande Guerre au cinéma: De la gloire à la mémoire* (Paris: Ramsay, 2008); Laurent Veray, *Avènement d'une culture visuelle de guerre: Le cinéma en France de 1914 à 1928* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Place, 2019).
51. See, for instance, the question and the (political) role of the representations of the ruins in Emmanuelle Danchin, *Le Temps des ruines, 1914–1921* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015).
52. Bruno Cabanes, *La victoire endeuillée: La sortie de guerre des soldats français, 1918–1920* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004).
53. Jean-Yves Le Naour, *La honte noire: L'Allemagne et les troupes coloniales françaises, 1914–1945* (Paris: Hachette, 2003).
54. Nicolas Mariot, *Tous unis dans la tranchée? 1914–1918, les intellectuels rencontrent le peuple* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2013).

55. Benjamin Ziemann, *Front und Heimat: Ländliche Kriegserfahrungen im südlichen Bayern 1914–1923* (Essen: Klartext, 1997); Nicolas Patin, *La catastrophe allemande 1914–1945: 1674 destins parlementaires* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).
56. Frédéric Rousseau, *La guerre censurée: Une histoire des combattants européens de 14–18* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2003). This latter aspect has been further developed by Alexandre Lafon, *La Camaraderie au front, 1914–1918* (Paris: A. Colin, 2014).
57. Prost and Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre*, 143.
58. John Horne and Alan Kramer, *1914: Les atrocités allemandes; La vérité sur les crimes de guerre en France et en Belgique* (Paris: Tallandier, 2005).
59. See, recently, Thierry Hardier, ed., *Craonne: 100 ans de batailles inachevées* (Edhisto/CRID 14–18, 2018).
60. André Loez, *14–18: Les refus de la guerre; Une histoire des mutins* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010).
61. Charles Ridet, *Les embusqués* (Paris: A. Colin, 2007).
62. See Rémy Cazals's chapter in Marc Ferro, ed., *Frères de tranchées* (Paris: Perrin, 2005).
63. Offenstadt, *Les fusillés*.
64. André Bach, *Fusillés pour l'exemple, 1914–1915* (Paris: Tallandier, 2003); Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien, *A vos ordres: La relation d'autorité dans l'armée française de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 2011).
65. Prost and Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre*. The title of the English version is *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies; 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
66. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Quelle histoire, un récit de filiation, 1914–2014* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014).
67. Fabrice Virgili, Danièle Voldman, *La garçonne et l'assassin: Histoire de Louise et de Paul, déserteur travesti, dans le Paris des années folles* (Paris: Payot&Rivages, 2011).
68. Elise Julien, *Paris, Berlin, la mémoire de la guerre, 1914–1933* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009).
69. Jean-Yves Le Naour, *Claire Ferchaud: La Jeanne d'Arc de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Hachette littératures, 2007).
70. François Bouloc, *Les profiteurs de guerre, 1914–1918* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 2008).
71. Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
72. See for example Fabien Cardoni, ed., *Les banques françaises et la Grande Guerre* (Paris: IGPDE, 2016). See also Laure Manchu, Isabelle Lespinet-Moret, and Vincent Viet, eds., *Mains-d'oeuvre en guerre: 1914–1918* (Paris, La Documentation française, 2018).
73. Philippe Salson, *L'Aisne occupée: Les civils dans la Grande Guerre* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015); see also James Connolly, Emmanuel Debryne, Elise Julien, and Matthias Meirlaen, eds., *Expériences d'occupation, transferts, héritages (1914–1949)* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2018).
74. André Loez and Nicolas Mariot, eds., *Obéir, désobéir: Les mutineries de 1917 en perspective* (Paris: Ed. la Découverte, 2008).
75. Nicolas Offenstadt, *14–18, aujourd'hui: La Grande Guerre dans la France contemporaine* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010), to be complemented by Baudouin, Chevallier, and Maurel, *Le web français*. For the *longue durée* of World War I-memories see Rémi Dalisson, *Histoire de la mémoire de la Grande Guerre* (Saint-Cloud: Soteca, 2015).
76. See, for instance, Heather Jones and Arndt Weinrich, "The Pre-1914 Period: Imagined War, Future Wars," *Francia* 40 (2013): 305–464. For the perception of the "lit-

- tle wars” prior to 1914, see also Olivier Cosson, *Préparer la Grande Guerre: L’armée française et la guerre russo-japonaise (1899–1914)* (Paris: Les Indes savants, 2013).
77. See for instance Michael Bourlet, Yann Lagadec, and Erwan Le Gall, eds., *Petites patries dans la Grande Guerre* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013).
  78. See, for instance, the special edition “La Caraïbe et la Première Guerre mondiale,” *Bulletin de la société d’histoire de la Guadeloupe* 168 (mai–août 2014).
  79. Henri Gilles, Jean-Pascal Guironnet, and Antoine Parent, “Géographie économique des morts de 14–18 en France,” *Revue économique* 65, no. 3 (2014): 519–32; Henri Gilles, “La guerre 1914–1918: les morts par départements et par régions,” in *Mémoire et trauma de la Grande Guerre*, ed. Gwendal Denis (Brest, Rennes: Centre de recherche bretonne et celtique, Travaux d’investigation et de recherche, 2010), 275–323. Antoine Prost, “Compter les vivants et les morts: l’évaluation des pertes françaises de 1914–1918,” *Le Mouvement social* 222 (2008): 41–60.
  80. Carl Bouchard, *Cher Monsieur le Président: Quand les Français écrivirent à Woodrow Wilson (1918–1919)* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2015). Another noteworthy example for the heuristic value of adopting different scales of analysis is Romain Fathi, *Our Corner of the Somme: Australia at Villers-Bretonneux* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
  81. Jean-Paul Amat, *Les forêts de la Grande Guerre: Histoire, mémoire, patrimoine* (Paris: PUPS, 2015); Daniel Hubé, *Sur les traces d’un secret enfoui: Enquête sur l’héritage toxique de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Michalon éditeur, 2016).
  82. Eric Baratay, *Bêtes de tranchées: Des vécus oubliés* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013).
  83. Tait Keller, “Aux marges écologiques de la belligérance: Vers une histoire environnementale globale de la Première Guerre mondiale,” *Annales HSS* (2016/1): 65–86.
  84. See the impressive exhibition catalogue edited by Bernadette Schnitzler and Michael Landolt, *A l’est, du nouveau! Archéologie de la Grande Guerre en Alsace et en Lorraine* (Strasbourg: Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 2013).
  85. Patrick Harismendy and Erwan Le Gall, eds., *Un adieu aux armes: Destins d’objets en situation de post-guerre* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2019).
  86. Romain Ducoulombier, *Camarades! La naissance du Parti communiste en France* (Paris: Perrin, 2010).
  87. Peter Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the Politics of National Security in the Era of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); for the articulation of judicial internationalism and the standards of diplomacy, see Rémi Fabre et al., eds., *Les défenseurs de la paix 1899–1917* (Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2018).
  88. See on this subject, Nicolas Offenstadt, “L’histoire auditive, un nouveau chantier: Quelques remarques,” in *Clameur publique et émotions judiciaires: De l’Antiquité à nos jours*, ed. Frédéric Chauvaud and Pierre Prétou (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 29–34.
  89. Paul Jankowski, *Verdun, 21 février 1916* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013); Antoine Prost and Gerd Krumeich, *Verdun 1916: Une histoire franco-allemande de la bataille* (Paris: Tallandier, 2015); Alexandre Lafon, ed., *Les Batailles de 1916* (Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2018).
  90. In this respect, see Nicolas Offenstadt, “Comparer l’incomparable? La ‘victoire’ de Verdun et l’échec de l’offensive Nivelle dans l’entre-deux-guerres,” in *Verdun sous le regard du monde*, ed. François Cochet (Saint-Cloud: Soteca, 2006), 309–26; Nicolas Offenstadt, ed., *Le Chemin des Dames: De l’événement à la mémoire* (Paris: Perrin 2012, new ed.). For a convincing example of this kind of battle history, see Mark Connelly and Stefan Goebel, *Ypres: Great Battles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). See

- also Laurent Veyssi re, *Vimy, un si cle d'histoires, 1917–2017* (Qu bec: Septentrion, 2018); Cl ment Puget, *Verdun et le cin ma: L' preuve et l' v nement* (Paris: Nouveau Monde  ditions, 2016), and Hardier, *Craonne*.
91. Francine Saint-Ramond Roussane, *La campagne d'Orient, 1915–1918: Dardanelles-Mac doine, d'apr s les t moignages de combattants* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2001). Another exception is Alexandre Sumpf, *La Grande Guerre oubli e: Russie, 1914–1918* (Paris: Perrin, 2014).
  92. *A L'Est, la guerre sans fin, 1918–1923*, 5 octobre 2018–20 janvier 2019, Mus e de l'Arm e, Invalides.
  93. Michel Foucault, *Dits et  crits, 1954–1988*, tome IV (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), text 293.
  94. Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008); Joe Lunn, *L'Odys e des combattants s n galais: 1914–1918* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014). See recently the rich and interesting book of Claude Markovits, a specialist of Indian history, about the specificities of Indian troops, the perceptions of the war and its violence on the Western Front, and encounters and nonencounters with the French population, etc., *De l'Indus   la Somme: Les Indiens en France pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris:  ditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme 2018).
  95. See, for example, Jay Winter, ed., *La Premi re Guerre mondiale*, 3 vols. (Paris: Fayard, 2014).
  96. Loez and Offenstadt, *La Grande Guerre*.
  97. Caroline Poulain, ed., *Manger et boire entre 1914 et 1918* (Dijon: Biblioth que municipale de Dijon, 2015). For health policies, see the recent works of Vincent Viet.
  98. Agn s Chablat-Beylot and Amable Sablon du Corail, eds., *Archives de la Grande Guerre: guide des sources conserv es par le Service historique de la d fense* (Vincennes: SHD, 2014); Philippe Nivet, Coraline Coutant-Dayd , Mathieu Stoll, eds., *Archives de la Grande Guerre: des sources pour l'histoire* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014).
  99. Recently see Marie Derrien, “‘La t te en capilotade’: Les soldats de la Grande Guerre intern s dans les h pitaux psychiatriques fran ais (1914–1980)” (PhD diss., Universit  Lumiere Lyon 2, 2015); Peggy Bette, *Veuves de la Grande Guerre: Itin raires et combats* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2017).
  100. More on the question in the Anglo-Saxon production: <http://www.epitaphsofthegreatwar.com/about/>, and Trefor Jones, *On Fame's Eternal Camping Ground: Epitaphs in the British Cemeteries on the Western Front* (2007).

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*Chapter 2*

## HISTORIES AND MEMORIES

Recounting the Great War in Belgium, 1914–2018

*Bruno Benwindo and Benoît Majerus*



Where World War I is concerned, as with many other themes, Belgian historians have long distinguished themselves by an absence of (self-)critical reflection about their works, practices, and methods. As this chapter will show, there has been no dearth of research into the war and its consequences.<sup>1</sup> However, the absence of any culture of historiographical debate has too often prevented historians from putting their works into perspective and revealing both their logical structures and their evolution. Seen through a century of Great War histories, Belgian historians have undeniably plied their “trade”: publications have (almost) never ceased, subsequently listed in comprehensive bibliographies. More recently, inventories have been painstakingly drawn up and complemented by practical source guides.<sup>2</sup> But an overall line of thinking about the way in which World War I has been recounted over a century by Belgian historians is still missing.

This lacuna seems all the more flagrant because works about the memorial culture emerging after the Great War have increased in number for the past two decades, in Belgium as elsewhere. Narratives about the war produced by monuments, school textbooks, and museums have, as we shall see, become almost classic research themes of historical investiga-

tion. But the narrative produced by historians themselves, and the part they have taken (or not) over a century in the debate about the past of war, have, for their part, remained obviously strangely hidden.

## Memories of the Great War

### 1914–40

Although the Belgian nation-state had enjoyed a comfortable peace since its independence in 1830, the invasion of its national territory by Germany, one of the powers supposed to guarantee its neutrality, plunged the country into the heart of the European conflict from August 1914 onward. For the four ensuing years, most of the country lived under an occupying government that affected the lives of six million Belgians. The hitherto unknown violence of the invasion, which caused fifty-five hundred civilian victims between August and October 1914, also gave rise to a mass exile: more than a million men and women took refuge in France, England, and the Netherlands, where six hundred thousand of them remained until the armistice in 1918. As far as the narrow strip of national territory that remained free was concerned, it was protected, somehow or other, by a few hundred thousand Belgian soldiers who were put to flight and, in the autumn of 1914, fell back into the Yser plain, where they stayed until September 1918.

Throughout the interwar period, World War I arose as a principal factor lending structure to collective Belgian memories. The memory of the 1914–18 war was, first and foremost, inscribed in stone. In just a handful of years, mainly between 1920 and 1924, steles, statues, commemorative plaques, and memorials flourished in almost all the country's towns and villages, forming a huge network of monuments.<sup>3</sup> And the heart of this network lay, unsurprisingly, in the country's capital: on 11 November 1922, the tomb of the Unknown Soldier was inaugurated in the center of Brussels. Illustrating the incorporation under way of the 1914–18 experience within an older patriotic narrative, this monument was erected at the foot of the Colonne du Congrès, a tower built in the mid-nineteenth century as homage to national awakening and liberal parliamentarianism. At the end of the war, and for decades thereafter, this has been where war veteran associations met, enjoying pride of place in these commemorations.<sup>4</sup>

By paying tribute to the soldiers slain for the motherland, Belgium became part of a huge transnational commemorative movement that spread throughout Europe. During earlier years, monuments to unknown soldiers had seen the light of day in France and England—countries that were

followed, also in 1922, by Czechoslovakia, Greece, and Serbia.<sup>5</sup> But unlike the case of its two powerful neighbors, in Belgium the civilian experience of the war also found its place in the monumental memory. The supreme “heroes” were, needless to say, the combatants, and in particular King Albert I, commander in chief of the army who, with the war, became a living myth.<sup>6</sup> However, alongside the “hero,” the figure of the “martyr” was also inscribed in stone. Monuments paid homage to civilians killed during the 1914 invasion, in particular in those “martyr cities,” Dinant and Louvain. Others were dedicated to the memory of those who, like Gabrielle Petit and Edith Cavell, paid for their resistance to the occupying Germans with their lives. Other more controversial monuments honored those who were deported to Germany.<sup>7</sup> The monumentalization of memory thus encompassed a plurality of war experiences in the name of a shared suffering “for the motherland,” a notion in which national, regional, but also communal forms of belonging all fitted together. Excluded *de facto* from this category were exiled persons, suspected of having abandoned the country at the very moment when it was in danger; these persons soon disappeared from the collective memory.

The monumental memory emerged above all “from below.” Monuments were usually erected by towns and villages (*communes*), without the help of national and provincial authorities, and funded by local subscriptions.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the interwar period, the Belgian state remained remarkably withdrawn from commemorations. After the signing of the Locarno Pact in 1925, which was meant to mark international détente, the central government even refused to participate in the inaugurations of memorials recalling the massacre of civilians in 1914 or accusing Germany of “atrocities.” What ensued was nothing less than a divorce between official memory and local memory, as is attested to by the inauguration in 1936 of the *Furore Teutonico* monument paying homage to the 674 civilians killed in Dinant during the invasion: the ceremony was held in the presence of a large crowd and many local notables, but without any representative from the central government.<sup>9</sup> The sole exception to this noninterventionism on the part of the state, the Eupen-Malmédy region, separated from Germany and annexed to Belgium in 1919 after a simulacrum of a referendum, suffered the repression of a German countermemory: homage to soldiers hailing from those cantons, who fought for Germany, to which they were at that time attached, was banned in that region.<sup>10</sup>

In a more lasting way, the “laissez-faire” attitude of the Belgian state with regard to commemorations, and the place it left to initiatives “from below,” would permit the emergence of a Flemish countermemory of the war. During the first months of the conflict, a “united front” did, to be sure, come into being around a Belgium whose very survival was threat-

ened. But this initial consensus was swiftly smithereneed, in particular under the influence of a radicalized fringe of the Flemish movement, a movement that had been organized since the mid-nineteenth century to lay claim to a Flemish cultural recognition in a nation-state dominated by the French-speaking bourgeoisie. On the Yser front, a *Frontbeweging* (literally: front movement) came into being among the troops from 1917 onward, to denounce the injustices suffered at the front by Flemish soldiers and claim the (cultural) autonomy of Flanders. In occupied territory, “activists,” for their part, were involved in an overt collaboration with the occupier in the hope of seeing the claims of the Flemish movement being fulfilled. The immediate postwar period and the upsurge of Belgian patriotism that went with it would have the effect of congealing that antagonism. This was illustrated by the controversies that went hand in hand with the program of Belgian justice responsible for punishing those who had failed in their patriotic duties during the war. Among these latter, there were both war profiteers and spies, as well as Flemish and Walloon activists. All were accused of having betrayed the motherland, a heroic image of which was developed as a counterpoint to those trials that had a central place in Belgian newspapers of the day.<sup>11</sup> The “profiteer” was the person who attracted the most condemnation during the initial postwar years, but it was, nevertheless, another figure, that of the Flemish activist, who would become a central memory issue during the following decades.

The matter of how convicted Flemish persons were treated—be it the execution of sentences, the restoration of political rights, or amnesty—lay at the heart of political arguments between the wars. Before long it polarized Belgian memories of the war, as is shown by the rifts between veterans’ associations. Situated, to begin with, in the Catholic and Flemish movement, the *Vlaamsche Oud-Strijders* (VOS) became radicalized in the 1920s and ended up incarnating the legacy of the *Frontbeweging*. They did indeed develop a frenzied pacifism, but they also rose up in support of a Flemish nationalism that veered off in an ever more anti-Belgian direction. A not inconsiderable number of Flemish war veterans nevertheless remained faithful to Belgian patriotism, incarnated by the powerful National Federation of Combatants and, even more radically, by the National Association of Combatants at the Front during the 1920s, and the Union des Fraternelles de l’Armée de campagne, as well as the Fédération Nationale des Croix du Feu during the 1930s.<sup>12</sup> As we can see, far from disappearing with the liberation, the community divisions occurring during the war became lastingly rooted during the following decades, including in the commemorative landscape.

In the Yser plain, in the 1920s, memory of the war was galvanized by the Flemish movement, keen to give voice to its claims—under the

slogan *Ici notre sang, à quand nos droits* (Here is our blood, what about our rights)—which gradually evolved toward an anti-Belgian logic. In 1930, the nationalist Flemish content of the Yser commemorations was confirmed by the erection of the Yser Tower, an imposing monument intended to be at once Christian, pacifist, and Flemish. The romantic rhetoric that was used for it was the exact mirror of the rhetoric to be heard around the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.<sup>13</sup> And there, too, it was war veterans who carried the memory. There was just one difference, but a fundamental one: at the Yser Tower, it was not Belgian heroes who were honored but “Flemish martyrs,” who died for a Belgian homeland that was not theirs. The political program of this setting of memory was displayed loud and clear on that monument: “Everything for Flanders, Flanders for Christ.”

## 1940–45

Less than a quarter of a century after the 1918 Armistice, Belgium was once again invaded by the German army. In May 1940, after an eighteen-day military campaign that ended with the surrender of the Belgian army, the country’s second occupation got underway, which did not come to an end until five years later. In the eyes of contemporaries, the memory of the Great War would be the matrix for “reading” World War II: for the occupying populations as for the occupied populations, the memory of the years 1914–18 was still very much alive, and for many of them World War I was not just a past recounted by others but a social experience directly lived.

“Transfers of experiences” from one war to another were particularly visible in the emergence of the initial resistance movements in 1940. The actions they ushered in were, in an initial period at least, directly copied from those undertaken two decades earlier. Thus it was that *La Libre Belgique*, an underground newspaper published during the first occupation, was reborn from its ashes in 1940. Certain news networks created in 1914–18 were, for their part, “simply” rekindled: at the head of one of the most important news networks during 1914–18, with *La Dame Blanche*, Walthère Dewé resumed those activities, for example, in 1940, by founding the Clarence network, based on a social commitment that had developed twenty-five years earlier.<sup>14</sup>

In a broader sense, traces of 1914–18, represented by monuments (such as the tomb of the Unknown Soldier) and anniversaries (for example, 11 November) were all places and moments marked by tensions between the occupied and the occupiers. The anniversary of 11 November 1940 was thus a particular challenge, because the ban on armistice commemorations in that particular year marked the end of what had seemed to

be the summer when everything might be possible—that period when Germany’s victory was probable, and when a state collaboration could be envisaged. During the following years and up until the end of the conflict, despite that ban, 11 November remained a special moment for commemorating World War I, even though that commemoration was limited both in its geographical settings (an urban phenomenon was essentially involved) and in its social settings (that memory was essentially underpinned by the middle classes).<sup>15</sup>

Where the occupier was concerned, the memory of the first occupation also turned out to be crucial. The German *Westforschung*, which had had a certain importance from the early 1930s onward, partly recruited people among those who had administered Belgium in 1914–18. With a view to preparing the coming invasion, the German military machine had every intention of making the most of past experience, which is why it painstakingly went through the administrative reports drawn up at that time with a fine-tooth comb. Once the second invasion had become a reality, and during the first two years of the war in particular, references to the previous occupation increased in number. In this way, the occupying power intended to lend meaning to the policy being adopted, whether it was the *Flamenpolitik*, economic governance, or relations with the Church.<sup>16</sup> What is more, the occupier became involved in one of the most active memorial policies: monuments that were reminders of the 1914 massacres, like the one at Dinant, were destroyed, the German archives brought together by the Commission des Archives de la Guerre were seized, and school textbooks were “cleansed” of the narrative of Belgian “martyrdom” in 1914–18.

## 1945–2018

The memory of the Great War did not disappear after World War II. On the contrary, during the first decades after 1945, it provided the frameworks, both physical and mental, in which commemorations of World War II were conducted. As symbols of national resistance, the places of memory of the Great War were spontaneously reoccupied immediately after the Liberation. In September 1944, with Brussels only just liberated, people and authorities returning from exile thus gathered around the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. During the following decades, the commemorations included in their homage, alongside the World War I soldiers, who remained the model of patriotic heroism, both the combatants of the 1940 campaign and the resistance fighters of 1940–44. In addition to their never denied attachment to the Belgian nation, the new category of veterans thus remained faithful to the commemorative language that

came into being immediately after 1918, a language through which they tried, as much as possible, to link their war experiences to the ordeal of the 1914–18 front.<sup>17</sup>

A similar “retraditionalization” of the new war was also enacted in the Flemish countermemory. At the Yser Tower as well, the spirit of World War I continued to float over the pilgrimages that were resumed in the late 1940s. Homage to Flemish soldiers, who were allegedly victims of an unjust Belgian state in 1914–18, now went hand in hand with an homage to other supposed victims of that same Belgian state, namely the Flemish “idealists” who collaborated with the occupier in 1940–44 and who, for that reason, suffered an unjust legal “repression” after the Liberation.<sup>18</sup> In that Flemish countermemory, as in the Belgian memory, the registry of martyrs grew longer after 1945, but as we can see this did not alter the patriotic interpretation of commemorations.

In this polarized arena, the Belgian state struggled to be heard and understood. As in the interwar period, groups of veterans, political associations, and local programs were given a free hand where commemorations were concerned. The bitter failure of the Belgian Museum of the World Wars attested to that weak position of the public powers that be when it came to memory culture. Unanimously adopted by the parliament in 1945, the project for a Belgian Museum of the World Wars was aimed at bringing together all the archives, publications, and memories concerning the history of the two world wars, which, once again, seemed to constitute just one history.<sup>19</sup> But that project would never see the light of day for lack of funding,<sup>20</sup> and the fragmentation of the commemorative landscape was duly noted: the Belgian state would not take under its wing any centralized policy of memory, after World War II, either.

Memorial practices and representations coming into being after the Great War thus survived the 1940–45 experience, despite the obvious differences between the two wars. Far from upsetting the legacy of 1914–18, on the contrary, the memory of World War II became grafted onto the old patriotic memory, attesting to the symbolic importance preserved by the Great War. The commemorations for the fiftieth anniversary of World War I, held between 1964 and 1968, illustrated the lasting quality of that legacy. In October 1964, a national parade was organized as a tribute to King Albert and war veterans, while a mass celebrating the memory of the invasion was held in the Saint-Michel Cathedral in the heart of Brussels. The commemorative wave came to an end in 1968 with a whole host of (local) events, celebrating the “50th Anniversary of Victory,” in the presence of veterans from 1914–18, for whom it was often one of their last public appearances. New cultural vectors were also mobilized for that anniversary. In 1964, inspired by the success of the BBC program *The*

*Great War*, French-speaking Belgian television launched *1914–1918: Le Journal de la Grande Guerre*. During the four years that followed, the war was recounted through the use of documents, reconstructions, and oral testimony. Broadcast during prime time, and in a period when there was only one television channel, the program quickly became an institution for television viewers and a model for the Belgian school of the historical documentary.<sup>21</sup>

During the ensuing decades, it was nevertheless above all at the local and no longer national level that the memory of the Great War was kept alive. At Dinant, where we have seen how the war affected people's minds, the memory of the invasion remained very vivid throughout the twentieth century, as well as being tinged by Germanophobia: up until 2001, the German flag was not included among the European flags decorating the Pont Charles de Gaulle.<sup>22</sup> In other cities, in particular in the Westhoek region, local memory and transnational memory continued to reciprocally fuel one another for a century.<sup>23</sup> At Ypres, the tradition of the “last post”—the bugle call to the dead, in use in the Commonwealth armies, which came into being in 1928 from a private initiative—is still practiced to this very day: every evening, the bugle calls of the local fire brigade attract many tourists by playing this musical homage. But beyond those towns and villages that were the most affected, the 1964–68 commemorations were also the swan song of the memory of 1914–18, at least in the form it had hitherto taken.

Starting with the end of the 1960s, the Great War gradually began to retreat from collective memories. There were many different causes for this. First and foremost they had to do with a generational change, namely the gradual death of war veterans of 1914–18. The memory of the Great War had developed during the postwar decades, as we have seen, because of the commemorative action of thousands of veterans assembled in associations. Starting from that organization “from below” of the memory that they incarnated and built upon in one and the same movement, the “elders” of 1914–18, by leaving the stage, finally also sealed the fate of their war memory. No other memorial player took up the baton to take the memory of 1914–18 into the public place: the public authorities remained at a distance from the commemorative field of tension, while the circles of memory of 1940 to 1945 gradually freed themselves from that guardian figure, represented by the Great War veteran—a heroic figure, to be sure, but, in the end, inhibiting and even troublesome, to such an extent did the comparison of the sufferings endured during the two world wars invariably seem to favor the “generation of fire.”<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, Belgian patriotic memory, which had dominated the narrative of the 1914–18 experience, was directly contradicted in that period

by the political development of the country. The erosion of Belgian national sentiment undermined a memory that, henceforth, in Flanders, struggled to compete with the Flemish countermemory. In the 1970s, that political development became an institutional reality: the reforms introduced by the state granted an ever broader autonomy to subnational regions and communities.<sup>25</sup> Keen to root their legitimacy in the past, these new subnational entities laid claim to various places of memory, which had hitherto been living in quasi-autonomy, while at the same time making a direct or indirect contribution to the development of new memorial structures.<sup>26</sup> This phenomenon has been particularly visible in Flanders. It has come to the fore around World War II places of memory, in particular with the program to create an ambitious holocaust museum, which opened its doors in 2012 under the name *Kazerne Dossin: Musée de l'Holocauste et des Droits de l'Homme*. World War I has not, however, been completely forgotten, as is shown by the support given by Flanders (but also by the European Union) to the museum *In Flanders Fields* that opened its doors in 1998. Since the 1980s, the Flemish authorities have also taken charge of the Yser Tower, declaring the site to be a “memorial of Flemish emancipation.” In this context, the monument has been “cleansed” of its most embarrassing references to a controversial past, in particular the collaboration during World War II. Recognized in 1997 by UNESCO as a monument for peace, this old symbol of nationalist Flemish memory is today refocused on a universalist peace discourse. Anyhow, the Belgian motherland, for which the soldiers of 1914–18 repeatedly reminded others that they had sacrificed themselves, appeared like a left-over of history.

There was a final factor, and not one of the least significant, that explains the dwindling interest in 1914–18: the new place taken by World War II in collective memories, in Belgium and elsewhere. From the 1970s onward, the memory of World War II was gradually extricated from the memorial settings of World War I. From then on, it was less patriotic heroism that was promoted than the sufferings endured by the various categories of victims (first among them the victims of Nazi racial arbitrariness). A new relation to the past saw the light of day and rendered the old heroic narratives of the trenches obsolete.<sup>27</sup> Now putting genocide of the Jews at its center and erecting human rights as a key, the memory of World War II came across as the predominant new memory paradigm, casting the 1914–18 war into the shadows. An edifying example is provided for us by television: the Great War had been the object of much pioneering attention in 1964–68, but it subsequently disappeared from Belgian TV channels. It was World War II that would, from then on, give the historical documentary its respectability. It was not until the end of

the 1990s and the “rediscovery” of the Great War that the 1914–18 conflict reappeared on the small screen.<sup>28</sup> And in that memorial “rediscovery,” historians would, for the first time, play a significant part.

The impressive scale and intensity of the recent centenary commemorations cannot be understood without taking into account the fact that the memory of this conflict had never completely disappeared. On the contrary, since the end of the Cold War and the Yugoslav Wars, historians had begun to reinvest this historiographical field by emphasizing the conflict’s seminal character. They were quickly followed by the general public, as already demonstrated by the vivacity of the ninetieth anniversary commemorations in 2004–8. Still, in many regards, and this obviously stands in comparison with other countries, the commemorations of the centenary of the Great War have marked the resurgence of the war as an important element of Belgian collective memory. This is not only the consequence of the unprecedented media hype surrounding the war but a much broader phenomenon. Between 2014 and 2018, books and all kinds of special press editions flooded the market, and numerous television documentaries<sup>29</sup> and a plethora of exhibitions, some of them with tremendous success,<sup>30</sup> presented the war or aspects of it. World War I museums were created or renovated,<sup>31</sup> and “classical” World War I-related sites were rediscovered and/or invested with new meaning. At first glance, this resurgence may seem unexpected, given the fact that the memory of World War II, the resistance, and the Shoah had come to overshadow World War I in Belgian memory culture as we have seen. Even more so that, for the first time, there were no longer any direct witnesses left of the war years. However, this is by no means contradictory: indeed, there are still many adults who have known and been close to people with first-hand experiences of the Great War. This is why the centenary has in fact provoked a rediscovery of 1914–18 in a very intimate sense. As most of these adults are bound to disappear in the decades to come, the centenary commemorations might very well prove to be the last of their kind, with direct emotional ties still present. It is this we would refer to as the “centenary effect.” In other words, the current public enthusiasm is rooted to a large extent, albeit not exclusively, in family and/or local memories. It is rooted in the long-forgotten war correspondence or notebook one literally “stumbles” across, in all kinds of documents or objects one finds or might find by chance in one’s attic, which all of a sudden establish an affective and personal link with this painful past that is undoubtedly more and more distant but continues to move and challenge today’s Belgians. This intimate dimension also underlies the way public demand for historians and archivists, museums, and the media expressed itself: while people wanted to understand the war on the most general level, this interest was

very often grounded in the desire to understand family or local history as part of a larger framework and to enable a reflection on the foundations of today's world. Overall, it is clear that the unprecedented scale of the commemorations of the "Great Centenary" exceeded all expectations.

Unsurprisingly, this upsurge of family and local memories was accompanied by political commemorative initiatives on all levels of the Belgian federal state, with commemorative policies varying considerably from one region to the other: Already in 2009, in its governmental agreement, the Flemish region had displayed its desire to commemorate, with much pomp and circumstance, the centenary of World War I with two explicitly declared objectives. On the one hand, this meant giving a powerful impetus to the economic and tourist sectors by making the most of the income from tourists, hailing in particular from the Commonwealth, who would pass through its territory between 2014 and 2018. On the other hand, the governing N-VA, the New Flemish Alliance, a regionalist and nationalist party, was intent on using the commemorations (and the international attention they provided) as a vehicle for gaining international recognition. Therefore, it moved away from the traditional victimizing discourse that we have seen and ventured to put forward a universal message of peace.<sup>32</sup> Bypassing the federal level, it was in particular the declaration "In Flanders Fields" that sought to establish the Flemish government as an important actor of the international commemorations of 2014. However, the initiative eventually failed for different reasons. On the one hand, the declaration's integral pacifism prompted critical reactions as much in French-speaking Belgium as on the international scene. For many Walloons (and also, for that matter, for many Flemings) the exclusive emphasis on peace was ill-befitting the Belgian World War I experience of occupation, atrocities, and civilian deportations: "Should all that have been accepted, because anything is better than war?"<sup>33</sup> Internationally, the criticism came first and foremost from countries with a slightly more heroic memory culture, such as Australia and Canada, whose representatives wished to put forward a more positive interpretation of death on the battlefield. Another, although less outspoken reason for the rejection of the Flemish initiative might have been the unwillingness of the international community to be drawn into the minefield of Belgian politics.

The other regions and the federal authorities had no intention of letting Flanders enjoy a monopoly over World War I commemorations and reacted by developing their own commemorative program. In Wallonia, while the ambition to politicize the centenary was less pronounced, the regional government nevertheless made important efforts to mark its presence and carried a commemorative discourse that was rather consen-

sual in the sense that it put forward very broad democratic values and did not try to flank an otherwise political agenda. This eventually reflects the fact that historically speaking, in Wallonia, the memory of World War I has never been nearly as important for the construction of a regional identity as in Flanders.

Compared to the involvement of the Flemish and Walloon regional governments, the federal government has been a relatively less important actor of the Belgian centenary. In fact, its role has above all been to coordinate the major international ceremonies organized in Liège (4 August 2014), Nieuwpoort (28 October 2014), and Brussels (11 November 2018), where it tried as well as it could to project the image of a united country. These events were important international venues and can be considered the Belgian contribution to the transnationalization of commemorations that we have seen throughout the centenary. As a consequence of this multilayered state activism, the 2014–18 centenary has arguably been turned into the greatest commemorative event in the history of the Belgian nation-state,<sup>34</sup> just when this latter seems inexorably doomed to disappear.

However, one should be careful not to overestimate the importance of the centenary “from above.” As far as the attitudes and expectations of the broader public were concerned, and this is equally true for the northern and the southern part of the country, the political tensions arising between the Flemish government on the one side and the Walloon and federal government on the other did not structure the centenary as a whole. Instead, what you could see everywhere was the triumph of local and family expectations that surely integrated the international dimension of the conflict, but which did so without necessarily being framed nationally. This is in stark contrast to the way the nation-state has been staged in many commemorations and exhibitions commissioned by the authorities.

## Histories of the Great War

### 1914–18

Obviously enough, the memory of the Great War was not part of the monumental culture, the political debate, and the new mass media. The first writing of the history of the war was more or less contemporary with events. This had to do with the fact that since the start of the conflict it was evident for all the belligerents that the combat was not being played out solely on the battlefield. There was also a “war of words.”<sup>35</sup> This was organized from 1914 onward around two major issues: the *Kriegsschuldfrage*,

or war guilt question, and the atrocities that accompanied the German invasion. In 1915, the German, French, and British governments published “books” that were respectively “white,” “yellow,” and “blue,” attempting to justify their positions and discredit the enemy’s theses. As a work of propaganda, that primitive writing of the history of the war also drew inspiration from historical methodology: publication of sources, critical reading and archival overlaps, use of oral testimony, etc. And, in return, those “books” became essential sources for the first histories of the war, which soon saw the light of day in a more classic form.

Whether what was involved was the *Kriegsschuldfrage* or the atrocities, Belgium lay at the heart of the debate. Its position was due to its being a historical subject buffeted between the powers dominating Europe, but also because it produced a historiographical discourse. Renowned historians such as Léon van der Essen, a professor at Louvain University, and Godefroid Kurth, teaching at Liege University, took up their pens while the war was still raging in order to describe certain conspicuous episodes in it.<sup>36</sup> For its part, from 1916 onward, the Belgian government published three “gray books” dealing with the controversies associated with the origins of the war, the German invasion, and the use of irregular troops (*francs-tireurs*). From the month of January 1915 on, it took part in an institutional way in these discussions, with the creation of a Bureau documentaire Belge (BDB), based in Le Havre. It was headed by Fernand Passelecq, a lawyer who, after the war, would be called upon by the Belgian government to draw up the list of Germans guilty of violations of the law of nations. Throughout the war, Passelecq put forward arguments, including against his own government, to refuse the “tricks of political propaganda”: for better or for worse, he tried to introduce what he called a “rigorous scientific discipline,” underwritten by “serious documentary researchers, and even historians.”<sup>37</sup> But this scientific, not to say hermetic, character of the works produced within the BDB also had the effect of making them largely inaudible during the war.

The various volumes that appeared between 1915 and 1919 within the BDB formed *de facto* the first history of Belgium in the Great War. They of course revisited the already mentioned controversies, but they also strove to provide information about other subjects, such as forced labor in Germany, the question of languages in occupied Belgium, the activity of the government in exile, and the Belgian military campaigns in Africa. Among this historiographical output, before the term was coined, one book stood apart from the rest. We owe it to a sociologist, Fernand van Langenhove, who worked at the Institut Solvay before the war and later became secretary of the BDB. In 1916, aged just twenty-seven, he published *Comment naît un Cycle de Légendes: Francs-tireurs et atrocités en*

*Belgique*, which distinguished itself dazzlingly from the flood of writings dealing with that issue that appeared at the time.<sup>38</sup> In order to understand how the violence that marked the 1914 invasion was triggered, he made the decision to analyze only German sources, in particular the testimony of soldiers, press articles, and official reports and records. His study demonstrated that German soldiers were in fact victims of a “legend”: the existence of *francs-tireurs*, which was imaginary, but fueled by the memory of the war of 1870. It was that legend, van Langenhove concluded, that explained why those soldiers transgressed moral boundaries—taking it out on the civilian population, and in particular on women and children—that were also par for the course in German ranks.<sup>39</sup> Translated into four languages during the war, the work was praised by Marc Bloch at the end of the conflict. French medievalists hailed both the analytical rigor and the critical distance of the book in a context of extreme political polarization: “What is truly noteworthy is the fact that it was written in 1917, by a Belgian.”<sup>40</sup>

## 1918–45

The immediate postwar period seemed to perpetuate that early historicization of 1914–18. With the goal of providing the sources and instruments necessary for that historical narrative, the Commission of War Archives (CAG) was created in November 1919 by the government, as the brainchild of the Royal Commission of History. With the help of various provincial committees, the CAG had the task of collecting and inventorying, throughout the country, the archives relating to the Great War. In this way, Belgium became part of a movement to safeguard documents that was occurring all over Europe, and saw the birth of the *Kriegsarchiv* in Germany, the Imperial War Museum in Great Britain and the *Comitato nazionale per la storia del Risorgimento* in Italy. Within the steering committee of the CAG, there were mainly historians and archivists complemented by a small political representation and Passelecq, the former director of the BDB.<sup>41</sup> The chairman of that committee, and the driving force behind the creation of that institution, was Henri Pirenne, the tutelary figure of national historiography. Internationally recognized for his scientific qualities before the war, Pirenne also became a “Belgian hero” when the war ended because of the stout patriotism he had shown under the occupation, which resulted in his deportation to Germany.<sup>42</sup> In spite of the prestige of its chairman, the CAG declined rapidly, essentially because of a lack of support from the Belgian state. In 1928, that pioneering work was abandoned once and for all: the rich archives brought together by the CAG were incorporated in the General Archives of the

Kingdom (AGR), where they would end up being moved from depot to depot to the point where they became no more than an inextricable shambles, and fell into oblivion for more than half a century.<sup>43</sup>

Over and above archives, interest in the history of the war found a second institutional reading during the 1920s, one also aimed at providing the tools necessary for the “scientificization” of the narrative. The *Revue Belge des Livres Documents et Archives de la Guerre 1914-1918* (RBLDA) started to be published in 1924. Much more than producing original contributions, it focused on publishing critical surveys of the very abundant written output dealing with the Great War in Belgium and in its Congolese colony.<sup>44</sup> With the intent of addressing a broad public, the RBLDA tried to sort out the wheat from the chaff amid that flood of publications, its yardstick being the criteria of positivist methodology that had triumphed in the nineteenth century. While offering an overview of all the Belgian production about 1914–18, the RBLDA thus acted like an authority (de)legitimizing the work of those who were writing the history of the Great War, professionally or otherwise.

Throughout the interwar years, the 1914–18 event in fact gave rise to an unprecedented tide of books, chronicles and pamphlets, where, in the end, the work of historians accounted for just a very small part.<sup>45</sup> As had already been the case during the war, veterans, journalists, novelists, and ordinary citizens took up their pens to describe the war, usually through the prism of those key episodes and figures represented (where Belgian memory was concerned) by the invasion of 1914 and the role of King Albert and (where nationalist Flemish memory was concerned) the “martyrs” of Yser and the activist combat. This often engaged writing about the war benefitted from at least as much attention and recognition as the output of professional historians. The figure of the witness, in particular, was erected as the authority par excellence with the credentials to deliver a narrative about the past. Within a movement of ego-history of European scope, Belgium stood out for the attention paid to the occupied country. A number of witnesses with a civilian experience of the war committed their memories to paper, when, in a more ambitious vein, they did not try to assemble “documents to serve history.”<sup>46</sup> Encouraged by the symbolic capital it held (in particular through the figure of Cardinal Mercier, archbishop of Malines and emblem of the resistance against the occupier), the Catholic Church also emerged at the end of the war as a historiographer.<sup>47</sup> One of the best-known works to which this tendency gave birth was the one by canon Jean Schmitz and dom Norbert Nieuwland. In no less than eight volumes and relying on the power of personal testimony, which they compared to the published documentation, these two clerics retraced the history of the invasion and the first weeks of occupation in the provinces

of Namur and Luxembourg. Over and above this truly monumental work, a whole host of small parish chronicles appeared during the 1920s and 1930s, with a mixture of patriotic ardor, Catholic moralism, and a desire to bear witness.<sup>48</sup> Attesting to the power of this wave of evidence, in a period when ego-history was not yet in vogue among historians, Pirenne himself published his *Souvenirs de captivité en Allemagne* in 1920.<sup>49</sup>

The limited role played by professional historians in writing about the war also had to do with forms of logic peculiar to the discipline. In Belgium, as elsewhere, the professionalization of history was developed in the nineteenth century based on studies of the Middle Ages (and to a lesser degree of modern times). During the first half of the twentieth century, there were no departments of contemporary history in Belgian universities, and the very legitimacy of such a history was still bitterly disputed: hindsight would be necessary for historical objectivity.<sup>50</sup> From then on, those who, all the same, focused on the contemporary period were usually confined to nineteenth-century studies. The disdain shown by academic history for more recent events, which would only disappear after 1945, was nevertheless shaken, a first time, by the power of the 1914–18 event. Rare historians, armed, moreover, with the legitimacy they had acquired as medievalists, like Pirenne, then went beyond the prejudices of their professional culture and plunged into the intricacies of writing about the all too recent history of the Great War. The Pact of Locarno, which was meant to announce an international reconciliation as from 1925, provided, backdrop-like, the frame in which there emerged a “scientific” exposé of the conflict.

The most noteworthy book produced by that historiography wavering between patriotism and internationalism appeared in 1928. We owe it to the irreplaceable Pirenne, who here proposed a broad summary of the history of occupied Belgium (and to a lesser degree of Belgium in exile), based on the publications of the different national commissions of enquiry after the war, the archives brought together by the CAG, and the work of his colleagues within the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.<sup>51</sup> The book was in fact included in what undoubtedly represented the most outstanding historiographical effort undertaken between the wars, namely the transnational project that was launched in the early 1920s by the Carnegie Endowment. Created in 1910, this private American foundation was, after the war, at the origin of a series that included no less than 150 volumes, dealing with some 15 countries. Proposing a huge socioeconomic history of societies in war, this series stood apart from current national historiographies by rejecting their patriotic logic and dismissing the military facts—the pacifist logic of the Carnegie Endowment *oblige*.<sup>52</sup>

The Belgian series ran to seven volumes, which all appeared between 1924 and 1928.<sup>53</sup> They undeniably upset the historiography of occupied Belgium by painstakingly and with hindsight dissecting the policy for the provision of supplies, Belgian industry, and the German administration. Some of the works, especially those devoted to unemployment and German legislation, are still reference works on the subject to this day.<sup>54</sup> The history they proposed was entirely focused on the experience of occupation: exile was only broached through a monograph devoted to the government that had taken refuge in France, while the experience of the soldiers was wiped from the map—in the tradition of all the Carnegie volumes. In addition, the training of the eight authors to whom we owe the seven volumes of the Belgian series merits attention. If the final summary was unsurprisingly entrusted to Henri Pirenne, no other historian was brought into the project: there were five jurists, one sociologist, and one engineer. Even in a history as ambitious as the one proposed by the Carnegie Endowment, professional historians occupied, as we can see, a marginal position when all was said and done. Here as elsewhere, they suffered the full brunt of competition from other academic disciplines, in particular the then-emerging social sciences.<sup>55</sup>

For other essential aspects of the Great War, such as the history of the front, professional historians abandoned the terrain, sometimes even in an outright way. Inspired by the social and economic history dear to Pirenne, the CAG thus laid claim, loud and clear, to the “exclusion of military facts” from its documentary explorations.<sup>56</sup> From then on, military history, which represented a major part of book production between 1918 and 1940,<sup>57</sup> remained the prerogative of the military men themselves. It was written around specific institutions, in particular the Army Museum, which became a state institution in 1923, and magazines that had the same status, such as the *Bulletin belge des sciences militaires*. These autonomous organizations guaranteed for military historiography a remarkable quantitative development, but they also had the effect of cutting off the other, more innovative tendencies, which were focused on the Great War at the same moment. Through these channels, it was in effect a literally nonacademic history that was written, where a detailed erudition was often combined with a frenzied patriotism to narrate the moments, great and small, of a regiment or a battle. And in this field, too, the moral importance of the witness, whether he was a proud general or a modest trooper, largely took precedence over that of the historian.

Further, after the 1920s, which had seen one or two figures cross the threshold of “immediate history,” academic historiography largely abandoned the study of World War I. The CAG, as we have seen, was dissolved

in 1928, the year when Pirenne's book put a full stop to the Belgian series produced by the Carnegie Endowment. From the 1930s onward, there was no longer any doubt about the established fact that the Great War had not managed to impose contemporary history in universities. Less than ever, scholarly historiography was attuned to other forms of narrative about the conflict, as is shown by a parallel between academic historiography and school textbooks. After the end of hostilities, the 1914–18 experience was incorporated in the teaching of history. It was also present in other subjects: at the beginning of the 1920s, almost all reading material devoted to national education was devoted to the Great War.<sup>58</sup> Throughout that decade, particularly in French-speaking Belgium, school textbooks were hallmarked by a distinctive Belgian nationalism and a marked Germanophobia. The cultural demobilization of that historiography came late—it was only in the early 1930s that more pacifist textbooks saw the light of day—and was short lived. The years leading up to World War II in fact saw the international climate become abruptly more tense, involving a sudden patriotic remobilization of that historiography. As a result, the non-conversion of Belgian school textbooks to the pacifist ideology between the wars can be read as a resistance to the canons of the new international morality that emerged with the Locarno agreements,<sup>59</sup> but it also implicitly revealed the relative powerlessness of professional historians to be heard. With the Great War, some of them did indeed move away from the positivist ethos of the nineteenth century and wrote a history of the present time, ahead of the pack. But nor did their hieratic narratives go astray in a proliferation of more influential memorial discourses, which gave pride of place to individual subjectivities, and the irreducible nature of the perceptible experience.<sup>60</sup>

## 1945–90

The post–World War II period was marked by the legitimization and institutionalization of contemporary history. Whereas the Great War had only very partially managed to erect the twentieth century as a respectable subject for a university historian, that situation was turned on its head everywhere in Europe after 1945.<sup>61</sup> In Belgium, contemporary history once and for all gained a foothold in the academic landscape from the late 1960s on, as is well illustrated by the creation of the *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* in 1969 and the Belgian Association for Contemporary History three years later. But in that development of a contemporary history, which before long would be the field that attracted the greatest number of students in Belgium, World War I would only play a minor part.

In the meantime, World War II pushed the 1914–18 experience to the sidelines. Up until the 1990s, Belgian historians were largely disinterested in the Great War: that conflict seemed decidedly obsolete in relation to burning issues such as the forms of research potential offered by the period 1940–45. Even military history found new questions to pose in the crushing defeat of 1940, and in the battle of the Ardennes, and before long would only broach World War I from its margins, the way its leading figure Henri Bernard did. Social and political approaches underwent an identical shift from the 1960s onward. This is attested to by the career of the Brussels-based historian José Gotovitch: when, in the early 1960s, he had already written his first master's dissertation devoted to the Great War<sup>62</sup>—because his research supervisor had barred him from working on the period 1940–45—and when he had been one of the historical advisors for the television program *1914–1918: Le journal de la Grande Guerre*, Gotovitch subsequently abandoned that terrain and became one of the leading lights in Belgium of the history of World War II. Among other things, he contributed to the development of the Centre de recherches et d'études historiques de la Seconde Guerre mondiale (CREHSGM). This research laboratory and documentation center was founded in 1969 and funded by the state; during the ensuing decades, it played a leading part in the remarkable rise of the historiography of the 1940–45 conflict. There was a striking contrast with the lack of legitimacy that the Great War was then suffering from.

That lack of legitimacy came across clearly, first and foremost, at the level of archival policy. While the CREHSGM gathered and inventoried everything relating to World War II, the 1914–18 period, to all appearances, was not among the priorities of the General Archives of the Kingdom. A similar lack of interest could be detected in universities: in them, World War I remained a marginal subject, despite the boom that contemporary history was enjoying in the groves of academe. An analysis of the articles published in the *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* shows the quite relative importance of the Great War in that contemporary historiography: only seven contributions out of 431 were devoted to World War I between 1969 and 1999. The report drawn up by the planners of the bibliography on the history of World War I in Belgium, which appeared in 1987, was harsh: "The historical output relating to the subject is old and obsolete, when it is not non-existent."<sup>63</sup> The history of the Great War was only tackled in a sporadic and fragmented way. It was henceforth focused around three debates.

The first of these controversies had to do with the fate of Flemish soldiers. In the nationalist Flemish memory, these combatants were presented as victims twice over, of both the violence at the front and the

bullying tactics of a French-speaking military apparatus. And this injustice appeared all the more intolerable because those soldiers represented 80 percent of the troops on the Yser, whereas the Belgian population was made up of 55 percent Dutch speakers as opposed to only 45 percent French speakers. This inequality in the sacrifice made grew from then on into a basic myth of Flemish nationalism: launched in 1917 by the activists, the figure of 80 percent Flemish soldiers became, for more than half a century, part of the arguments that rang out in the Yser Tower, but also in Flemish history books.<sup>64</sup> It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that different Flemish historians came up with a critical approach, conducting their debate in the specialized literature but also in the columns of an influential newspaper like *De Standaard*. That historiographical debate was, needless to say, politically charged, but it was also heuristic in nature: what sources were to be used to know the language spoken by the soldiers? It was only in the latter half of the 1980s that two military historians put a full stop to the discussion about what they called “the myth of the 80 percent”: Luc De Vos and Hans Keymeulen demonstrated that the percentage of Flemish soldiers among the Belgian war dead was 64 percent, a really high casualty rate but lower than what nationalist Flemish mythology had always maintained.<sup>65</sup>

The second debate focused on the activist Flemish movement under the occupation, and more broadly on the impact of World War I on Flemish nationalism. In the 1920s, the activists had been presented, in nationalist Flemish circles and, in particular, by their historians, as “idealists” expressing a long-felt Flemish frustration in the face of Francophone injustices. This image would be demolished in the 1970s by historians who were keen to go beyond conventional wisdom. In 1974, Lode Wils, an eminent specialist of the Flemish movement, set the cat among the pigeons: activism, he argued, was a creation of the occupier’s *Flamenpolitik*, and not vice versa.<sup>66</sup> The anti-Belgian stance of the Flemish movement, which did not exist prior to 1914, had been merely artificially imported by Germany to justify German occupation and to destroy the Belgian state. Without *Flamenpolitik*, he concluded that there would not have been any separatist Flemish nationalism. The following decades saw Flemish historiography clashing around Wils’s thesis, with some refuting it by highlighting the autonomy of the Flemish activists and the traces of anti-Belgian sentiment in the Flemish movement before 1914, while others radicalized it even more by asserting that the activism (and to a certain degree the Flemish movement) had, even before the war, been spurred on by German pan-Germanism.<sup>67</sup>

The third and final discussion point had to do with the role of Albert I in 1914–18. Up until 1945, books about this issue had more to do

with hagiography than with historiography, playing a direct part in the construction of the myth of the “king-cum-knight,” emblem of Belgian military heroism.<sup>68</sup> It was only from the 1970s onward that a new generation of historians would go beyond this mythological narrative, especially under the influence of the Royal Question and the virulent controversies about the attitude of Albert I’s son and heir, Léopold III, during the second occupation. For the first time, the archives were put to use and markedly nuanced the image of a king heroically standing up to German barbarism. Various authors showed that, with his concern to preserve European equilibrium, the sovereign had attempted to obtain not so much a military victory but a peace based on compromise during the war, especially by engaging in talks with Germany.<sup>69</sup> Over the years that followed, the historian and archivist Marie-Rose Thielemans pushed this analysis considerably further: Albert, for her, had been a pacifist, not to say defeatist king.<sup>70</sup> The initial myth, as we have seen, was thus almost completely stood on its head, which, in return, certainly gave rise to other more subtle writings.<sup>71</sup> Subsequently, this issue became less fervent, and the debate shifted from Albert’s diplomatic action to his linguistic policy.

These three debates that punctuated the historiography of the Great War from the 1960s to the 1990s shared several features in common. First of all, they attested to the emergence of a new generation of historians who, relying on in-depth archival investigation, were keen to be done with the myth that had hitherto dominated Belgian and Flemish memories. From then on, while scholarly historiography and collective memories had been developed without too much contact during the interwar years, a dialogue came into being in the 1960s. The emergence of a new critical function devolving to historiography came into being at this point: henceforth, historians had a moral duty, that of analyzing and deconstructing the received ideas of the public debate. Illustrative of this were the abovementioned works about World War I, but also, in an even more vigorous manner, the critical historiography of World War II, which was forcefully introduced from the 1970s onward.<sup>72</sup>

Another shared and probably less heartening feature of these three debates was their isolation. Everyone took their place within a political history that was, in the end, traditional, and also dominated by the community challenges that are constructing and also unraveling Belgium. If this historiography was open to public debate, it was in no event open to the new international tendencies emerging at that time around the Great War.<sup>73</sup> Those three quintessentially Belgian debates completely sidestepped the social history that, from the 1970s onward, was renewing knowledge of the conflict at the international level. This ignorance was explained by the fact that these three controversies were, above all, the

result of discussions coming from other historiographies. They were part and parcel of the Flemish movement and of the history of the royal function—two historiographical issues that were major ones at that time—without ever taking the Great War as a subject *per se*.

As far as social history is concerned, which became *de rigueur* at that time in the history departments of the universities of Brussels and Ghent, it is currently disregarding the short timeframe of the world wars. Whereas an economic and social historian such as Pirenne had lent respectability to the historiography of 1914–18 during the interwar years, his successors now focused on other subjects and other time frames.<sup>74</sup> Only a handful of isolated efforts saw the light of day. Let us mention, in particular, the works of Peter Scholliers, which, from the late 1970s onward and throughout the 1980s, turned out to be close to those then being written by Jürgen Kocka in Germany and Jay Winter in England.<sup>75</sup> A later example of transnationalization is provided for us by the history of women: drawing inspiration from French and Anglo-Saxon debates, pioneers such as Eliane Gubin and Denise De Weerdts focused on the role of women in 1914–18, and the impact that the conflict had on relations between the sexes.<sup>76</sup> But these new readings of the Great War, proposing an approach that was at once more social and less nationally confined, would have no sequel, and gave rise neither to historiographical currents nor to institutional networks.

If Belgian historians missed out on the swift development of European historiography about the Great War in the 1970s and 1980s, they also showed little interest in a German historiography that, in the same period, focused anew on the Belgian case. In the wake of the discussions caused by the *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (Grasp for World Power) by Fritz Fischer,<sup>77</sup> the occupation policy in Belgium would be the subject of various German research projects. The *franc-tireur* issue, the role of Cardinal Mercier, and the destruction of the Louvain Library are some of the subjects dealt with in these books, which, for the most part, appeared during the 1980s.<sup>78</sup> But these works had few repercussions in Belgium. It was not until the later half of the 1990s that Belgian historians joined the European bandwagon.

## 1990–2000

The end of the twentieth century saw the Great War make a spectacular comeback within Belgian historiography. This stepped-up interest in a subject that, just a few years earlier, seemed irrevocably dated was part and parcel of a wider reemergence at the international level. There were many different reasons for this, and, on the basis of a classic explanation,

they had to do with the geopolitical developments that were then causing upheavals in Europe. The civil war, which tore the former Yugoslavia (precisely where, of course, World War I had started) asunder, seemed to announce the return of nationalism, in varying forms, while the collapse of the Eastern Bloc brought out new lines of thought about the historical unity of what became the “short twentieth century.” According to this argument, while World War II remained a central event, it was no longer the springboard of analysis. From then on, it was the Great War that was interpreted as the matricial catastrophe in a century that started in 1914 and ended in 1989.<sup>79</sup>

In Belgium, this historiographical renewal can be broken down into three distinct sequences. In 1997, the Belgian historian Sophie De Schaepdrijver published *De Grootte Oorlog*, a somewhat ordinary title for a work that is anything but ordinary. Her book presented nothing less than the first summary account of Belgium in 1914–18 since Pirenne’s book, which appeared seventy years earlier.<sup>80</sup> The book, which was immediately acclaimed, was a tour de force. In it, De Schaepdrijver proposed an ambitious general survey of Belgian experiences during the 1914–18 period, based on a bibliography that we might describe, at the very least, as fragmented and incomplete; but she herself also delved into the archives, in particular personal ones. Combining political, social, and cultural history, the book married an academic approach—it swiftly became the reference book on the period—with an attractive narrative style, which lay at the root of its public success. For several weeks, a history book was at the top of the nonfiction bestseller lists, a rare occurrence in Belgium. Its Dutch version alone was reprinted nine times between 1997 and 2008. As for its author, who had hitherto held a somewhat marginal position in the national historiographical arena (she had obtained a PhD from Amsterdam University and had since taught in the Netherlands), she was propelled to the very core of the new developments taking place around the 1914–18 war.

If the book by Sophie De Schaepdrijver, who has meanwhile been teaching at Pennsylvania State University, sounded the alarm, it was initially just a solitary work. During the years that followed, academic research into World War I in Belgium would become institutionalized, taking two complementary directions. The first was that of a cultural history, with a firm foothold at the Catholic University in Louvain (UCL), gravitating around Laurence van Ypersele. In 1994, this historian had submitted a doctoral thesis about King Albert I. Unlike in the previous generation, it was no longer royal practice but the myth constructed around the “warrior-king” that was now the subject of analysis.<sup>81</sup> This approach, in terms of history, to social representations subsequently hallmarked all

the output from UCL. From the end of the 1990s, this output focused on the impact of the Great War on Belgian society, in particular through studies of war memorials and memories of the atrocities of 1914.<sup>82</sup> More recently, this trend would broaden its area of interest to other themes, such as resistance and espionage in occupied Belgium, the occupation of the Ruhr, and the “purification” after the German occupation.<sup>83</sup> On the international level, this first Belgian “school” of 1914–18 enjoyed an important process of legitimization with the co-opting of its leading light, Laurence van Ypersele, within the steering committee of the International Research Center of the Historial de Péronne, with which she had long shared a cultural approach to war.

The second area of development was, for its part, included more in the tradition of social history. It first emerged within the old Centre de recherches et d'études historiques de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, renamed, from 1997 on, Centre d'études et de documentation Guerre et Sociétés Contemporaines (CegeSoma). This change of name conveyed the enlargement of the chronological focus of this public institution, which now included the whole of the twentieth century in its themes.<sup>84</sup> In it, World War I, in particular, was promoted as a special area of investigation, and the CegeSoma soon became a fully-fledged player in the historiography of 1914–18, proposing doctoral theses, holding conferences, and devoting themed issues of its magazine to it, and, more recently, initiating public history projects around commemorations for the centenary of the war. The history of war experiences it promoted, giving pride of place to the people involved, the institutions, and their agency, with an often explicit comparison between the two world wars, subsequently gained a firm foothold in the academic arena, in particular at Ghent University where it encountered a powerful tradition of social history.

Alongside CegeSoma, another federal institution played a leading role in this historiographical renewal. From the latter half of the 1990s onward, the General Archives of the Kingdom (AGR) conducted a remarkably committed policy involving the availability of the 1914–18 archives, contrasting radically with the lack of interest that had surrounded those documents since the interwar period.<sup>85</sup> Over a fifteen-year span, more than two hundred archival inventories for that period were published by the AGR. This structural effort, the only one capable of making another writing of the history of Belgium in 1914–18 possible, also went hand in hand with a policy promoting new research findings. In 2001, a conference-*cum*-assessment was organized about the state of sources and historiography, and, in 2010, another such event was devoted to the end of the war.<sup>86</sup> Lastly, where publishing was concerned, the AGR distinguished itself by creating a collection devoted specifically to the Great

War. Launched in 2001, this series of *Etudes sur la Première Guerre mondiale* today includes some twenty volumes, most of them doctoral dissertations that duly enjoyed a wider readership.

The comeback of the Great War in historiography was in fact also conspicuous in master's theses produced in history departments. This fact is not insignificant when one knows that, in Belgium, it is here that a basic part of research, one relying more broadly on archival work, takes place. The quantitative analysis of master's theses submitted since 1957 shows that it was only from the 1980s onward that the Great War became a (legitimate) topic of study within the Belgian academic world.<sup>87</sup> And it was only in the 2000s that the number of dissertations increased significantly, attesting to the clear revival of interest for World War I.

The predominance of the Catholic University of Louvain where academic production is concerned can also be observed with regard to final dissertations. More generally, in spite of a more limited number of students, French-speaking universities are “producing” two-thirds of these works, seemingly revealing a greater interest in World War I in the south of the country than in the north. This imbalance is even more flagrant where doctoral theses are concerned: over the past three decades, ten theses about the Great War have been submitted in French-speaking universities, as opposed to five in Flanders. How are we to explain this lopsidedness? In the first analysis, we might put forward the hypothesis that the “patriotic” character of the Belgian experience in 1914–18 would pose more of a problem in Flanders, whereas it would be desirable in a French-speaking Belgium, which is apparently ever more attached to unitarianism. But, in a more prosaic way, the explanation probably has to do above all with systems of historiographical logic. The early re-



**Figure 2.1. Master's Theses on World War I in History Departments (n=349).**

Source: Statistics from database compiled by Sihem Talbi (Université du Luxembourg). Chart by the author.

ception of the school of Péronne in French-speaking Belgium, traditionally paying heed to French debates, has undeniably relaunched interest in 1914–18 in this part of the country. And the leading part played by van Ypersele, institutionally associated with the Historial de Péronne and the Catholic University of Louvain has done the rest: one-third of the dissertations about the Great War produced over the last decade have been under the supervision of this professor. This helps toward a better understanding of why, up until the 1990s, the majority of these were submitted in Dutch-speaking universities, and why there was a reversal

### MASTER THESES ON WWI ACCORDING TO UNIVERSITIES (N=349)

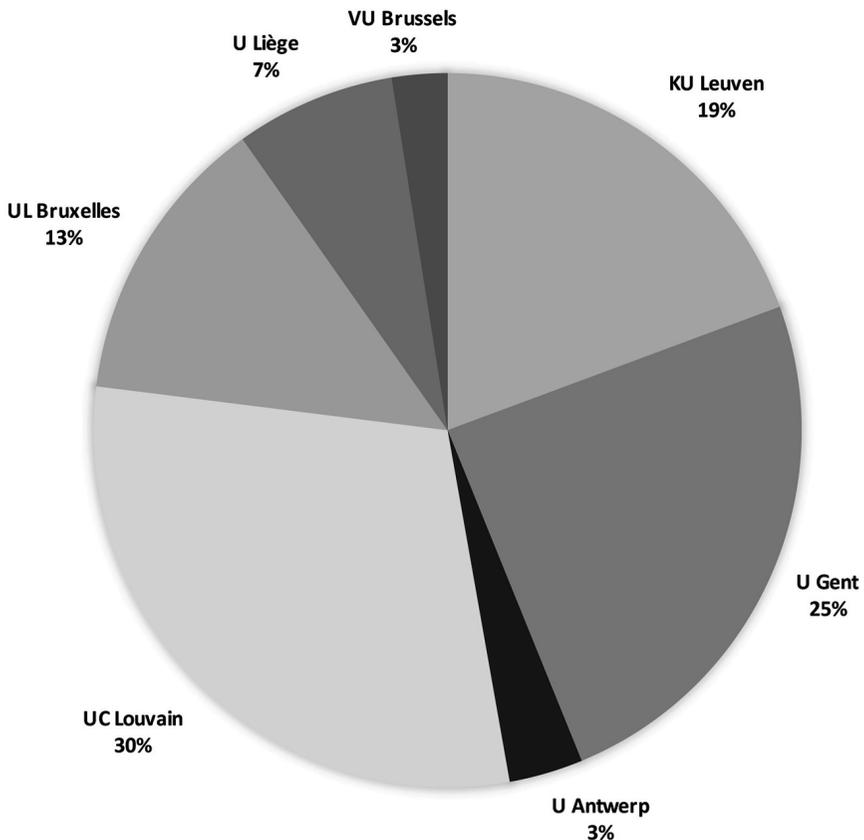


Figure 2.2. Master's Theses on World War I by Universities (n=349).

Source: Statistics from database compiled by Sihem Talbi (Université du Luxembourg). Chart by the author.

of this tendency from the early 2000s onward. Lastly, where these final theses are concerned, at the very least it has to be said that the Great War is still attracting more male students (61 percent) than female students (39 percent).

### Current Perspectives

“How can one not be interested in Belgian history?” This was the question raised by the US-based British historian Tony Judt and others in 2005, with a twist of irony.<sup>88</sup> The historiography of 1914–18 nevertheless offers a thoroughly serious answer to this question. Since the 2000s, Belgian historians are not in fact the only ones to have (re-)become interested in the experience of Belgium in the Great War. Within the framework of an international questioning about the emergence of “total war,”<sup>89</sup> the Belgian case is now attracting the attention of foreign historians. Published in 2001, the already classic book by John Horne and Alan Kramer (Trinity College, Dublin) about the “German atrocities” of 1914 illustrates this interest, but also the interest that Belgium presents in a transnational line of thinking about the violence of war and the way it affects civilians.<sup>90</sup> The effect of this book, which won the prestigious Fraenkel Prize for Contemporary History, was to reposition Belgium at the hub of the international historiography of 1914–18. Following in the direct wake of Horne and Kramer, other authors would focus on the German invasion in Belgium to the point where the subtitle of “untold story” chosen by one of them may seem somewhat inappropriate.<sup>91</sup>

In a more original way, other works produced abroad over the past decade are enriching thinking about the all-encompassing nature of war by also taking Belgium as a paradigmatic case. The exploitation of manual labor in occupied territory, the artistic and patrimonial plunder, and forms of civilian resistance are all subjects that contribute just as much to an international discussion as to making up for the gaps in domestic historiography.<sup>92</sup> This internationalization of research can also be felt with regard to doctoral research: more than one-third of the theses submitted over the last three decades about Belgium in 1914–18 were done so abroad (mainly in Germany), which represents a noteworthy exception with regard to other periods of Belgian history.<sup>93</sup> In this way, where summaries are also concerned, the case of (occupied) Belgium has been fully incorporated in a transnational history of the war.<sup>94</sup>

The disillusioned assessment that the English historian Martin Conway put forward in 1994—the history of Belgium is “remarkably ne-

glected”—is thus no longer valid for the experience of the Great War.<sup>95</sup> On the contrary, this period seems to be one of the only periods when the Belgian case has been taken into account in an international debate. Unlike what happened during the 1980s, and the silence that surrounded the works being produced in Germany, a dialogue was struck up this time between international historiography and Belgian historiography. The conference held in 2003 at the Free University in Brussels, titled “Une guerre totale? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre mondiale,” illustrated the intensity of that dialogue, because one-third of the forty or so speakers at that conference came from abroad.<sup>96</sup> In Belgium too, from now on, the Great War is being written about and included within a transnational framework, and the influence of an intrinsically international project like the *Historial* of Péronne cannot be overestimated in this regard.

Present-day historiography is organized around three experiences—occupation, exile, and the front—that bolster Belgium as a laboratory of total war, foreshadowing what Europe would be in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>97</sup> Through this kaleidoscope of experiences, whose diversity for the past ten years or so has enjoyed a certain historiographical depth, social history seems to be making its comeback. If the cultural approach has indisputably given a new impetus to a subject that seemed exhausted, by proposing a questioning about the “culture of war” and the legacy of the conflict, the social organization of war experiences today seems to be one of the main threads of research in progress. If the history of the occupation was much written about from the interwar period onward, the great synthetic works of that period are also being renewed today by a historiography that is more attentive to interplays of scales and local practices.<sup>98</sup> The dynamics of social control, subsistence, and resistance are now being put under the magnifying glass,<sup>99</sup> just like the margins of maneuver and processes of adaptation where institutions are concerned, be they police or legal bodies, under occupation.<sup>100</sup> For its part, experience of the front had for many years only been broached in the shadows of the controversies about the Flemish movement and the attitude of King Albert; this then vanished from the areas of concern of historians, as is shown by its absence from the conference “A Total War?” held in 2003. Since then, a certain number of historians have reinvestigated the experience of Belgian soldiers, in particular through the lens of the institutions and disciplinary organizations they had to deal with.<sup>101</sup> Lastly, for almost a century, refugees were the real blind spot of history and of the memory of 1914–18. In the end they, too, found their historian during the 2000s, who highlighted the socially differentiated character of experiences of exile.<sup>102</sup> To these three henceforth defined fields was

timidly added the history of the colonies in 1914–18 and the history of multicultural aspects on the Belgian front, which remain areas that are largely undeveloped.<sup>103</sup> The time when just a few issues—the linguistic division and the royal function—were still informing the historiography of the war is well and truly behind us.

Through this thematic development and thanks to the creation of institutional infrastructures, Belgian historians have gained a firm foothold in the discussion about the war past. But we shouldn't be fooled by this success: since the conflict itself, the voices of historians have never been the only ones to make themselves heard. The many witnesses who, for decades, had occupied a pivotal place in commemorations, died a long time ago, of course, but other bearers of memories have also been part of the revival of interest around 1914–18. The powers that be, in particular, have become quintessential players in the memory of the Great War.

What has been and still is the place of historians in this context? As we have seen, Belgian historians have long struggled to make themselves heard in the debate about the war past. It was only in the 1960s, when the generation of witnesses was dwindling, that historians assumed an important role in this debate, by attacking the myths that had brought into being both Belgian and Flemish patriotic memories. In an ever more independent way, from the 1990s onward they even developed a new history of World War I, which was less straitjacketed in systems of national logic. However, the commemorative wave of 2014–18 can be considered a reminder of the fact that, to borrow the famous words of Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, "The war of 1914 belongs to nobody, not even historians."<sup>104</sup> In French-speaking Belgium and at the federal level, historians have been integrated into the commemorative framework, something that has not failed to stir up certain questions about the (potential) absence of critical voices with regard to such explicitly political projects.<sup>105</sup> On the Flemish side, however, within a commemorative policy dominated by issues of tourism and national assertion, historians have simply been sidelined. And this, in its turn, has stirred up angry reactions, in particular from the historian Sophie De Schaepdrijver, railing against a "Flemish affront to all its historians."<sup>106</sup>

The centenary has led historians to work differently and to interact with a multitude of commemorative actors they had not necessarily been used to working with, be they politicians, the media, or large private companies wishing to organize events and exhibitions. The role and practice of the historian has deeply been affected by this: while his expertise remains of course recognized, he must also—one might argue too often—deal with imperatives that are at times incompatible with the principles governing the academic field. Public history practices are still not as de-

veloped as they should be and will have to be professionalized in a new context, where history tends to become a product.

This critical remark notwithstanding, professional historians have, as a matter of fact, been present at all levels throughout the centenary: they have made an effort to popularize recent World War I research in books,<sup>107</sup> in the media (in many regards taking the place of the necessarily lacking witnesses), in documentaries and docudramas (without, however, having a word to say in the editing process), in numerous scientific committees of exhibitions, or simply in giving lectures to a broader public. In this context, one cannot fail to note the variety of cases. Sometimes historians were used to obtain public funds (the major exhibitions in Liège-Guillemin and at the Royal Museum of the Army); then there were scientific committees that only existed on paper (e.g. Liège), or committees whose recommendations have finally not been followed (MRA). In other cases, the historians' advice has been completely taken into account: the Bruges exhibition with Sophie De Schaepdrijver is a case in point just as the RTBF (Belgian public television) documentaries, where Marianne Sluszný called upon professional historians to correct her synopsis. Sometimes historians receive payment (as much for their work as for staying quiet), sometimes not. Is it possible to avoid instrumentalization? Can we protect our research (and our reputation) against being used for political (or other) purposes? Experience tells us this can be difficult, at times.

Whenever historians have been listened to, the result was an undeniable intellectual gain. However, one should be careful not to think that this gain was automatically synonymous with public attention. In fact, as people with a little PR-experience know, the emotional and the spectacular tend to draw more audience than intellectual reflection, even if we should avoid thinking of these as being principally antithetic toward one another. On a slightly different note, one should not fail to acknowledge that the massive turnout in Liège and Mons on 4 August 2014 was very much due to the presence of Prince William and Princess Kate. Likewise, in Nieuwpoort on 28 October 2014, and in Ploegsteert on 11 December 2014, people flocked to see Angela Merkel and Michel Platini respectively. And on 11 November 2018, the public moved to the Column of Congress to see King Philip and Queen Mathilde. It should be noted, however, that this "star" effect should not obscure the real public enthusiasm for 1914–18.

In any case, the sustained presence and engagement of historians throughout the centenary, whether on the Walloon or on the federal side, has undoubtedly facilitated the launching of several research projects on the Great War.<sup>108</sup> It seems that Belgium has gone quite far in that direction, at least by international comparison: there have been no

less than thirty-four theses on World War I funded as part of the centenary commemorations, sometimes directly by the federal government,<sup>109</sup> sometimes by the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation,<sup>110</sup> sometimes by all Belgian universities. The new research takes advantage of the countless archival resources freshly inventoried or newly uncovered by families. While social history seems to have gained some ground on cultural history,<sup>111</sup> this new social history remains in many regards inspired by the cultural history approach.<sup>112</sup> The most recent aspects are interdisciplinarity, the emergence of the history of emotions and gender history, as well as transnational history.<sup>113</sup> Occupied Belgium is no longer studied without taking into account the North of France, which was also occupied.<sup>114</sup> In the same vein, occupier-occupied relations can no longer be addressed without using the archives of all the countries involved to cross-reference points of view. And the end of the war can now only be understood in terms of multiple longer postwar processes, characterized by multiple intersecting chronologies that altogether broaden the field of investigation.

Looking back on the commemorative wave of 2014–18, it has to be said that both the history and the memory of the Great War have never, since the between-the-wars period, been the subject of any such attention, be it political or scientific. But at a time when the public authorities are turning the past into an area of intervention, and at a time when historians are attempting to combine the demands of a transnational science with a concern for a public history, the role of both in the production of a narrative about the past is, more than ever, a controversial challenge.

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## Notes

1. We are indebted to Professor Laurence van Ypersele (Université catholique de Louvain) for offering crucial advice on different parts of this chapter.
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4. Francis Balace, "Le soldat inconnu belge: Du lieu de mémoire au lieu d'affrontement," in *Les soldats inconnus de la Grande Guerre. La mort, le deuil, la mémoire*, ed. François Cochet and Jean-Noël Grandhomme (Saint-Cloud: Soteca, 2012), 363–98.
5. Kenneth S. Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers: From London and Paris to Baghdad," *History and Memory* 5, no. 2 (1993): 7–31.
6. Laurence van Ypersele, *Le roi Albert: Histoire d'un mythe* (Ottignies: Quorum, 1995).
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9. Axel Tixhon, *Le souvenir des massacres du 23 août 1914 à Dinant: Étude des commémorations organisées durant l'entre-deux-guerres* (master's thesis, Université catholique de Louvain, 1995).
10. Andreas Fickers, "De la 'Sibérie de la Prusse' aux 'Cantons rédimés': L'ombre diffuse de la Grande Guerre dans la mémoire collective des Belges germanophones," in *Une "guerre totale"? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre mondiale. Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique*, ed. Michaël Amara, Serge Jaumain, Benoît Majerus, and Antoon Vrints (Brussels: AGR, 2005), 615–33.
11. Laurence van Ypersele, "L'appel à la mémoire et ses derives," in *La patrie crie vengeance! Le châtiement des inciviques belges au sortir de la Grande Guerre*, ed. Xavier Rousseaux and Laurence van Ypersele (Brussels: Edition Le Cri, 2008), 147–57.
12. Alain Colignon, *Les anciens combattants en Belgique francophone, 1918–1940* (Liège: Libr. Grommen, 1984); Guido Provoost, *De vossen: 60 jaarverbond van Vlaamseoudstrijders, 1919–1979* (Brussels: VOS, 1979); Gita Deneckere, "Oudstrijders op de vuist in Brussel: Het amnestieconflict tijdens het interbellum," *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* 25, nos. 3–4 (1994–95), 273–327; Martin Schoups and Antoon Vrints, *De overlevenden: De Belgische oud-strijders tijdens het interbellum* (Kalmthoud, Polis, 2018).
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  16. Benoît Majerus, “Von Falkenhausen zu Falkenhausen: Die deutsche Verwaltung Belgiens in den zwei Weltkriegen,” in *Besatzung. Funktion und Gestalt militärischer Fremdherrschaft von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Günther Kronenbitter, Markus Pöhlmann, and Dierk Walter (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006), 131–45; Benoît Majerus, “Conceptualizing the occupations of Belgium, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands (1933–1944),” in *Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp and Stefan Martens (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 10–20.
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  18. Frank Seberichts, *Duurzamer dan graniet: Over monumenten en Vlaamsebeweging* (Tiel: Lannoo, 2003); Marnix Beyen, “Elle est de plus en plus noire, la masse des flamingants: Comment s’est forgée l’image de l’occupation et de la répression en Flandre (1945–2000),” in *Collaboration, répression: Un passé qui résiste*, ed. José Gotovitch and Chantal Kesteloot (Brussels: Labor, 2002), 99–114.
  19. Suzanne Tassier, *L’histoire de la guerre mondiale: Pour un Musée de la guerre mondiale et un Office de documentation contemporaine* (Brussels: Office de publicité, 1944).
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  21. Jacques Grégoire, “Quand la télévision partait pour la Grande guerre,” *Bulletin d’information du Centre liégeois d’histoire et d’archéologie militaire* 10, no. 2 (2007): 5–22.
  22. See Tixhon, *Le souvenir des massacres du 23 août 1914 à Dinant*.
  23. Delphine Lauwers, “L’Ypres Salient come luogo della memoria europea? Public History e turismo di guerra dal 1919 ai giorni nostri,” *Memoria e Ricerca* 37, no. 2 (2011): 87–113.
  24. Alain Colignon, “La Belgique, une patrie d’anciens combattants?” *Cahiers d’Histoire du Temps présent* 3 (1997): 115–42.
  25. Jean Stengers, “La déconstruction de l’État-nation: Le cas belge,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’Histoire* 50 (1996): 36–54.
  26. See Benvindo and Peeters, *Les décombres de la guerre*.
  27. *Ibid.*
  28. Grégoire, “Quand la télévision partait pour la Grande Guerre.”
  29. In Flanders, the ten-episode series *In Vlaamse Velden* on VRT Eén (funded by the province of West Flanders) has to be considered a huge popular success, just as the RTBF documentary *14–18: l’histoire belge* by Marianne Slusznay and Michel Mees on the Walloon side. Another successful documentary was André Darteville’s *Trois journées d’août 1914* on the German atrocities of August 1914.
  30. The two most important exhibitions of 2014–15 have been *14–18, c’est notre histoire* at the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and *J’avais 20 ans en 1914* at Liège-Guillemin Central station.
  31. Already in 2013, the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper had been entirely renovated. Examples for newly created museums are the Interpretation Center Plugstreet Experience in Ploegsteert (inaugurated in 2013) and the Mons Memorial Museum (inaugurated in 2015).
  32. There have been some highly successful initiatives in that regard. Take, for instance, the “Flanders Fields Gardens,” the first of which was inaugurated in London, or the illumination of the front lines from Nieuwpoort to Ploegsteert in October 2014.

33. Sophie De Schaepdrijver, quoted in Christian Laporte, “Un affront flamand à tous ses historiens,” *La Libre Belgique*, 31 January 2013. See also Laurence van Ypersele, “The Preparations of the 14–18 Commemorations by the Walloon-Brussels Federation and Wallonia,” *Journal of Belgian History* 42, no. 4 (2012): 186–91.
34. Nico Wouters, “‘Poor Little Belgium?’ Flemish- and French-language Politics of Memory (2014–2018),” *Journal of Belgian History* 42, no. 2 (2012): 198.
35. John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
36. Leon Van der Essen, *L’invasion allemande en Belgique: De Liège à l’Yser* (Paris: Payot, 1917); Godefroid Kurth, *Le Guet-apens prussien en Belgique* (Paris: Champion, 1919).
37. Michaël Amara, *La propagande belge durant la Première Guerre mondiale (1914–1918)* (Brussels: Université libre de Brussels, 1998), 17.
38. Fernand van Langenhove, *Comment naît un cycle de légendes: Francs-tireurs et atrocités en Belgique* (Paris: Payot, 1916).
39. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*.
40. Marc Bloch, “Réflexions d’un historien sur les fausses nouvelles de la guerre: Psychologie collective,” *Revue de synthèse historique* 8 (1921): 34. Bloch was mistaken: the book was published in 1916, not 1917.
41. Christophe Martens, *Belgische historici en de verwerking van de Eerste Wereldoorlog: Eenstudieaan de hand van de Commission des Archives de la Guerre en de Revue Belge des Livres, Documents et Archives de la Guerre (1919–1928)* (master’s thesis, UGent, 2011).
42. Peter Schöttler, “Henri Pirenne face à l’Allemagne de l’après-guerre ou la (re) naissance du comparatisme en histoire,” in *Une “guerre totale”? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre mondiale: Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique*, ed. Michaël Amara, Serge Jaumain, Benoît Majerus, and Antoon Vrints (Brussels: AGR, 2005), 507–17; Sophie De Schaepdrijver, “‘That Theory of Races’: Henri Pirenne on the Unfinished Business of the Great War,” *Revue Belge d’Histoire Contemporaine* 41, nos. 3–4 (2011), 533–52.
43. Amara, *La propagande belge durant la Première Guerre mondiale*, 6.
44. See Martens, *Belgische historici*.
45. As is illustrated in the pages of Lefevre and Lorette, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre mondiale*.
46. Jean Schmitz and Nobert Nieuwland, *Documents pour servir à l’histoire de l’invasion allemande dans les provinces de Namur et de Luxembourg*, 8 vols. (Brussels: G. Van Oest & cie, 1919).
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48. Giselle Nath and Maarten Van Alstein, *14–18 van dichtbij: Inspiratie gids voor lokale projecten over de Grote Oorlog* (Leuven: Acco, 2012), 132.
49. Henri Pirenne, *Souvenirs de captivité en Allemagne (mars 1916–novembre 1918)* (Brussels: M. Lamertin, 1920).
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51. Henri Pirenne, *La Belgique et la guerre mondiale* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1928).

52. Alain Chatriot, "Comprendre la guerre: L'histoire économique et sociale de la guerre mondiale; Les séries de la Dotation Carnegie pour la Paix internationale," in *Histoire culturelle de la Grande Guerre*, ed. Jean-Jacques Becker (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005), 33–44.
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54. Jacques Pirenne and Maurice Vauthier, *La législation et l'administration allemandes en Belgique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1925); Ernest Mahaim, *Le secours de chômage en Belgique pendant l'occupation allemande* (Paris: PUF, 1926).
55. Jean-François Crombois, *L'univers de la sociologie en Belgique de 1900 à 1940* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Brussels, 1994).
56. Martens, *Belgische historici*, 43.
57. About half of the five hundred pages of the bibliography of World War I prior to 1985 (where the facts are concerned, above all prior to 1940) have to do with military history: see Lefevre and Lorette, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre mondiale*.
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59. *Ibid.*
60. Sophie De Schaepdrijver, "Rancoeurs et grands coeurs: Les fictions d'occupation en Belgique," in *La Grande Guerre: Un siècle de fictions romanesques*, ed. Pierre Schoentjes and Griet Theeten (Geneva: Droz, 2008), 183–204. This is a feature common to interwar European historiography: Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre: Un essai d'historiographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 19.
61. Pieter Lagrou, "Historiographie de guerre et historiographie du temps présent: Cadres institutionnels en Europe occidentale, 1945–2000," *Bulletin du Comité international d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale* 30–31 (1999–2000), 191–215; Henri Rouso, *La dernière catastrophe: l'histoire, le présent, le contemporain* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012).
62. José Gotovitch, *Contribution à l'histoire de la presse censurée 1914–1918* (master's thesis, Université libre de Brussels, 1961).
63. Lefevre and Lorette, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre mondiale*, 6.
64. Christine van Everbroeck, "Une conscience née dans le feu: Divergences à propos du pourcentage de victimes flamandes de la Première Guerre mondiale," in *Les grands mythes de l'Histoire de Belgique, de Flandre et de Wallonie*, ed. Anne Morelli (Brussels: Editions Vie ouvrière, 1995), 233–42.
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  90. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914*.
  91. Laurel Zuckerman, *The Rape of Belgium: The Untold Story of World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Jeff Lipkes, *Rehearsals: The German Army in Belgium, August 1914* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007). It is noteworthy that the recent German controversy surrounding Ulrich Keller’s book (Ulrich Keller, *Schuldfragen: Belgischer Untergrundkrieg und deutsche Vergeltung im August 1914* [Paderborn: Schöningh, 2017]) did not provoke much reaction on the Belgian side, even if the rejection of Keller’s main hypothesis claiming that the Belgian army led an irregular war against the German invaders was consensual. See, for instance, Laurence van Ypersele, “La thèse délirante du professeur Keller sur 14–18,” *La Libre*, 3 June 2019, retrieved 19 September 2019 from <https://www.lalibre.be/debats/opinions/la-these-delirante-du-professeur-keller-sur-14-18-5b11992f5532f10b07e52e8>; Christophe Brüll and Geneviève Warland, “Débats récents sur l’invasion allemande en Belgique en 1914: À propos d’Ulrich Keller, Schuldfragen,” *Revue Belge d’Histoire Contemporaine*, forthcoming. 50, no 1 (2020): 112–124.
  92. Christina Kott, *Préserver l’art de l’ennemi?: Le patrimoine artistique en Belgique et en France occupées, 1914–1918* (Brussels: PIE-Peter Lang, 2006); Christoph Roofl, “Dinosaurier-Skelette als Kriegsziel: Kulturgutraubplanungen, Besatzungspolitik und die deutsche Paläontologie in Belgien im Ersten Weltkrieg,” *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 27, no. 1 (2004): 5–26; Jens Thiel, “Menschenbassin Belgien”: *Anwerbung, Deportation und Zwangsarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen: Klartext, 2007); Tammy M. Proctor, “Missing in Action: Belgian Civilians and the First World War,” *Revue Belge d’Histoire Contemporaine* 35, no. 4 (2005): 547–72; Christoph Schmidt-Supprian, *The Antwerp Question: The Significance of the Port City of Antwerp for Germany during the War* (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2006).

93. We have listed twenty-four doctoral theses between 1981 and 2013, ten of which were presented abroad.
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95. Martin Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium: Léon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement 1940–1944* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 5.
96. Michaël Amara, Benoît Majerus, Serge Jaumain, and Antoon Vrints, eds., *Une ‘guerre totale’? La Belgique dans la Première Guerre mondiale: Nouvelles tendances de la recherche historique* (Brussels: AGR, 2005).
97. Bruno Benvindo and Benoît Majerus, “Belgien zwischen 1914 und 1918: Ein Labor für den totalen Krieg,” in *Durchhalten! Krieg und Gesellschaft im Vergleich 1914–1918*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper and Elise Julien (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 127–48.
98. Antoon Vrints, *Bezette stad: Vlaams-nationalistische collaboratie in Antwerpen tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2002); Luc Vandeweyer, *Een kleine stad in een “Groote Oorlog”: De Eerste Wereldoorlog en het activisme te Tienen en omgeving* (Tienen: Aqua Fortis, 2003).
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100. Majerus, *Occupations et logiques policières*; Aurore François, *Guerres et délinquance juvénile: Un demi-siècle de pratiques judiciaires et institutionnelles envers des mineurs en difficulté (1912–1950)* (Bruges: La Charte, 2011); Mélanie Bost, *Traverser l’occupation 1914–1918? Du modus vivendi à la grève, la magistrature belge face aux occupants allemands* (PhD thesis, Université catholique de Louvain, 2013).
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102. Michaël Amara, *Des Belges à l’épreuve de l’exil: Les réfugiés de la Première Guerre mondiale; France, Grande-Bretagne, Pays-Bas, 1914–1918* (Brussels: Éditions de l’Université de Brussels, 2008). See also Evelyn de Roodt, *Oorlogsgasten: Vluchtelingen en krijgsgevangenen in Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Zaltbommel: Europese Bibliotheek, 2000); Pierre Purseigle, “Les mobilisations sociales à l’épreuve de l’exil belge: Étude comparée France—Grande-Bretagne,” in *Une “guerre totale,”* ed. Amara, Jaumain, Majerus, et Vrints, 429–42.
103. Let us nevertheless mention Jeannick Vangansbeke, “Comrades in Arms? Het diplomatieke steekspel tussen België en het Britse Empire in Afrikatijdens de Grote

- Oorlog,” *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* 38, nos. 1–2 (2008): 131–58; Dominiek Dendooven and Piet Chielens, *La Première Guerre mondiale: Cinq continents au front* (Brussels: Racine, 2008).
104. Prost and Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre*, 1.
  105. Wouters, “Poor little Belgium?” 198.
  106. Laporte, “Un affront flamand à tous ses historiens.”
  107. For example, Chantal Kesteloot and Laurence van Ypersele, eds., *Du café liégeois au Soldat Inconnu: La Belgique et la Grande Guerre* (Bruxelles: Racine, 2018).
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  109. See the Belspo-Brain Projects (2013–17): “Experiences and Memories of the Great War” (MEMEX WWI) and “Great War from Below” (GWB). The results of the MEMEX WWI Project can be found in Geneviève Warland, ed., *Experience and Memory of the First World War: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Insights* (Münster: Waxmann, 2018).
  110. See, for example, the project of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (2013–17): “Commémorer 14–18: L’impact de la Première Guerre mondiale sur l’évolution du Droit International: les juristes belges.”
  111. Laurence van Ypersele, Geneviève Warland, and Michaël Amara, eds., “La Belgique et la Grande Guerre,” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 272 (2018): 3–134.
  112. See, for example, Sophie De Schaepdrijver, *Gabrielle Petit: The Death and Life of a Female Spy in the First World War* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Emmanuel Debruyne, “Femmes à Boches”: *Occupation du corps féminin, dans la France et la Belgique de la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2018); Benoît Majerus and Anne Roekens, *Vulnérables: Les patients psychiatriques en Belgique (1914–1918)* (Namur: Presses universitaires de Namur, 2018).
  113. See in particular Dominiek Dendooven, “Subaltern War Experiences in the First World War: Non-European Involvement in Belgium and Northern France, 1914–1920” (PhD diss., Universiteit Antwerpen, 2018), and Enika Ngongo, *Le Congo et la Grande Guerre: Enjeux et mutations pour la colonie belge (1914–1931)* (PhD in progress, Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles).
  114. For example, Jan Naert, “Hoeders van de staat. Burgemeesters in bezet en bevrijd België en Frankrijk (1914–1921)” (PhD, Universiteit Ghent, 2020); or Elise Rezsöhazy, “De la protection du secret militaire à l’occupation des populations civiles. Les polices secrètes allemandes derrière le front Ouest (1914-1918)” (PhD, UCLouvain, 2020).

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*Chapter 3*

# BRITISH AND COMMONWEALTH HISTORIOGRAPHY OF WORLD WAR I

1914–2018

*Jay Winter*



## **The Significance of World War I in Collective Memory as a Social and Commemorative Framework for Research**

The years 1914–18 are the great divide in British history. I will elaborate on this claim with respect to the impact of the Great War first on political, then on economic, and finally on cultural life. First comes politics. The 1914–18 war transformed British politics in three ways. The first change was the enfranchisement of the entire male population and the female population of Britain over the age of thirty. The second was the replacement of the Liberal Party by the Labour Party on the left of British politics. During and after World War I, the Liberals went into a century-long decline, which, with brief flurries of activity, has meant that the Labour Party is now (2018) the only alternative to the Conservative Party in British electoral politics. The third was the outbreak of civil war in Ireland in 1916, leading by 1923 to the effective secession of all but six northern provinces of Ireland from Britain.

In economic terms, World War I divided a period of domestic and global growth before 1914 and a period of domestic and global contraction

and depression after 1920. The war crippled the old export industries—textiles, shipbuilding, and coal—and eliminated the ballast provided by export income to British gross national product. Once again, the war was a bridge between the halcyon days, when the coal industry boomed, when British shipyards serviced the world, and when British banking and investment financed the industrialization of Europe and North and South America, and the dark period of depression, which began in 1920 and was still evident twenty years later.

Culturally, the Great War has been the most powerful vector in the development of British life in the twentieth century, even greater than the experience of World War II. The reason is simple: the bloodbath of the Great War had no equivalent, before or since.

Consequently, for generations of British people, there was no event in modern British history that can match the emotive power of the Great War. The preference for the title “Great War” over the later forms of reference—the First World War or World War I—indicates the power of the 1914–18 conflict to dominate discussions of British politics and society. Only a Great War could signify a conflict that took the lives of 750,000 British men and another 250,000 men from the dominions and empire. A million-man army of the dead marched into eternity in 1918, having lost their lives in what was seen then as a very Great War; great in the sense of terrible, devastating, unforgettable. Victory was celebrated in November 1918, but quickly the word “victory” took on a taste as of ashes, leading millions to see the war as a mutual disaster, mutilating victors and vanquished alike.

The scale of casualties, including the mutilated and wounded, as much as the dead, inevitably inscribed the Great War as a disaster in family history, and this is what separated the 1914–18 conflict from all British wars before or since. The Great War democratized death in wartime. Given the fact that the bulk of British casualties were borne by the volunteer army put together in 1914–16, before conscription arrived, casualties hit every corner of Britain. No longer was it Wellington’s “scum of the earth” who bore the brunt of military losses; now it was society as a whole. Indeed, the higher up a man was in the social scale, the greater were his chances of becoming a casualty of war. That was because middle- and upper-class men could pass the rudimentary medical examinations for fitness for service more frequently than working-class men, and because the social structure of the selection of the officer corps mirrored the social structure of prewar British society. Elites became officers, and officer casualties were twice as high as those of men in the ranks. Thus there was a Lost Generation of social elites, whose fate was recounted in the novels of disillusionment of the period 1928–32.

Even though casualties were socially determined, the scale of losses was so great that it makes sense to speak of the Great War spreading a cloud of grief and bereavement over the entire nation. No town in Britain was spared from the disaster, and even though only one in eight who served in the British army was killed, and one in three wounded, hundreds of thousands of families lost sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, and a host of neighbors, friends, mates, lovers, and assorted kinsmen. Nothing before in British history had cost so many lives, and no war would be so costly thereafter.

The language of loss was registered in material terms in the thirty thousand or so war memorials constructed in Britain in the interwar years. Each war memorial was the history of a town or village or neighborhood's blood sacrifice in the war. Many were ecumenical in the symbols chosen to mark the loss of life of local residents in the war. The cheapest form of stone monument was the obelisk, an Egyptian symbol that enabled those commissioning the monument to avoid offending those who believed that the Protestant Reformation had eliminated the cross as a national symbol. The obelisk was useful too in signifying the service of Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and atheists during the war. The cenotaph served the same purpose, being a Greek symbol without any Christian resonance at all. It was an empty tomb, not the empty tomb of Christian practice.

Whereas 11 November was not a state holiday in Britain as it was in France, a collective practice in the interwar years of marking the loss of life in the Great War emerged *in media res*. The two-minute silence stopped all business and communication at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year. Telephonists pulled the plugs on phone conversations. Buses came to a stop. Sirens wailed. In the 1930s, the early social survey organization Mass Observation asked people what they were thinking about during the two-minute silence. The answer: they were thinking about those who weren't there, the dead, the missing, the Lost Generation of the Great War.

The two-minute silence at 11:00 A.M. on 11 November came to an end in 1939, when Britain was at war again. It was simply too important for war production to go on, and authorities moved the event to the Sunday closest to 11 November. By taking it out of everyday life, they diminished its power, and by putting it into the Sunday liturgy, they tended to merge remembrance Sunday with church attendance. That was bound to mean that the ceremony lost its familial character and its immediacy, especially in the post-1945 decades when church attendance declined precipitately. In those years of austerity, in many cases, the names of the dead of World War II—one-third the number of World War I—were simply tacked on to already existent local war memorials. The Royal British Legion organized

poppy sales each year in November to fund charitable efforts on behalf of British veterans and their families. Millions wore the red paper poppy on their lapel as a miniature war memorial.

By then, too, other forms of remembrance had begun to dominate the commemorative calendar. By the 1960s, the television age turned remembrance into an activity the family did together on the living-room sofa. The BBC launched its second channel in 1964 with a twenty-six-part series on the Great War. It was the most spectacular success in televisual history. The series was scripted by two conservative historians, Correlli Barnett and John Terraine, but their words were eclipsed by film and photographs of the war. The massive public who viewed the series saw the images and forgot the script. The images had their own implicit captions: they showed that the war was an exercise in futility, that the leadership, military and political, had no idea how to control the instruments of violence they had unleashed, and that millions of men had paid with their lives and limbs for the incompetence or worse of their leaders. As the poet Ted Hughes put it, the war was a defeat around whose neck someone placed a victory medal. His father had been shell-shocked and never spoke of the war.

By the 1970s, the empire was a thing of the past, and a divided British public watched the war in Vietnam on their television sets, and their children studied World War I war poetry—written by Sassoon, Owen, Rosenberg, and others—as set texts in their O-level and A-level examinations. The war poets remained in print throughout the century, and later entered popular entertainment first on stage in 1963, through the music hall rendition of World War I songs in the pacifist play *Oh! What a Lovely War!*, which was turned into a successful film in 1968, and then on television through the spectacularly successful comic romp through British history *Blackadder Goes Forth* in 1993. Their comi-tragedy became a term with a human face: that of the British men sent over the top in the Great War by men whose lunacy showed the force of Aristotle's old dictum that comedy is tragedy just averted—or not averted in this case.

By the end of the twentieth century, the real costs of international travel had dropped sufficiently to enable a major battlefield tourism industry to emerge. This occurred elsewhere in the Commonwealth too, where Canadians came in droves to Vimy Ridge, and Australians to Gallipoli and the Somme. Many were in search of grandfathers or great-grandfathers who had fought. Family history fueled the Great War memory boom, both in terms of tourism and of a market for World War I fiction and film. Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli*, as much about the Vietnam War as about 1915, made a major impact in stimulating war remembrance in Australia.

So too did fiction set in the Great War. Most notably, there was in Britain Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy about Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and their doctor, W. H. R. Rivers, and Sebastian Faulks's account of the underground war of tunnelers, *Birdsong*, alongside Timothy Findley's *The Wars* in Canada and David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter* and Thomas Keneally's *Daughters of Mars* in Australia.

The 2014 centenary of the outbreak of the Great War reflected the ongoing tradition of seeing the war as a futile tragedy. No celebratory gestures were possible when the toll in human life was so colossal. The question as to how soldiers managed to survive the Great War has dominated public discussion, just as it has dominated historical writing, and by the early twenty-first century, a deepened sense of the traumatic memories of soldiers who fought in the Falkland Islands, Ireland, Afghanistan, and Iraq brought public attention back to their predecessors, the men of 1914–18, whose psychological wounds were and continue to be underestimated both during and long after the war.

The four years of the centenary of the Great War has produced a substantial increase in the documentary material available for future historians. This is the outcome of public appeals both at the national and the local level for families to come forward with the contents of suitcases long stored away in attics and garages containing the papers and photographs of ancestors who had served in the war. In a sense, the centenary has democratized the archive of war, by adding ordinary family papers to archives.

This focus on families has also boosted the interest in the local history of the war—of towns, villages, factories, hospitals, farms, and schools during the war. This has meant that after one hundred years, thinking about the Great War means thinking about local identities as much as about national identities.

It is too soon to see how the vote for Brexit fits in to the way Britons understand their past, including the Great War, as different from that of Europe. My sense is that the British Great War was fought in Europe primarily but was never understood as a European event. The war was defined as British in the sense that most of the men who fought and died joined up voluntarily and gave their lives to defend what they understood as the British way of life—pubs, country churches, football, the hallmarks of a British, and not a European, landscape. The relative weakness of British schoolchildren in foreign-language acquisition testifies to the long-standing and still strong British-mindedness of popular understandings of the Great War, and of twentieth-century history as a whole. Separate British and European understandings of the Great War made it easier for British men and women to stand back from the European Union, created

as a way of escaping from continental conflicts, especially those centering on France and Germany.

Finally, the Great War's significance in British popular culture is still bound up in one word—sacrifice. It is a word ripe with quasi-religious images and sentiments, which have been enhanced by and during the centenary. Britain is no longer a churchgoing nation. That does not mean that a search for the sacred has disappeared; on the contrary, the sacred has migrated to other sites. In twenty-first-century Britain, it is no longer in the churches but in front of war memorials, in war cemeteries, on the battlefields of the Somme and Ypres, and in war museums that ordinary British men and women ask sacred questions today. What does it mean to give your life for your brothers or your families? Why did so many men die for so little reason? Why so much suffering? The point here is that the focus on sacrifice adds a sacred aura to the war, one that was evident in the public response to the installation of 880,000 ceramic poppies in the moat around the Tower of London in 2014. Each one stood for a single lost soldier serving in British forces during the war. This symbolic sea of blood, coming out of British history, captured what the collective memory of the Great War is in Britain a century after the end of hostilities.

## The Historiography of World War I

Over the past century, there have been three previous generations of historical writing in Britain and the dominions on the Great War. The first was what I will term “the Great War generation.” These were scholars, former soldiers, and public officials who had direct knowledge of the war either through their own military service or through alternative service to their country's war effort. They wrote history from the top down, by and large through direct experience of the events they described. The central actor portrayed in these books was the national or the imperial state in its *dirigiste* forms at home or at the front. The most voluminous of these endeavors was the 133-book effort to write the economic and social history of the war, sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Most of these tomes were penned by men in essential positions, insiders who ran the war at home or at the front, and who had to deal with its aftershocks. Sir William Beveridge was chairman of the British series of this mammoth project. He was the bureaucrat's bureaucrat, responsible for food control and other facets of social policy. He was also ideally placed to organize studies of labor policy and other matters under his direct responsibility during the war.

On the military side, all the service arms engaged in retrospective analysis of their contribution to the war effort. This is evidently a literature of self-justification, a posture adopted in virtually all official histories of the armed forces, many of which were written by former soldiers for the benefit of the various national staff colleges, trying one at a time to frame “lessons” for the future. These works were frequently highly technical and so detailed that they took decades to appear. The delay diminished their usefulness in planning the next war in more efficient ways.

Alongside such publications were dozens of memoirs by the leaders of the military and the political war effort. The market for biographies was virtually unlimited, enabling men in retirement to construct their own, frequently self-serving, narratives of the war. If blame existed for failings, it was exported by these authors to their enemies. Lloyd George and Haig, Churchill, and Hamilton engaged in these prose conflicts after the war, as did, with less venom, Canadian, South African, and Australian leaders.

The second generation may be termed “fifty years on.” This group of historians wrote in the 1960s, and wrote not only the history of politics and decision-making at the top but also the history of society, defined as the history of social structures and social movements. Of course, the two kinds of history, political and social, went together, but they were braided together in different ways than in the interwar years. Many of these scholars had the benefit of sources unknown or unavailable before World War II. The “fifty-year rule” enabling scholars to consult state papers meant that all kinds of documents could be exploited by those writing in the 1960s, which threw new light on the history of the war.

In the 1960s, there was much more use of film and visual evidence than in the first generation, though in the interwar years battlefield guides and collections of photographs of devastation and weaponry were produced in abundance. After World War II, the age of television history began, attracting a greater audience to historical narratives than ever before. This became evident in the size of the audience for new and powerful television documentaries of the war. In 1964, the BBC launched its second channel with the monumental twenty-six-part history of the war. As we have already noted, *The Great War* was a remarkable achievement, exhaustively researched in film archives and vetted by an impressive group of military historians. Many of the millions of people who saw this series had lived through the war. In 1964, the young men who had fought and survived were mostly above the age of seventy, but what made the series a major cultural event was that the families of the survivors, and of those who did not come back, integrated these war stories into their own family narratives. The Great War thus escaped from the academy into the much more lucrative and populous field of public history, represented by

museums, special exhibitions, films, and now television. By the 1960s, the Imperial War Museum in London had surpassed many other sites as the premier destination of visitors to London. It remains to this day a major attraction in the capital, just as the Australian War Memorial, an equally impressive museum and site of remembrance in the Australian capital of Canberra, and the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa do.

The founder of the Australian war memorial, Charles Bean, had been the official historian of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF),<sup>1</sup> and had landed with it at Gallipoli and served with it in France and Flanders. His voice was that of the first generation, who spoke with the authority of lived experience. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that a new generation of historians, born later, took on the task of turning heroic narrative into rigorous history, detached from the men who had lived it.

Thus, this second generation of historians added a new kind of narrative to the collective memory of war, the archivally based social history of war. This was no mean achievement. There was more than a little nostalgia in the celebration by survivors of the sheer fact that they had lived “fifty years on.” By 1964, the European world that went to war in 1914 no longer existed. All the major imperial powers that joined the struggle had been radically transformed. The British Empire was (just about) a thing of the past. The Commonwealth Office merged with the Foreign Office in 1966. The nostalgia of 1964 was, therefore, for a world that had begun to fall apart in the Great War. For many people, the blemishes and ugliness of much of that world were hidden by a kind of sepia-toned reverence for the days before the conflict. “Never such innocence, / Never before or since,” wrote Philip Larkin in a poem whose title referred not to 1914 but to the more archaic “MCMXIV.” This poem was published in 1964.

In much historical writing, as much as in historical documentaries, the dramatic tension derived from juxtaposing this set of prelapsarian images with the devastation and horror of the Western Front, as well as with the sense of decline, a loss of greatness, that marked the post-1945 decades in Britain and France, not to mention Germany and Italy. Whatever went wrong with the world seemed to be linked to 1914, to the time when a multitude of decent men went off to fight one war and wound up fighting a much more terrible one.

Decencies were betrayed, some argued, by a blind elite prepared to sacrifice the lives of the masses for vapid generalizations like “glory” or “honor.” This populist strain may be detected in much writing about the war in the 1960s, and in the study of social movements that arose out of it. The fiftieth anniversary of the Gallipoli landing provoked a surge of interest in the Great War in Australia and New Zealand, where the loss of the battle was eclipsed by the birth of these two nations. Similarly heroic

were narratives of the Bolshevik revolution, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 1967. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many scholars told us much more about the history of labor, of women, of ordinary people during the conflict than scholars working in the interwar years had.

The third generation may be termed the “Vietnam generation.” Its practitioners started writing in the 1970s and 1980s, when a general reaction against military adventures like the war in Vietnam took place in Britain and Europe as well as in the United States. This was also the period in Europe when public opinion turned against the nuclear deterrent, and when the 1973 Middle Eastern war had dangerous effects on the economies of the developed world. The glow of the “just war” of 1939–45 had faded, and a new generation was more open to a view that war was a catastrophe to both winners and losers alike.

This was the environment in which darker histories of the Great War emerged. There were still scholars who insisted that the Great War was a noble cause, won by those who had right on their side. But there were others who came to portray the Great War as a futile exercise, a tragedy, a stupid, horrendous waste of lives, producing nothing of great value aside from the ordinary decencies and dignities thrown away by blind and arrogant leaders.

The most influential works were written by three very different scholars. Paul Fussell, a veteran of the Second World War wounded in combat, produced a classic literary study, *The Great War and Modern Memory* in 1975.<sup>2</sup> He was a professor of literature, a man who saw action as a combat soldier in World War II, and used that experience to fashion an interpretation of how soldiers came to understand the war they found in 1914–18 as an ironic event, one in which anticipation and outcome were wildly different. It was a time when the old romantic language of battle seemed to lose its meaning. Writers twisted older forms to suit the new world of trench warfare, one in which mass death was dominant and where, under artillery and gas bombardment, soldiers lost any sense that war was a glorious thing. Fussell termed this style the “ironic” style and challenged us to see war writing throughout the twentieth century as built upon the foundations laid by the British soldier-writers of the Great War.

John (later Sir John) Keegan produced a book a year later that paralleled Fussell’s. An instructor in the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, but a man whose childhood infirmities ensured he would never go to war, Keegan asked the disarmingly simple question, “Is battle possible?” The answer, published in *The Face of Battle* in 1976,<sup>3</sup> was perhaps yes, long ago, but now in the twentieth century, battle presented men with terrifying challenges. The men who fought at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 could run to the next hill to save their lives. Foot soldiers converging on

Waterloo four centuries later could arrive a day late. But in 1916, at the Battle of the Somme, there was no escape. Given the industrialization of warfare, the air above the trenches on the Somme was filled with lethal projectiles from which no one could run. Mass death in that battle and in the other great conflict of 1916 at Verdun pushed soldiers beyond the limits of human endurance. Nothing like the set battles of World War I followed in the 1939–45 war, though Stalingrad came close to replicating the horror of the Somme and Verdun. Here was a military historian's book, but one whose starting point was humane and to a degree psychological. The soldiers' breaking point was Keegan's subject, and with power, subtlety, and technical authority he opened a new chapter in the study of military history as a humane discipline.

Here his work echoed that of a historian who worked outside of the academy: Martin Middlebrook. His *First Day on the Somme*, published in 1971, brought the searchlight of research down to the level of the individual soldier.<sup>4</sup> His pioneering work, which he repeated in subsequent years on other days of two world wars, made more vivid than ever before what may be termed the populist history of the war. Of great importance was the evidence he provided as to how well-informed families were about the fate of their men. Telephone links told loved ones in the garrison town of Bury in Lancashire not only of losses but also of the distinctions and decorations earned by their men well before the newspapers got the information.

In 1979, Eric Leed, a historian steeped in the literature of anthropology, wrote a similarly pathbreaking book. *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*<sup>5</sup> borrowed subtly from the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner. He had examined people in a liminal condition, no longer part of an older world from which they had come, and unable to escape from the midpoint, the no-man's land, in which they found themselves. Here is the emotional landscape of the trench soldiers of the Great War. They were men who could never come home again, for whom war was their home, and who recreated it in the years following the Armistice. Here was the world of shell-shocked men, but also that of the *Freikorps*, militarized freebooters of the immediate postwar period, who prepared the ground for the Nazis.

In all these cases, and by reference to very different sources, the subject at hand was the tragedy of the millions of men who went into the trenches and who came out, if at all, permanently marked by the experience. They bore what some observers of the survivors of Hiroshima termed the "death imprint": the knowledge that their survival was a purely arbitrary accident. Here we may see some traces of the antinuclear movement, putting Japanese civilians and Great War soldiers alongside one another.

The moral and political differences between the two cases are evident, but the wreckage of war, so these writers seemed to say, is at the heart of the civilization in which we live. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that these three books, alongside others of the time, helped create a tragic interpretation of the Great War, one in which victimhood and violence were braided together in such a way as to tell a fully European story of the war, one to which the founders of the European Union clearly reacted. From the 1970s on, European integration was an attempt to move away from the notion of the nation-state as that institution which had the right to go to war, as Raymond Aron put it. The result has been a progressive diminution of the role of the military in the political and social life of most European countries. James Sheehan asked the question in a recent book *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?*<sup>6</sup> The answer is, they and most (though not all) of their leaders have fled from the landscape of war so devastatingly presented in the works of Fussell, Keegan, Leed, and others.

One particularly active school of historical writing in English has been in Australia. Canadian scholars have made similar contributions, but the lead in producing pathbreaking histories of the Great War has been taken by a series of remarkable scholars in Australia. The first among them is Bill Gammage, whose *The Broken Years* was the pioneering account of the Australian Imperial Force in the Great War.<sup>7</sup> Gammage was the first man to consult the archives of the war outside and beyond the work of Charles Bean, the official historian of the Australian war effort. He turned official history into national history, and did so in moving and enduring ways. The very title undercut triumphalism while retaining a sense of respect for the Anzac achievement. Similarly, Ken Inglis showed how significant war memorials were in an understanding of the enduring effects of the Great War through his classic study, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*.<sup>8</sup> And the military history of the conflict has no finer chroniclers than Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, who, in a series of studies of British military history, completely undermined the claim that the British high command engaged in a learning curve during the war. The problem, Prior and Wilson showed, was that they did not learn at all, or learned something they then forgot, and stuck to the idea that the war would be won by a breakthrough battle.<sup>9</sup> British historians, like Gary Sheffield, think otherwise, but the balance of opinion stands with Prior and Wilson. Here the work of Bill Philpott on the Battle of the Somme has reinforced some elements of both Prior and Wilson's and Sheffield's points of view.<sup>10</sup> But of one thing we can be sure: there will be more.

The history of commemoration in Britain and the Commonwealth was another major development of the third generation of historians writing about the Great War. Jonathan Vance, writing on Canada, Bruce Scates

on Australia, and Jay Winter on Britain, France, and Germany all brought out the implications of Ken Inglis's early work on the material culture of collective remembrance.<sup>11</sup> Many other scholars have picked up these themes in regional, provincial, and local contexts all over the world.

### **Outlook on Current Research Trends: The Transnational Generation**

Now we are in a fourth generation of writing on the Great War. I would like to term it the "transnational generation." This generation has a global outlook. The term "global" describes both the tendency to write about the war in more than European terms and to see the conflict as trans-European, transatlantic, and beyond. Here was the first war among industrialized countries, reaching the Middle East and Africa, the Falkland Islands and China, drawing soldiers into the epicenter in Europe from Vancouver to Cape Town to Bombay and to Adelaide. Here was a war that gave birth to the Turkey of Ataturk and to the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin. Demands for decolonization arose from a war that had promised self-determination and had produced very little of the kind. Economic troubles arose directly out of the war, and these were sufficiently serious to undermine the capacity of the older imperial powers to pay for their imperial and quasi-imperial footholds around the world.

A word or two may be useful to distinguish the international approach, common to many of the older histories of the war, from what I have termed the transnational approach. For nearly a century, the Great War was framed in terms of a system of international relations in which the national and imperial levels of conflict and cooperation were taken as given. Transnational history does not start with one state and move on to others but takes multiple levels of historical experience as given, levels that are both below and above the national level.<sup>12</sup> Thus the history of mutiny is transnational, in that it happened in different armies for different reasons, some of which are strikingly similar to the sources of protest and refusal in other armies. So is the history of finance, technology, war economies, logistics, gender relations, and command. The history of commemoration also happened on many levels, and the national is not necessarily the most significant, not the most enduring.

The peace treaties following the Great War show the meaning of the transnational in other ways. Now we can see that the war was both the apogee and the beginning of the end of imperial power, spanning and eroding national and imperial boundaries. Erez Manela's work on "the Wilsonian moment" is a case in point. He reconfigures the meaning of

the Versailles settlement by exploring its unintended consequences in stimulating movements of national liberation in Egypt, India, Korea, and China. Instead of telling us about the interplay of Great Power politics, he shows how non-Europeans invented their own version of Wilson in their search for a kind of self-determination that he, alongside Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando, was unprepared to offer to them. Who could have imagined that the decision these men took to award rights to Shantung Province, formerly held by Germany, not to China but to Japan would lead to major rioting and the formation of the Chinese Communist Party?<sup>13</sup> Xu Guoqi has been active in mapping the trajectory of Asian history and, in particular, the Sino-Japanese conflict through a careful study of the Great War period. And Santanu Das has vividly explored the multifaceted effects of the war on Indians and on India, through the history of emotions, material objects, and narratives.<sup>14</sup>

Historians of the revolutionary moment in Europe itself between 1917 and 1921 have approached their subject more and more as a transnational phenomenon. After all, both revolutionaries and the forces of order who worked to destroy them were well aware of what may be termed the cultural transfer of revolutionary (and counterrevolutionary) strategy, tactics, and violence. In recent years, these exchanges have been analyzed at the urban and regional levels, helping us to see the complexity of a story somewhat obscured by treating it solely in national terms. Comparative urban history has established the striking parallels between the challenges urban populations faced in different warring states. Now we can answer in the affirmative the question as to whether there is a metropolitan history of warfare. In important respects, the residents of Paris, London, and Berlin shared more with one another than they did with their respective rural compatriots. These experienced communities had a visceral reality somewhat lacking even in the imagined communities of the nation.

Here we must be sensitive to the way contemporaries used the language of nation and empire to describe loyalties and affiliations of a much smaller level of aggregation. A journalist asking British troops on the Western Front whether they were fighting for the empire got a “yes” from one soldier. His mates asked him what he meant. The answer was that he was fighting for the Empire Music Hall in Hackney, a working-class district of London. This attachment to the local and the familiar was utterly transnational.<sup>15</sup>

Another subject now understood more in transnational than in international terms is the history of women in wartime. Patriarchy, family formation, and the persistence of gender inequality were transnational realities in the period of the Great War. Furthermore, the war’s massive effects on civilian life precipitated a movement of populations of stagger-

ing proportions. Refugees in France, the Netherlands, and Britain from the area occupied by the Western Front numbered in the millions. So did those fleeing the fighting in the borderlands spanning the old German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires. One British scholar has estimated that perhaps 20 percent of the population of Russia was on the move, heading for safety wherever it could be found during the Great War.<sup>16</sup> And that population current turned into a torrent throughout Eastern Europe during the period of chaos surrounding the Armistice. What made it worse was that the United States closed its gates to such immigrants, ending one of the most extraordinary periods of transcontinental migration in history. Thus population transfer, forced or precipitated by war, transformed the ethnic character of many parts of Greece, Turkey, the Balkans, and the vast tract of land from the Baltic states to the Caucasus. Such movements antedated the war, but they grew exponentially after 1914. This is why it makes sense to see the Great War as having occasioned the emergence of that icon of transnational history in the twentieth century, the refugee, with his or her pitiful belongings slung over shoulders or carts. The photographic evidence of this phenomenon is immense.

The cutting-edge history of the Great War is transnational in yet another respect. We live in a world where historians born in one country have been able to migrate to follow their historical studies and either stay in their adopted homes or migrate again, when necessary, to obtain a university post. Christopher Clark was born in Sydney, studied in Berlin, and finished his studies in Cambridge, where he still teaches. John Horne grew up in Adelaide, trained at Oxford, and teaches in Dublin. Sean McMeekin studied at Berkeley and taught in Turkey for a considerable time before returning to the United States; Norman Stone was trained at Cambridge and taught at Bilken University in Turkey. Fifty of the seventy authors of the three-volume *Cambridge History of the First World War*, which I edited, are transnational scholars, practicing history far from their place of birth, and enriching the world of scholarship thereby.<sup>17</sup> Seeing the world in which we live at a tangent, in the words of Constantine P. Cavafy, opens up insights harder to identify from within a settled world. The world of scholarship today may be described in many ways, but the term “settled” is not one of them. This unsettledness is a major advantage, one that will enable more transnational histories to emerge alongside national histories, and for each to enrich the other.

It is important to repeat that these new initiatives in transnational history have built on the work of the three generations of scholars that preceded them. The history of the Great War that has emerged in recent years is additive, cumulative, and multifaceted. National histories have

a symbiotic relationship with transnational histories; the richer the one, the deeper the other. No cultural historian of any standing ignores the history of the nation or of the social movements that at times have overthrown it; to do so would be absurd. No military historian ignores the language in which commands turn into movements on the field of battle. War is such a protean event that it touches every facet of human life.

Thus one difficulty now is to separate Anglo-Saxon historiography from that practiced in other languages. The overlaps between them are so great now that we divide them only for heuristic purposes. In one respect, though, there is a new Anglo-Saxon agenda of research on the Great War that promises to enrich our understanding of the history of the subject in a host of ways. It may be termed the “Greater War” approach, capturing the work of scholars in Dublin led by Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, who insist on the unity of a decade of conflict, between 1912 and roughly 1923, in which the violence of the Balkan Wars, the Great War, and the postwar years forms one powerful continuum. The great advantage of this approach is that it shifts the center of gravity of war from Paris to Warsaw and points east.<sup>18</sup> If the Western Front observed a ceasefire on 11 November 1918, that was evidently not the case throughout Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and beyond. Here the instability of the peace settlement of 1919 can be sketched in blood, just as it can be seen clearly in the turbulent postwar years throughout the British and French empires, and in other countries, such as China and Latin America.

There are three studies that point to new directions in the history of World War I. First, the work of Christopher Clark on the outbreak of the war has tended to reflect our contemporary concern with terrorism. His exploration of the Serb entanglement with the Black Hand and the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 were probably impossible before 9/11. His shift of the terms of the debate on war guilt toward Serbia has led him to break with the old Fischer thesis on unique German guilt and to generalize responsibility for the war among all the great powers. This has appealed to German readers of his book in particular, while leaving many Anglo-Saxon readers unmoved in their view that a European war was planned in Vienna and Berlin before anywhere else. If everyone was responsible for the outbreak of war, then no one was more responsible than others. Thus his contribution reinforces the general view dominant in earlier historiography that the Great War was a collective tragedy with collective authors and consequences.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, the first volume of Hew Strachan’s comprehensive history of World War I, *To Arms*, is the first general history of the conflict written by a British historian on the basis of a comprehensive study of European archives and historiography. Breaking out of the English-language fetters

in which most of British military history has been limited for decades, Strachan clearly points the way to the future. Strachan's important book is the beginning of a multivolume history, which, when published, will provide a landmark as the first global military history of the war.<sup>20</sup>

John Horne's *Our War* is important in crossing the border between Northern and Southern Ireland, and to show that the boundaries constructed after the war have falsely divided the war into two conflicts, one acknowledged and another hidden.<sup>21</sup> The significance of this book goes beyond that of what George Bernard Shaw called *John Bull's Other Ireland*. It points to the need to bring the violent years after 1918 back into the history of the war. In particular, this matters in the case of Eastern Europe where most historians still start their national history of Poland or Hungary or Lithuania in 1918 and speak of a century of struggle to achieve it. What Horne has done for Ireland, others in future must do for Eastern Europe. The disaster that struck Eastern Europe and Russia in 1914 did not stop in 1918. The years 1917–23 form a unity in economic history, in demographic history, indeed in the history of revolution. While recognizing the importance of chronicling the story of national movements and armies, it is time for all historians of World War I to contribute to a fully European history of the conflict that we still rightly term the Great War.

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*Chapter 4*

## OF EXPECTATIONS AND ASPIRATIONS

South Asian Perspectives on World War I, the World,  
and the Subcontinent, 1918–2018

*Margret Frenz*



Every Republic Day, a parade is held at the center of power in New Delhi, starting at Rashtrapati Bhavan and moving along Rajpath, making its way past and around the India Gate.<sup>1</sup> The parade is the highlight of the three-day-long celebrations of India's independence and its constitution, which took effect on 26 January 1950. The parade showcases India's cultural and social heritage as well as its military strength. Thus, the cityscape built under British colonial rule to reflect the splendor of the Raj has been claimed and transformed to represent independent India's constitutional grounding. Of the aforementioned buildings, the India Gate at the eastern end of Rajpath is the starting point for this chapter: initially named the All India War Memorial, the India Gate was designed by one of the empire's most prominent architects, Edwin Lutyens.<sup>2</sup> Work began in 1921, and after a decade, the memorial was dedicated in a ceremony conducted by the then-vice-roy to commemorate the more than 70,000 soldiers of the Indian armies who died in World War I.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the names of 13,516 further soldiers who died at the North-West Frontier and in the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919 are inscribed on the arch and the foundations of the India Gate.<sup>4</sup> The India Gate is built in a neoclassical style free of religious ephemera.

In postcolonial India, the India Gate perhaps best symbolizes the intricate fabric of colonial and postcolonial commemoration of war—and the struggle for independence—in what was British India and is now India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. After the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, in connection with Bangladesh becoming its own state, the Amar Jawan Jyoti (the flame of the immortal soldier) was added underneath the India Gate. It commemorates unidentified Indian soldiers who died fighting for India. Thus, the India Gate together with the Amar Jawan Jyoti arguably combine colonial and postcolonial public expressions of mourning for members of the Indian colonial and postcolonial army. At the same time, the India Gate and Amar Jawan Jyoti reflect the very different wars in which the subcontinent was involved in the twentieth century.

I argue that World War I, as seen from a South Asian perspective, was a colonial rather than a global war, and was perceived as potentially offering a better position for negotiating increased Indian participation in ruling the country after the war. Although much support for the war was couched in the language of voluntary aid to London, it seems doubtful that there was a choice to be made. In fact, the British colonial government mobilized not only men but also resources in cash and kind, rather purposefully, making their demands more palatable to the Indian population by promising an avenue to self-government for the years after the war.

This chapter explores the ways in which World War I features in commemorative practices as well as in Indian (and South Asian) collective memory. Secondly, it discusses the historiography on World War I, taking, whenever possible, a South Asian perspective.<sup>5</sup> In a third section, it outlines current research trends and commemorative practices.

### **World War I in Indian and South Asian Commemorative Practice**

Apart from the India Gate in Delhi, several memorials dedicated to the memory of Indian soldiers fighting in World War I are situated in India, and a few are scattered across the world. In India, nearly all prominent memorials dedicated to the memory of Indian soldiers and seamen who lost their lives during World War I are located in the capitals of the erstwhile presidencies of British India, namely, Chennai (then Madras), Kolkata (then Calcutta), and Mumbai (then Bombay)—most of the memorials being “small and austere.”<sup>6</sup>

The Bombay Memorial is housed in the Sailor’s Home on Thana Road, not far from the port, and commemorates the sailors of both world wars.

These sailors provided the necessary skills to ship materials required for the war between India and Europe. Bombay was the major port and hub for shipping men and material between India and the battlefields in Europe, Mesopotamia, and Africa.

Similarly, the Kolkata Lascar Memorial on the riverbank of the Hoogly commemorates Indian sailors, whereas the Glorious Dead Cenotaph on the northern edge of the Maidan appears to have been dedicated to the memory of British soldiers in the Indian army during World War I. It is built following the example of the cenotaph in London. The names on the plaques are exclusively English ones, and in 1959 the plaques were removed and brought to nearby St. John's Church, where they can be seen today. To this day, a Christian service is held at St. John's Church in combination with a wreath-laying ceremony at the Glorious Dead Cenotaph, organized and led by the British high commissioner to remember the—white—British soldiers to whom the cenotaph is dedicated. The 49th Bengalis Memorial on College Square just a couple of miles away pays tribute to the dead Bengali soldiers of World War I. The white marble pillar is, however, frequently submerged by the bustling activity on the square. Each of the three memorials is dedicated to a different race or section of society, and the distinct ceremonies held until now illustrate the segregation of the colonial army on the grounds of race and class during the war.

In Chennai, the Victory Memorial was originally built in 1933 to commemorate Indian soldiers who fell during World War I. It is located in the southern vicinity of Fort St. George at a roundabout marking the beginning of Marina Beach. Over the course of the twentieth century, inscriptions paying tribute to soldiers who died in World War II, the Indo-Pakistani Wars of 1947–48, 1965, and 1971, the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and the 1999 Kargil War were added to the main memorial or the little pillars surrounding it. The original engraving on the foundation of the memorial reads, "To the memory of all those from the Madras Presidency who lost their lives in the service of the British Crown." After independence, it was changed and now states, "To the service of the nation," with "and post-independence martyrs" added to the inscription on another line. Arguably, the transformation of the dedication on the Victory Memorial represents not only the transformation of the country from a colony within the British Empire to an independent nation-state but also the transformation of a colonial people moving on from referencing the king emperor to acknowledging their fellow citizens for their services in the army.

There are hardly any memorials relating to World War I in Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka. In Karachi, a memorial engraved with the

names of soldiers who fought and died in World War I is located in the Karachi War Cemetery. Similarly, a section of the Protestant Cemetery known as Gorā Qabristān in Rawalpindi is dedicated to the graves of soldiers of the 1914–18 war.<sup>7</sup> In Bangladesh, building an independent nation in 1971 dominates any historical narrative. The Jatiyo Sriti Shoudho (National Martyrs Memorial) in Savar and the recently inaugurated Liberation War Memorial in Tripura play a central role in public commemorative practice: the country does not have a memorial dedicated to the soldiers of World War I.<sup>8</sup> A cenotaph was built in Colombo in the 1920s, now dedicated to the dead soldiers of both world wars. Rana Wiru Commemoration Day, also known as Remembrance Day, in Sri Lanka is on 18 May and commemorates the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka in 2009. The official ceremonies on the day are held at the National War Memorial in Colombo, where the dead of all wars since World War I are remembered.

Outside the subcontinent, war memorials for Indian combatants and noncombatants were erected in various European locations, for instance in Brighton in the United Kingdom<sup>9</sup> and in Neuve-Chapelle in France.<sup>10</sup> In the Middle East, a memorial has been erected in Basra in Iraq on which Indian soldiers are now named after the memorial was relocated and rebuilt after the Iraq war.<sup>11</sup>

This brief overview of the existing memorials dedicated to the dead of World War I in India or connected to the memory of Indian Expeditionary Forces who fought in theaters of war in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa illustrates that within India, the major memorials have undergone various transformations over the past century. For instance, both the India Gate in New Delhi and the Victory Memorial in Chennai commemorate not only soldiers who fell during World War I but also their comrades who did not return from later wars.

Particularly with respect to the India Gate, the imbuing of the memorial with a new meaning is obvious: away from the demonstration of imperial power and India's subordinate role within the empire toward becoming a reference point for independent India as an integral part of the parades surrounding the celebrations of 15 August. Commemorative practice and collective memory have been transformed, and imaginations and enactments have shifted from an imperial, colonial context to a post-colonial, independent, and national one. Not only has the Indian state taken up the site as a central marker for the nation's narrative of independence, but New Delhi's and India's citizens also congregate around India Gate in order to voice and present their demands. The Victory Memorial in Chennai underwent a similar transformation. In addition, the inscriptions on its marble and stone structure were updated: the inscription at

the Victory Memorial's foundation now dedicates it to soldiers of "the nation," erasing the reference to "the British Crown."

Significantly, there are hardly any commemorative events that honor only the soldiers and seamen of World War I—perhaps because it is seen as a colonial war that was imposed on India. In fact, India was declared to be at war with Germany by London—without consulting Indian opinions and perspectives on this major step.<sup>12</sup> Although support for the war effort was given aplenty, the focus was on achieving responsible government and, perhaps, even independence.

The bombardment of oil tanks, harbor buildings, and anchored ships in the Chennai (then Madras) harbor by the SMS *Emden* in September 1914 seems to be much more present in the imagination of current Chennaiites than the existence of the Victory Memorial. Madras was the only Indian city to be bombarded during World War I. On the one hand, the presence of the event is reflected in the annual commemoration ceremony that takes place at the commemorative plaque on the eastern wall of the civil high court, in which Chempakaraman Pillai is also commemorated. He was a Tamilian, born in Kerala, and lived in Germany. Apparently, he was on board the *Emden* as the ship's surgeon.<sup>13</sup> The former chief minister of Tamilnadu, M. Karunanidhi,<sup>14</sup> erected a statue for Chempakaraman Pillai, projecting him as a brave soldier in the struggle against British oppressors. This underlines the perception of World War I as being part and parcel of the freedom struggle. On the other hand, the brief bombardment of Madras harbor is present in the use of the word "emden" in the Tamil and Malayalam languages; it denotes a strong, bold person, taking on a challenge.<sup>15</sup>

The analysis of the war memorials in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai show that they and their meaning were transformed—not forgotten. Rather, there were relatively few World War I memorials in India from the start, and the ones that were put up were generally built by the imperial rulers to serve, firstly, the praise of empire and, secondly, the commemoration of dead British and Indian soldiers. Moreover, memorials and the way in which nonwhite soldiers were remembered varied across the empire, with some memorials bearing the names of Indian soldiers, others not, and none of African soldiers.<sup>16</sup> I argue that the colonial and imperial overtones of creating these war memorials, especially the India Gate, reflect the perception that World War I was indeed a colonial war, perhaps global in geographical terms, but certainly colonial in how it was executed and in what it meant for the Indian population. Corresponding to this notion is the engagement of the local population with the memorials: the Victory Memorial in Chennai hardly plays a role in the lives of Chennaiites and is rarely visited—in contrast to memorials dedicated to

politicians such as M. G. Ramachandran and C. N. Annadurai,<sup>17</sup> which were built in a style reminiscent of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and are located in proximity to the Victory Memorial along Marina Beach. The latter are highly valued by the local population and are visited in veneration akin to the veneration demonstrated in temples, mosques, and churches: shoes are removed before entering the space surrounding the memorials, donations are made, and festivals frame ritualistic events at the memorials. Remarkably, Mary Hancock's book-length discussion on *The Politics of Heritage from Madras to Chennai* does not mention the Victory Memorial once, an implicit suggestion that neither in the past nor in the present does World War I play a role in the Tamil memoryscape.<sup>18</sup> The India Gate, apart from being incorporated into independent India's celebrations of the Republic, has become a favorite spot to enjoy summer evenings with friends or have a picnic or an ice cream, and has also turned into a sought-after tourist location where pictures and selfies are taken. Thus, the integration of the India Gate in the urban landscape of New Delhi has taken quite a different trajectory from the one originally planned.

## Historiography of World War I Relating to India/South Asia

In the past decade, which witnessed the centenary of World War I, engagement and research relating to commemorative practice as well as social and cultural aspects of the war mushroomed and produced a much larger output than the decades before. Despite this, the research literature on India—or South Asia—and World War I comprises a comparatively small body of work, particularly when considering the vast field of historical, sociological, anthropological, and other studies relating to the subcontinent's path to independence, emergence of three nation-states, and sociocultural and economic trajectory over the past seventy years. The following overview of the historiography on literature relating to the role of India and Indians during World War I attempts to include, whenever possible, South Asian perspectives. At the time of the war, two-thirds of the subcontinent was under direct British colonial administration, and one-third was under the rule of Indian princes whose reign was controlled by British residents at their courts. Goa, Daman, and Diu belonged to the Portuguese Empire, and the French had possessions along the southeastern and southwestern Indian coasts.<sup>19</sup>

Between 1918 and today, the writing about India's role in the war has transformed profoundly with respect to thematic and methodological approaches. It can be divided into three phases. Roughly, the first phase

includes the immediate years after the war until Indian and Pakistani Independence in 1947; the second phase covers the first four decades or so of the postcolonial nation-state until the mid-nineties; and the third encompasses the last two decades, post-liberalization up until the current day. In these three phases, different themes and concerns characterized investigations and historical research into the involvement and role of Indians in World War I. Broadly speaking, the main question posed by writers in the pre-independence phase was “why” and “for whom” World War I was fought, while many scholars of the second, post-independence phase turned to the question of “how” the war was conducted, and scholars of the current, post-liberalization phase finally engaged with “who” battled the war—the combatants and noncombatants—as well as the experiences they made over the course of World War I. Some themes, however, cannot be exclusively allocated to one phase or the other, but bridge them or occur in waves throughout the past hundred years.

In the first phase (1914–47), research and writing on World War I was characterized by an imperial and colonial perspective. It saw Indian soldiers as being part of the imperial effort to win the war, with an emphasis on doing so first on the battlefields of Europe and subsequently in Africa and the Middle East. Individual soldiers and their experiences, perceptions, and imaginations were less of a concern for authors; the focus was firmly on military aspects of the war. Focal topics were the various campaigns and actions of the war, the recruitment process, and the deployment of the Indian Expeditionary Forces to France and Belgium in 1914 and Mesopotamia in 1915, as well as to other theaters of war in Africa and the Middle East throughout the war years. Some of the memorials dedicated to the combatants and noncombatants of the British colonies were built and inaugurated in the two decades after the war (see above).

In the second phase, from around 1947 to the mid-1990s, World War I arguably became less of an interest to historians as questions and research into the struggle for independence and nation-building took center stage, and the war was seen as one of the contributing factors to advancing potential self-government in India. This is reflected in many histories of India that discuss important twentieth-century events: within the larger historical context, World War I receives little attention, often being relegated to a couple of paragraphs or a couple of pages, or not even featuring in the chronology.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the effects of World War I were mostly seen in conjunction with its political results, notably the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1917, the passing of the Rowlatt Act, which continued martial law throughout British India, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in 1919, and the resulting noncooperation movement under the leadership of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as well as the independence

movement.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the rise of Indian businesses during and after the war and the home-rule movements received attention. Commemoration ceremonies were limited, and the original intention of some memorials was transformed as previously mentioned with respect to the India Gate and the Victory Memorial.

The third phase, from the mid-1990s, is characterized by an increased interest in World War I in the run-up to the centenary commemorations around the world. In India, this period has also seen growing engagement on the part of the state. The past two decades have generated studies exploring social, cultural, and medical aspects of the war. Perhaps the most significant theme that has been taken up is the attempt to write Indian soldiers and seamen—their voices, experiences, and perceptions—back into the story. This was made possible after hidden sources such as letters, sound archives, photographs, and material objects belonging to or created by Indian soldiers were unearthed and provided the basis for new perspectives on sociocultural dimensions.

Looking at the historiography on South Asia and World War I through a broad thematic lens, the major groups can be summarized under military, diplomatic-political, and sociocultural history—and most importantly, subaltern perspectives.

## Military History

“If any troops are to leave this country for active warfare in Europe, let Indian as well as British soldiers be sent without distinction of race and creed to serve side by side in defence of our united cause.”<sup>22</sup>

It has been highlighted by several scholars that monographs and shorter studies exploring the role of the Indian Army within the British Empire generally constitute only a comparatively small field of research. Nevertheless, they are too many to be discussed comprehensively and in detail in this section on military history, which limits itself to the most important publications through the pre-independence, post-independence, and post-1990s phases.

Contemporary studies of World War I and of the following years up to the late 1940s tend to engage with the vast assistance given by India to the empire, its contributions in terms of men, material, and money—assistance that went far beyond military support. During World War I, Indian soldiers were sent to Europe to fight for the colonial emperor’s cause for the first time in the history of the British Empire. Until then, they had only been perceived as a colonial army, with their three main responsibil-

ities firmly placed in the territories of the colonies: they were employed to guard the internal security in India, maintain the northwestern frontier of India, and act as an imperial reserve for potential invasions from Afghanistan or Russia. The majority of soldiers came from the Punjab, belonged to the mid-peasantry, and earned their livelihood by soldiering in the army for five to seven years. They had received hardly any education, and were thus deemed less of a threat to English “superiority” than educated Indians.<sup>23</sup> Both recruitment and employment of Indian soldiers by the British colonial government featured layers of inherent and more overt variations of racism: the Indian population was categorized into different communities, soldiers being recruited only from what were perceived to be the “martial races,” and a fear existed of changing the power balance through having Indian soldiers serve in Europe. However, at the juncture of declaring war on Germany in 1914, Indian combatants and noncombatants were deemed essential to the British war effort and deployed in all theaters of the war. It needs to be borne in mind that the Indian army was an army put together by the British colonial government. Officers and other commanding positions were firmly held in British hands, with colonial Indian subjects allowed to become common soldiers, including lower-ranking officers. The command structure followed a clear and racially biased hierarchy, with social norms of a colonial society replicated in the army.<sup>24</sup>

Looking at studies published in the pre-independence historiographical phase, differences in approach become apparent rather quickly: even if they focus on detailing the numbers and figures of the Indian contributions to the war on all levels, contrasting perspectives on how these were perceived become obvious. Shortly after the war, in 1919, Mukat Bhargava published an extensive study on World War I. It is a detailed four-hundred-page account of the contributions of India and Indians to the British war effort. Enumerating and listing these contributions resulted only partially in the desired overall acknowledgment of how crucial they were for the British. In his preface, claiming to represent the views of Indians, Bhargava states his concerns about how little the sacrifices of the Indian population were acknowledged—or how they were even disguised—in the years after the war:

The idea of compiling a readable volume which could enable India and the world at large to estimate and appreciate at its full worth the invaluable assistance rendered by this country to the British Empire when the latter was face to face with a crisis of the greatest nature suggested itself to me when certain influential persons both here and in England were making an organized attempt to belittle India's services in order to serve their own

selfish objects or those of their parties—an attempt, alas, which has not yet been abandoned altogether. These people forget, perhaps deliberately, that had India not come in the rescue of the Empire when the latter's fate hung in a balance, so to say, . . . the history of the war would have been written in a different tune.<sup>25</sup>

Bhargava's volume considers in detail how all sections of the Indian population as well as Indian rulers of the princely states gave, as requested by the British colonial state, their lives, money, material, and expertise in huge numbers. According to Bhargava, they perceived this as an opportunity to achieve concessions by the colonial state toward responsible government or independence—after all, Britain was defending democracy and liberty in Europe and, thus, should grant equality in political terms, i.e. hand over government to Indians to “become a fair partnership beneficial to both parties, that it will someday represent brotherhood, not subjection and exploitation.”<sup>26</sup> However, despite some measures taken that inched toward self-government, such as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1917, the expectations of achieving “swaraj within one year”<sup>27</sup> were not to be fulfilled.

A rather different tone is taken by the report of the government of India, published four years after Bhargava's. It opens with a quotation from Lord Hardinge's message to the secretary of state in September 1914 detailing how Indians of all classes, including Indian students studying in London, offered whatever they could in terms of resources, finances, and their own manpower to support the British in the war—out of “eager loyalty.”<sup>28</sup> Indian contributions are presented in detail, examples of which are given here: by the end of December 1919, 1.44 million Indian combatants and noncombatants were enlisted for service; 184,350 animals were sent overseas; medical personnel sourced and recruited for service; the Indian Munitions Board was set up and large amounts of material produced in Indian industries—worth 18 million pounds Sterling—shipped to the various theaters of war; food including wheat worth 40 million pounds Sterling was exported to Britain; and, by the end of 1919–20, the handsome sum of 146.2 million pounds Sterling was paid to the British government in London to finance further war needs.<sup>29</sup> Despite the impressive—and at times self-denying—support given by Indian individuals in terms of donations and taxes, and by the princely states, the perception or expectation of Indian individuals and politicians of how the relationship between Britain and India might be shaped after the war were belied. Instead, India was still perceived as “poor and backward.”<sup>30</sup>

Merewether and Smith's account of the sufferings of the Indian corps in France argues that they made the decisive difference in turning the

war in Britain's favor: "It would be truer to say that the Indian and British Regiments which together composed the Indian Army Corps in their turn saved the Empire."<sup>31</sup> Despite the recognition of the substantial efforts of the Indian army, Merewether and Smith stress the skills of the British officers: writing about the dead of the various battles, the names of British officers and brief summaries of their deeds are narrated, whereas Indians are not named with only the number of the dead mentioned—except for when Indians survived in exceptional circumstances, like Khudadad Khan, who received the Victoria Cross.<sup>32</sup>

From the few studies written on World War I and India during the pre-independence period, it appears that they depict rather different attitudes: some writers show the tendency to see World War I from the point of view of—admittedly educated—Indians, expecting "equal partnership" with the British and aspiring to self-government. Other authors depict the war from the standpoint of British officers or the British colonial government.

Military historians of the post-independence period focused on the army—its organization, recruitment, and equipment. Little attention, however, was given to how Indian soldiers experienced service. Although Donovan Jackson's *India's Army* was published five years ahead of independence, it falls within the overall characteristics of this phase of production. It is a regiment-by-regiment description of the Indian army with some background information on how the army was created by the British in India. James Edmonds intends "to show the main features of what happened" in World War I, thus offering a rather conventional account of the war's battles with a strong focus on the Western Front—perhaps not a surprising perspective as he worked for the British army all his life.<sup>33</sup> Shyam Narain Saxena focuses on the role of the Indian army during World War I from the perspective of an Indian sepoy, claiming to write equally "for the professional soldier, for the historian and for the general reader." He argues that Indian soldiers were professionals but that they were not trained well enough or equipped adequately.<sup>34</sup> S. D. Pradhan outlines how much the Indian army was transformed during the World War, and Ian Leask contends that the Indian army's expansion was particularly useful as it allowed the reinforcement of British troops in Europe.<sup>35</sup> In a later study, S. D. Pradhan details the Indian army's engagement in East Africa, suggesting that this campaign was one of the most interesting of World War I, that soldiers' morale contributed more toward success than tactics, and that the Indian army played a significant role.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, Jeffrey Greenhut argues that the Indian army was not suited to fighting in the theaters of war in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East for a variety of reasons. The reasons offered range from claiming that Indian

soldiers—sepoys—were only able to cope with direct frontier battles<sup>37</sup> to asserting that sepoys did not contribute to the war effort in the trenches to the expected level, as they left the scene through abundant acts of self-mutilation and desertion.

More recent publications, of the postliberalization phase, paint a more precise picture of the situation that members of the Indian army found themselves in: their weapons were two to three generations out of date, or they needed to quickly get used to new weapons handed out to them; their clothing was not sufficient for the cold European autumn and winter; and their overall equipment was inferior. Moreover, they had to get acclimatized to unfamiliar weather conditions and to an unknown landscape, as they were thousands of miles away from home—often without proper nutrition. The lack of a joint commanding structure across the British and Indian armies, with gaps in communication between London and the British colonial government of India, with factionalism and discord among British officers in the various Indian Expeditionary Forces, and with more general difficulties in leading a multinational heterogeneous army in which officers and soldiers did not necessarily know each other are discussed in the work of Ross Anderson, Nikolas Gardner, S. D. Pradhan, and Geoffrey Till.<sup>38</sup>

Scholars of the postliberalization phase, among them Pradeep Barua, Gordon Corrigan, Kaushik Roy, and others, produced studies that highlight and substantiate the massive effort Indian combatants and non-combatants made. They emphasize the laudable and respectable ways in which the Indian army reacted to the challenges encountered in the battlefields of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.<sup>39</sup>

## Political and Economic History

“If we Indians bring back to India the flag of victory which we have helped to win for our King George, we shall have proved our fitness and will be entitled to self-government.”<sup>40</sup>

From the beginning of the war, the hope of “earning” responsible government or dominion status was held by many Indians. The above quote shows that the notion of fighting alongside the British in Europe and thus proving to have the—imagined—required qualities to take responsibility for governing India independently circulated widely at the time. The hope and vision for self-government was underlined by Woodrow Wilson’s fourteen-point program, which he presented in his speech of 8 January 1918 and declared as essential to future world peace.<sup>41</sup> This

view is represented in the writings of several contemporaries of the pre-independence phase, collected in a volume focused on speeches, opinions, and statements leaning toward political assertions, as well as attempts to contextualize the war and the efforts of India to support the British. It features extracts of speeches by prominent political figures at the time, such as Annie Besant (1857–1933), leader of the Home Rule League and staunch believer in India being given self-government after the war; Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1844–1920); and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), who returned to India in 1915 after nearly twenty years in South Africa.<sup>42</sup> In combination with resolutions of the Imperial War Conference, political statements and speeches were also compiled by a few other contemporaries.<sup>43</sup> During the 1920s, a series at Oxford University Press brought together small volumes that engaged with Christianity and the war, including one by an author who asked whether the British were worth fighting for, another by one who discussed the role of women in the war, and a third by one exploring questions of race. One of them argued that the war would only have an effect on educated Indians and hardly any effect at all on the vast majority of the population.<sup>44</sup> These examples illustrate by and large the evaluation of political effects on the war by contemporaries at the time, thus reflecting scholarly interpretations of the pre-independence phase.

The aspirations and expectations of Indians both in India and in East Africa, which arose from Wilson's fourteen-point program with its promise of self-determination, were bitterly disappointed, as the president of the East African Indian National Congress expressed in a speech made in 1920:

With the end of that long and terrible struggle in the victory of the Allied arms we looked for recognition in practice throughout the Empire of those principles which were so loftily proclaimed by British statesmen when our aid and sympathy were sought. Alas, the disillusionment has been great. We have seen how in our motherland the pledges made . . . were ruthlessly broken. . . . And now we have seen, in our own case, the failure to redeem the promises made, to live up to the pledges and to accord us the rights which are so indubitably ours.<sup>45</sup>

The “Wilsonian moment” was a brief and rather restricted one indeed, and “the principle of self-determination was honored in Paris more in the breach.” However, no single government, including the British colonial one, could deny the legitimacy of the claims to self-determination after Wilson's speech.<sup>46</sup>

As mentioned earlier, India did not only send its men, sepoys, and laborers to the war, it also supported the British and their Allies by sup-

plying them with tons of material and a significant amount of money. In 1917, the Indian Munitions Board was set up in order to coordinate the logistics and organization of the military and other supplies that needed sending to the theaters of war, as well as to oversee the production of the material requested and to ensure that an infrastructure, mainly railways, was put in place to ferry goods between production sites and ports. Apart from listing the figures for material and monetary contributions to the war effort, the literature of the pre-independence phase remains more or less silent on the effects of World War I on India's overall economy in its aftermath.<sup>47</sup> According to one author, the wartime expansion of the Indian industry particularly in comparison to the agricultural sector was impressive, and would in his view continue in the years to come—that is, the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, other authors writing more recently emphasize that both agriculture and industry suffered during World War I due to the lack of skilled labor. Prices for goods in India increased, which was acutely felt by the population who had to pay much more for essentials, such as oil and salt, than in the prewar years.<sup>49</sup>

In the second, post-independence phase, the political and economic history of India zoomed into focus: scholars focused on the establishment of the Indian nation-state, with much work concentrating on the Five-Year Plans, the Green Revolution, the reorganization of the states in India, which was completed only in 1956, the incorporation of French and Portuguese India into the Republic of India, internal challenges such as consolidating structures that would ensure the smooth working of the world's largest democracy, and finding specific strategies to denote India's position in the world as an independent nation, free of the former colonial power.

Various debates on which moments in Indian history should be seen as watershed moments can be observed for the post-independence phase. Some scholars have argued that World War I could indeed be seen as a turning point in the movement for independence. The so-called August Declaration, announcing the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1917, has been seen as such a moment, even though the constitutional reforms were implemented only in 1919.<sup>50</sup> Censorship of public opinion in India, legalized in the Defence of India Regulations Act of 1915 and used in the quelling of the Ghadar movement of 1915, did not end when World War I came to a close; it was continued through the Rowlatt Act of 1919, which allowed the British colonial government to employ the same restrictive measures on the freedom of speech and writing even in peacetime—despite the granted constitutional reforms—and to do so indefinitely.<sup>51</sup> Indian politicians and so-called revolutionaries reacted in different ways; perhaps the most visible campaign was Gandhi's first satyagraha cam-

paign and the civil disobedience movement that protested against the continuation of war regulations in peacetime India. The killing of many peaceful civilian protesters at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in 1919, and the disillusionment of many returning Indian sepoy to India, added to the popularity of Gandhi's campaigns.

During the post-independence phase, economic effects of World War I were taken up by a few scholars, for instance Krishan Saini. He argues that the trade pattern changed profoundly, that India's postwar trade was restricted by the rupee being bound to the pound, and, finally, that the British colonial government did not actively encourage and protect Indian industries after the war.<sup>52</sup> Studies engaging with the economic history of India usually do not specifically consider World War I; more frequently, they are structured around different industries, trade, and financial arrangements.<sup>53</sup> In his extensive paper, Morris D. Morris highlights how the industry in India transformed profoundly from a raw-material-exporting industry to one that manufactured large amounts of jute, cotton, and iron and steel. For instance, by 1918, 80 percent of the exports was manufactured jute, whereas before the war, raw jute was exported; the production of steel and iron at TISCO's grew by a factor of six. Partly, this development was triggered by the side effects of World War I: the competition of foreign companies in India weakened, while, at the same time, the demand within the country rose sharply. In addition, India had become the supply center for the British army and their allied operations despite the shortage of skilled labor. The interwar period saw continued industrial development.<sup>54</sup> Dietmar Rothermund analyzes the circumstances and consequences of the Great Depression in India, comparing India's pre- and postwar economic situation and considering the dependence on the British economy in his study of interlinked economic and political history for the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>55</sup>

Overall, the literature on India and its history in the post-independence phase concentrated on documenting, analyzing, and interpreting the struggle for independence and the first decades of the nation-building process, including the massive push toward industrialization and the green revolution. Both world wars were understood in that context, and seen for the negotiating powers they offered Indian politicians to elicit concessions from the British colonial government, which shifted and twisted until finally agreeing to Indian independence in the 1940s—under the pressure of being highly indebted to India financially and not able to pay off these debts.

In the post-liberalization phase, the focus of research shifted toward analyzing people's perspectives in more detail, as well as how they perceived larger political events and economic developments. This shift is

most pronounced in studies dealing with sociocultural aspects of the war and will be explored in the following section.

### Sociocultural History

“Don’t you go but stay and do your work. . . . That [black pepper] which I brought with me has all been finished and some more has been sent. . . . The leaves of the tree are falling. Think about this.”<sup>56</sup>

Rozina Visram’s groundbreaking paper on “The First World War and the Indian Soldiers,” published in 1989, toward the end of the post-independence phase, opens a window to the perspectives of Indians who fought in the war.<sup>57</sup> This hitherto underresearched field of Indian perceptions of India and its role in World War I only took off in the post-liberalization phase with numerous scholars exploring sociocultural aspects of the war.

The quest to get to know, understand, and analyze Indian sepoys’ perspectives on World War I was taken up by Susan VanKoski with her publication exploring sepoys’ letters, and by David Omissi reprinting and contextualizing their letters in *Indian Voices of the Great War*.<sup>58</sup> Both authors reflect on the several layers of mediation those letters went through, and the new information provided in these letters by Indian soldiers that allow a few glimpses into their experiences and reflections. Glimpses, as the letters are mediated at several stages: the majority of them were dictated to scribes who wrote them down in Gurmukhi, Punjabi, or other Indian languages, then translated to English by the censor’s office. Knowing that their letters would be read out loud at home, senders might have also restricted themselves in what they dictated. Thus, what is available to the reader today are the censored extracts of letters mediated by scribes and translation, which were potentially self-censored. Nevertheless, through them we attain insights into Indian soldiers’ experiences of the war; their perceptions of the people, landscape, and weather in Europe; their enquiries about home; and their observations of cultivation, education, and interactions in France. In the letters, England and France are described sometimes in more favorable ways, sometimes less so: England is mentioned as “worth seeing” and the arts being “a credit to them,” but as being rainy.<sup>59</sup> France is portrayed as “the home of beauty,” the “women of this country are women like the good fairies,” and the soldiers feel well treated. At the same time, France is perceived as “weak in spiritual morality.”<sup>60</sup>

The letters also reflect, to some extent, the experience of the day-to-day routine of World War I, the value system and religious affiliation of

Indian sepoy, but they mostly remain silent on the larger political context of India in World War I, the French army, and British officers. One letter reports that “it is very hard to endure the bombs. . . . It will be difficult for anyone to survive and come back safe and sound from the war. . . . There is no confidence of survival. The bullets and cannon-balls come down like snow.”<sup>61</sup> The reality of the war hit the soldiers hard; some described it as a “devil’s war” or as “the ending of the world,” comparing it to the war depicted in the Mahabharata.<sup>62</sup> In trying to comprehend and inform families and friends at home about the many dead, some letter writers resort to metaphors: “men are dying like maggots” or fall like “leaves off a tree.”<sup>63</sup> Others, but fewer in number, glorify the war in their letters and see it as a noble duty to fight the cause of the king.<sup>64</sup> Yet others add their religious feelings to their description of the battle, asking for grace and imploring the need to repent: “God grant us grace, for grace is needed. Oh God, we repent! Oh God, we repent!”<sup>65</sup>

In some instances, it is obvious that letter writers intended to circumvent censorship, but this did not deter the majority of letter writers from warning relatives and friends not to enlist in the army as the quote at the beginning of this section illustrates, in which the term “black pepper” stands for Indians, the term “red pepper” for the British. This metaphor comes up time and again, especially when writers wish to express some form of judgment. For instance, Indian soldiers are seen as stronger than British soldiers: “Black pepper is very pungent, and the red pepper is not so strong. This is a secret, but you are a wise man.” Furthermore, soldiers observe and report that “the red pepper is little used and the black more.”<sup>66</sup>

Despite the mediated nature of the letters, they are invaluable in that they convey the lived experience of Indian soldiers, their expectations and aspirations, their views on events, which would otherwise not be accessible. They provide one of the few bodies of sources that allow insights into subaltern, nonwhite perspectives, along with the recordings of voices of Indian prisoners of war kept at Humboldt University at Berlin and material objects kept in various museums scattered around the globe. Moreover, some private papers and diaries are held in Indian archives.<sup>67</sup> One such diary has been partly published and analyzed: the diary of Amar Singh of Jaipur, which shows the in-between position of an Indian officer in the colonial Indian army, who on the one hand was part of the commanding structure and on the other hand could only get so far in the hierarchy of the British-commanded and racially prejudiced army, and who had to implement colonial policies even when he did not agree with them.<sup>68</sup> Another Sikh soldier conveyed his experiences in Europe, comparing the civilized behavior of the French with the condescending atti-

tude of British colleagues and officers: “We came to know that the British had no respect for the Indians. They regarded us as their servants.”<sup>69</sup>

Attitudes of superiority combined with anxieties relating to the “intermingling” of races, particularly the idea that Indians could court British white women, triggered various policies from Whitehall to ensure that, for instance, wounded Indian soldiers would not be cared for by British nurses. Indian soldiers’ movements were restricted and clear distinctions and divisions established to segregate the wounded soldiers from the surrounding communities in order to prevent any potential mutual attraction. Philippa Levine argues that “racism was functionally necessary to the stability of imperial rule.”<sup>70</sup> In contrast, the freedom of movement of soldiers from the white dominions was not restricted.

This notion appears in current research, for instance in Santanu Das’s argument that “Indian soldiers have been doubly marginalized: by Indian nationalist history . . . and by the grand narrative of the war which still remains largely Eurocentric.”<sup>71</sup> Although the debate has widened and has become more inclusive of the multiracial, multilinguistic, and multireligious nature of the combatants and noncombatants fighting for the European empires during World War I, some scholars still focus on the European parts of the army, hardly taking into account the crucial presence of Indian sepoys, African askaris, and other colonial subjects, relegating their presence to a couple of sentences or referring to a couple of publications, and to the effects of the war on Europe rather than on the different continents of the globe and their multifaceted relationships with each other. One such monograph, published as recently as 2017, consciously engages exclusively with the “British Army proper” and mentions the imperial forces, including the Indian army, only in the margins. In conclusion, the authors emphasize “that the British Army was the single most important component of the British Empire’s immense war effort.”<sup>72</sup> At the center of Radhika Singha’s paper on the labor corps are the noncombatants who were crucial to the war endeavor. They numbered 563,369 out of the approximately 1.44 million Indians who were sent overseas.<sup>73</sup> Singha analyzes how the great demand for manpower changed the way in which the British colonial government recruited noncombatants, finally turning to prisoners and sending them to the labor corps in Mesopotamia. In her case study, Singha highlights how previous norms were set aside by the British colonial government in order to bring unskilled laborers, including those from prisons, to work in the labor corps.<sup>74</sup> Ravi Ahuja, Heike Liebau, and others investigate the experiences of South Asian prisoners of war in the German POW camps around Berlin, and how their presence was used by German anthropologists to make large-scale audiovisual documentations and observations to use in their scholarly work.<sup>75</sup> Another

bottom-up perspective is offered by Gajendra Singh, who explores the in-between worlds of Indian soldiers.<sup>76</sup> Tan Tai-Yong analyzes the ways in which recruitment in Indian districts was undertaken, demonstrating the tightening of regulations and increasing control of the local population by the colonial administration.<sup>77</sup>

After the lack of medical care led to dwindling morale in the winter of 1914/1915, treating the wounded soldiers became one of the major considerations for Whitehall. Their manpower was crucial to the war effort, and another crisis could not be afforded. Medical services thus became central to government policies, significant for the population, and crucial for keeping up morale among soldiers, whether British or Indian. Returning rehabilitated soldiers to the theaters of the war became, according to Mark Harrison, ever more efficient through a “well-oiled medical machine.”<sup>78</sup> Indians were distributed across several hospitals in Britain, of which the pavilion in Brighton is probably the most well-known. The wartime medical care delivered to Indian soldiers in Britain—which is acknowledged in several soldiers’ letters—contrasted with the minimal investment in healthcare for the Indian population on the subcontinent.<sup>79</sup>

Overall, this overview demonstrates that the focus of research was almost entirely on military history in the pre-independence phase, that the emphasis of the post-independence phase was on the creation of the new Indian nation-state, with World War I and its commemoration receding into the background, and that in the current post-liberalization phase, sociocultural studies take center stage with the aim of understanding who took part in the battles, making formerly silenced voices heard, and analyzing their experiences of the war.

## Current Research Trends and Commemorative Culture

Since 2014, the beginning of the centenary of World War I, a host of literature has appeared that engages with the conflict and India’s role in it. These publications, which could be termed “centenary publications,” relate to military, economic, political, and sociocultural aspects of World War I or provide overviews. They follow earlier publications that appeared at anniversaries, most noticeably in 1968 and 1978, the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of the end of the war, and consider the war’s effects on India.

Recent surveys include the *Cambridge History of the First World War*, edited by Jay Winter, and the *1914-1918-online International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, which claims to be “the most comprehensive encyclopedia of the First World War” put together by “the largest network

of First World War researchers worldwide with participants in more than 50 countries.<sup>80</sup> The *Cambridge History* offers insights on Asia's role, with India being investigated alongside China, Japan, and Vietnam, whereas the online encyclopedia provides several entries, for instance on the Indian labor corps by Radhika Singha, on sepoy letters by David Omissi, and others. The *Routledge Studies in First World War History* are mostly concerned with the military aspect of the war. The majority of its volumes offer perspectives on European rather than any other experiences and memories of World War I.<sup>81</sup>

Of the recent publications relating to military history, George Morton-Jack's stands out as a thorough study, analyzing the structure of the Indian army before the war as well as the accomplishments of the Indian Expeditionary Force (IEF) A on the Western Front, with a limited comparison to the IEFB, IEF C, and the IEF D's performance in East Africa and Mesopotamia. Morton-Jack contends that the positive evaluation of the Indian soldiers' achievements by contemporary officers such as James Willcocks at the Western Front are seeing "something of a revival."<sup>82</sup> A few other centenary publications, mostly edited volumes, investigate the war from thematic or regional perspectives, and either weave India's role in, or feature single chapters on India and what the war meant for the country in terms of providing material, men, and money to the war effort.<sup>83</sup> In one of his recent articles, Santanu Das suggests that the centrality of written texts needs to be overcome and other kinds of sources, be they visual, oral, or material, need to be taken into account. His current research is situated at the interface of academic and public understandings of history, taking the demand for the exploration of a wide array of sources seriously.<sup>84</sup>

Another strand of centenary publications consists of books by amateur historians and writers who present their interpretations of World War I events and its effects on the Indian population, and who engage with the commemorations in one way or another. Amarinder Singh, a retired officer of the Indian army, describes the contributions and the suffering of Indian soldiers during World War I. Similarly, Major General Ian Cardozo presents an account of the war, followed by individual portraits of the Indian soldiers who received the Victoria Cross. Both dedicate their work to the Indian soldiers of the war.<sup>85</sup> Collections of photographs document Indians in the war and the memorials to Indian soldiers around the world.<sup>86</sup> Shrabani Basu's *For King and Another Country* spells out the distance Indians felt at the mentioning of World War I and the perception of it being a European war. She portrays the perspectives of Indian soldiers based on their letters, diaries, and other documents.<sup>87</sup>

Official commemorative culture in India includes discussions on establishing a National War Museum; the submission deadline for the ar-

chitectural competition closed on 12 October 2017 with 268 proposals having been submitted. The process can be followed on the government's websites.<sup>88</sup> Recently, an Indian delegation inaugurated a new memorial to Indian soldiers in Haifa.<sup>89</sup> Not only the Indian government but also the Commonwealth War Graves Commission intends to make the sacrifice of Indians during World War I more visible, even if this policy is not publicly promoted. Nevertheless, the CWGC decided to name Indians and others on memorials. For instance, their names were engraved on the new Basra memorial that was rebuilt after it had been destroyed during the Iraq war. However, no memorial currently exists that carries names of African combatants or noncombatants, as their names were not recorded. Michèle Barrett argues that, instead of “projecting an *appearance* of equality,” an open discussion on this issue would be more honest and fruitful.<sup>90</sup> In the successor states to British India—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh—the commemoration of World War I happens on a modest level.

This chapter has illustrated that World War I was a European and colonial war. As Hew Strachan notes, at the time it was known as the Great European War, a designation that is not in use anymore.<sup>91</sup> As the main European players in the war had colonies, these were drawn into the conflict, thus extending the war geographically to many regions of the globe. The implications of the war for the colonies were different from those imagined by the Indian population: their expectations and aspirations to achieve self-government were deeply disappointed; notwithstanding the Wilsonian moment, the claims to self-government by non-European regions were dismissed. Instead, the British and French empires were strengthened through the redistribution of German colonies and the mandates taken on through the newly created League of Nations.

I would like to conclude by emphasizing the three main points made throughout this chapter: firstly, World War I was a colonial war in terms of asymmetric power relationships: the colonies were forced into war by the metropolises. Secondly, the commemoration of the war, both its material culture and its social practice, were transformed: they have become much more about the present and the future than about the past. Last but not least, scholarship on India's role in World War I has undergone a major transformation over the past century, with ample research fields still to be investigated.

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ory, and Migration in a Globalizing World: *The Goan Experience, 1890–1980* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014); *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790–1805* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), and *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016 and 2019, coedited with James Belich, John Darwin, and Chris Wickham).

## Notes

1. The title of this chapter is inspired by Rozina Visram's groundbreaking article on engaging with South Asian perspectives of World War I, where she writes, "The war raised many expectations and aroused many aspirations." Rozina Visram, "The First World War and the Indian Soldiers," *Indo-British Review: A Journal of History* 16, no. 2 (1989): 25. In the present chapter, literature published on World War I in languages other than English, French, and German could unfortunately not be considered. I am grateful to Christina Hofmann, Claire Phillips, Georg Berkemer, and Aparajith Ramnath for their valuable comments and support.
2. Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), architect of New Delhi together with Herbert Baker, designed over sixty war memorials across the empire, including the one in Delhi.
3. 10 February 1921: laying of the foundation stone; 12 February 1931: inauguration of the memorial. The third Anglo-Afghan War lasted from 6 May to 8 August 1919.
4. Philip Davies, *The Penguin Guide to the Monuments of India*, vol. 2: *Islamic, Rajput, European* (London: Penguin, 1989), 139. Of the named soldiers, 959 came from the United Kingdom and one from Australia. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, retrieved 31 December 2017 from [https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead/results/?cemetery=DELHI%20percent20MEMORIAL%20percent20\(INDIA%20percent20GATE](https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead/results/?cemetery=DELHI%20percent20MEMORIAL%20percent20(INDIA%20percent20GATE).
5. Most of the literature on World War I and South Asia focuses on India. Not much is available on Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka. They belonged to the political entity of British India until their independence a few decades after World War I. Frequently, World War I is not even mentioned in survey histories; see, for instance, Christophe Jaffrelot, ed., *Le Pakistan* (Paris: Fayard, 2000); M. R. Kazimi, *A Concise History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009); Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Willem van Schendel, *History of Bangladesh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (Westport, CO: Greenwood Press, 2006); K. M. De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1981).
6. Neelima Jeychandran, "Representing and Reconstructing Memories of the World Wars in India," in *RIHA Journal: Journal of the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art* 0170 (2017): 1.
7. "Karachi 1914–1918, War Memorial" and "Rawalpindi War Cemetery," Commonwealth War Grave Commission, retrieved 13 January 2018 from <https://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/144300/KARACHI%20percent201914-1918%20percent20WAR%20percent20MEMORIAL>; <https://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/92012/rawalpindi-war-cemetery/>.

8. "Jatiyo Sriti Soudho," The Polynational War Memorial, retrieved 13 January 2018 from <http://www.war-memorial.net/Jatiyo-Sriti-Soudho-1.294>; Shilajit Kar Bhomik, "Bangladesh Liberation War Memorial in Tripura to Be Inaugurated in November," 30 October 2017, retrieved 13 January 2018 from <http://www.dhakatribune.com/world/south-asia/2017/10/30/bangladesh-liberation-memorial-tripura/>.
9. Tim Barringer, "An Architecture of Imperial Ambivalence: The Patcham Chattri," in *The Great War and the British Empire. Culture and Society*, ed. Michael J. K. Walsh and Varnava Andrekos (London: Routledge, 2017), 215–48; David A. Johnson and Nicole F. Gilbertson, "Commemorations of Imperial Sacrifice at Home and Abroad: British Memorials of the Great War," *History Teacher* 43, no. 4 (2010): 563–84; David A. Johnson, "The Great War's Impact on Imperial Delhi: Commemorating War-time Sacrifice in the Colonial Built Environment," in *The Great War and the British Empire. Culture and Society*, ed. Michael J. Walsh and Varnava Andrekos (London: Routledge, 2017), 249–63.
10. Stanley Rice, *Neuwe Chapelle: India's Memorial in France 1914–1918* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927); Michèle Barrett, "Subalterns at War: First World War Colonial Forces and the Politics of the Imperial War Graves Commission," in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 156–76. Indian combatants and noncombatants are also buried in the cemeteries of Mazargues, Neuville-Sous-Montreuil, and Ayette, as well as in Forlì in Italy.
11. Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
12. For instance, see Thomas R. Metcalf and Barbara D. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 161–64.
13. Chempakaraman Pillai was born in Tiruvananthapuram in 1891 and died in Berlin in 1934. He went to Europe in the 1910s, moving between Switzerland and Germany. However, there is no evidence for Chempakaraman's presence on the Emden or his role during the bombardment of Madras.
14. M. Karunanidhi (1924–2018) was chief minister of Tamilnadu several times: 1969–76, 1989–91, 1996–2001, 2006–11.
15. S. Muthiah, *Madras Rediscovered: A Historical Guide to Looking Around, Supplemented with Tales of "Once upon a City"* (Chennai: EastWest, 2008), 285; "Emden, the Raider," *Frontline*, 20 August 2014. The Emden even made it into some letters of sepoys in 1914, in which they remark on the losses of the British: David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914–1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 25–26.
16. Michèle Barrett, "Afterword: Death and the Afterlife; Britain's Colonies and Dominions," in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 301–20.
17. M. G. Ramachandran (1917–87), chief minister of Tamilnadu 1977–87; C. N. Annadurai (1890–1969), founder of the DMK and chief minister of Tamilnadu 1967–69.
18. Mary Hancock, *The Politics of Heritage from Madras to Chennai* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).
19. The five French possessions sent soldiers to join the British-Indian army in France. They disembarked in Marseilles in late 1914. Chantal Antier-Renaud and Christian Le Corre, *Les soldats des colonies dans la Première Guerre mondiale* (Rennes: Editions Ouest-France, 2008), 30.
20. Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India*, 6th ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Metcalf and Metcalf, *Concise History of India*; Michael Mann,

- Geschichte Indiens vom 18. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005); Burton Stein, *A History of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004); D. R. Sardesai, *India: The Definitive History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008).
21. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were intended to provide the first step toward Indians partaking in the administration of British India. Its most prominent feature was the introduction of dyarchy, with the central government in Delhi remaining firmly under British control and some responsibilities in provincial governments being transferred to Indian ministers, such as agriculture and education. Law and order were reserved for British governors. The Rowlatt Act was passed on 18 March 1919. On 13 April 1919, a peaceful gathering protesting the Rowlatt Act took place in the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. A British general decided to disperse the people by opening fire on them, killing 370 and wounding many more, making it the worst massacre during the time of British colonial rule. On the request of G. K. Gokhale (1866–1915), Gandhi (1869–1948) returned to India in 1915 from South Africa via England.
  22. *Lahore Tribune*, quoted in Visram, “First World War and the Indian Soldiers,” 17.
  23. Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*; Susan VanKoski, “Letters Home, 1915–1916: Punjabi Soldiers Reflect on War and Life in Europe and their Meanings for Home and Self,” *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 2, no. 1 (1995): 43–63; see also John H. Morrow, “The Imperial Framework,” in Jay Winter, ed., *Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 1: *Global War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 406–7. Although the British government came around to employing Indian sepoy in Europe, they ensured that African askaris remained in Africa (they brought only African labor battalions to Europe). For more information on the concept of “martial races,” see Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995); Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Cultures, 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
  24. The centrality of the Punjab for the Indian army and vice versa is discussed in Rajit K. Mazumder, *The Indian Army and the Making of Punjab* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003).
  25. M. B. L. Bhargava, *India’s Services in the War* (Allahabad: Standard Press, 1919), iii. Other Indian authors at the time echoed Bhargava’s tenor, for instance, Bhupendranath Basu, who at the outbreak of the war stated, “India . . . claimed to hold an equal position with other parts of the Empire.” In Bhupendranath Basu, *Why India Is Heart and Soul with Britain in This War* (London: Macmillan, 1914), 8.
  26. Bhargava, *India’s Services in the War*, 35–36.
  27. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, “Swaraj within one Year,” *Young India*, 22 September 1920.
  28. *India’s Contribution to the Great War* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1923), 61–65.
  29. *Ibid.*, 78–80, 107, 146, chapter 4 on finances.
  30. The donations by Indian princes was estimated at a little more than 5 million pounds Sterling. See *ibid.*, 167. Quotation on 166.
  31. John Walter Beresford Merewether and Frederick Smith, *The Indian Corps in France* (London: John Murray, 1918), vii. See also James Willcocks, *With the Indians in France* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1920); E. W. C. Sandes, *The Military Engineer in India*, 2 vols. (Chatham: Institution of Royal Engineers, 1933–35), chapters 13 and 14.

32. See Merewether and Smith, *Indian Corps in France*, 39.
33. Donovan Jackson, *India's Army* (London: S. Low, Marston & Co., 1942); James E. Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I* (New York: Greenwood Publishers, 1968).
34. Shyam Narain Saxena, *Role of Indian Army in the First World War* (Delhi: Bhavna Prakashan, 1987), citation on xi and 147.
35. S. D. Pradhan, "Indian Army and the First World War," in *India and World War I*, ed. Dewitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 49–67; Ian D. Leask, *The Expansion of the Indian Army during the Great War* (MPhil diss., University of London, 1989).
36. S. D. Pradhan, *Indian Army in East Africa* (New Delhi: National Book Organisation, 1991).
37. Jeffrey Greenhut, "The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914–1915," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 1 (1983): 54–73.
38. Ross Anderson, "The Battle of Tanga, 2–5 November 1914," *War in History* 8 (2001): 294–322; Ross Anderson, "Logistics of the Indian Expeditionary Force D in Mesopotamia: 1914–1918," in *The Indian Army in the Two World Wars*, ed. Roy Kaushik (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 105–44; Nikolas Gardner, "Command in Crisis: The British Expeditionary Force and the Forest of Mormal, August 1914," *War & Society* 16, no. 2 (1998): 13–32; Nikolas Gardner, "Morale of the Indian Army in the Mesopotamia Campaign, 1914–1917," in *The Indian Army in the Two World Wars*, ed. Roy Kaushik (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 393–417; Nikolas Gardner, *Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914* (PhD thesis, University of Calgary, 2000); Pradhan, *Indian Army in East Africa*, op. cit.; Geoffrey Till, "The Gallipoli Campaign: Command Performances," in Gary Sheffield and Geoffrey Till (eds.), *The Challenges of High Command: the British Experience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 34–56.
39. Barua Pradeep, *The State at War in South Asia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Gordon Corrigan, *Sepoys in the Trenches* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2006); Roy Kaushik, "From Defeat to Victory: Logistics of the Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914–1918," in *First World War Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 35–55; Roy Kaushik, ed., *The Indian Army in the Two World Wars* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); see also Aravind Ganachari, "First World War: Purchasing Indian Loyalties; Imperial Policy of Recruitment and 'Rewards,'" *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 8 (2005): 779–88.
40. Mahomed Hasan to Sowar Raja Khan Zaman Khan (Muslim Rajput, 38th CIH, France), 26 August 1916, quoted in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 228. This letter seems to be written by an educated combatant and is an exception in the way it relates to the larger political context of the time.
41. Address of the president of the United States, delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, 8 January 1918 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918). See particularly 6: "A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims with the government whose title is to be determined."
42. G. A. Natesan, *The Indian Review War Book: All about the War* (Madras: G. A. Natesan & Co., 1915).
43. Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750–1921*, vol. 2 (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1922); *Speeches of Indian Princes on the World War* (Allahabad: The Compiler, 1919).
44. John Matthai, *India and the War* (London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1915), 3–4.

45. President's Speech, East African Indian National Congress 1920, Kenya National Archives MAC/EAI/28/1. Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee (1856–1936) was president at the time. He had given large sums to the British war effort; moreover, Indians fought in the King's African Rifles and as part of the Indian Expeditionary Forces B and C.
46. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5, 217.
47. See for instance Dhananjaya Ramachandra Gadgil, *The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times* (London: Milford, 1924).
48. S. G. Panandikar, *Some Aspects of the Economic Consequences of the War for India* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala, Sons & Co., 1921).
49. Michelle McAlpin, "Price Movements and Fluctuations in Economic Activity (1869–1947)," in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 2: 1757–1970, ed. Dharma Kumar (Hyderabad: Orient Longman with Cambridge University Press, 1982), 879. Combining economic and political aspects is Budheswar Pati, *India and the First World War* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1996).
50. Hugh Tinker, "India in the First World War and After," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 4 (1968), 88–107; Judith Brown, "War and the Colonial Relationship: Britain, India and the War of 1914–18," *India and World War I*, ed. Dewitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 19–47.
51. Gerald N. Barrier, "Ruling India: Coercion and Propaganda in British India during the First World War," *India and World War I*, ed. Dewitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 75–108.
52. Krishan G. Saini, "The Economic Aspects of India's Participation in the First World War," in *India and World War I*, ed. Dewitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 141–76.
53. For instance Kumar, *Cambridge Economic History of India*; Amiya K Bagchi, *Private Investment in India, 1900–1939* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972); B. R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India 1860–1970*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
54. Morris D. Morris, "The Growth of Large-Scale Industry to 1947," in Kumar, *Cambridge Economic History of India*, 553–676.
55. Dietmar Rothermund, *India in the Great Depression 1929–1939* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1992).
56. Lance Naik Ram Carup Singh (Rajput, Ninth Bhopal Infantry) to Lance Naik Dobi Singh (Sixteenth Rajputs, Calcutta), May 1915, quoted in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 65. Toward the later years of the war, recruitment was sometimes enforced rather than voluntary (see *ibid.*, 16).
57. Visram, "First World War and Indian Soldiers"; Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), chapter 6.
58. VanKoski, "Letters Home"; Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*.
59. Subedar-Major [Sardar Bahadur Gagan] (Sixth Jats, 50) to a friend (India), Brighton Hospital, [early January 1915?], quoted in Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 27; a wounded Sikh to his brother (Amritsar District, Punjab), England, 15 January 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 28; Bugler Mousa Ram (Jat, 107th Pioneers) to Naik Dabi Shahai Jat (121st Pioneers, Jhansi District, UP), Kitchener's Indian Hospital Brighton, 2 April 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 49; Sub-Assistant Surgeon Naragen Moreshiver Pundit (Maratha) to D. M. Pundit (Sangola, Shorapur District, Bombay), Bournemouth, 27 April 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 57.
60. L. R. to a friend (India), Rouen Camp, 22 March 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 45; a Sikh sepoy to Gurun Ditta Mal (Depot, Forty-Seventh Sikhs, Fatehgarh, Farrukhabad

- District, UP), [probably Forty-Seventh Sikhs, France], 12 May 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 60; an Afridi Pathan to his brother (Fifty-Fifth Rifles, India), Fifty-Seventh Rifles, France, 27 June 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 72.
61. A Garhwali to his father [Thirty-Ninth Garhwali Rifles?], France, 14 January 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 27–28.
  62. A Sikh to his father (Punjab), England, 20 February 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 39; a wounded Punjabi Rajput to his to a relative, England, 29 January 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 32.
  63. A wounded Sikh to his brother (Amritsar District, Punjab), England, 21 January 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 31; Rifleman Amar Singh Rawat (Garhwal Rifles) to Dayaram Jhapliyal (Garhwal District, UP), Kitchener's Indian Hospital, 1 April 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 48.
  64. A wounded Garhwali Subedar to a friend (India), England, 21 February 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 39.
  65. Amir Khan (Punjabi Muslim) to his brother Lance Naik Khan Zaman (Eighty-Fourth Rifles, Rawalpindi District, Punjab), 129th [Baluchis], France, 18 March 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 43.
  66. Bugler Mousa Ram (Jat, 107th Pioneers) to Naik Dabi Shahai Jat (121st Pioneers, Jhansi District, UP), Kitchener's Indian Hospital Brighton, 2 April 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 49; Sepoy Mansa Ram (107th Pioneers) to Guard Ramshwar or Divisankar (GIP Railway, Station Seepri, Jhansi, UP), Kitchener's Indian Hospital Brighton, April 1915, quoted in *ibid.*, 58.
  67. Jürgen Mahrenholz, "Ethnographic Audio Recordings in German Prisoner of War Camps during the First World War," in *World War One: Five Continents in Flanders*, ed. Dominiek Dendooven and Piet Chielens (Ypres: Lanno, 2008), 161–66; Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja, eds., *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany* (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011); collections at the Nehru Museum and Memorial Library (Teen Murti Bhavan).
  68. Dewitt C. Ellinwood, ed., *Between Two Worlds: A Rajput Officer in the Indian Army, 1905–21; Based on the Diary of Amar Singh of Jaipur* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2005). See also Susanne H. Rudolph, Lloyd I. Rudolph, and Mohan Singh Kanota, eds., *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary; A Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), see also Santanu Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 70–89.
  69. Interview with a Sikh soldier in S. D. Pradhan, "The Sikh Soldier in the First World War," in *India and World War I*, ed. Dewitt C. Ellinwood and S. D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 224.
  70. See Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*; Visram, "First World War and the Indian Soldiers," 21–22; Philippa Levine, "Battle Colors: Race, Sex, and Colonial Soldierly in World War I," *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 4 (1998): 104–30, 105. See also Gregory Martin, "The Influence of Racial Attitudes on British Policy towards India during the First World War," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14, no. 2 (1986): 91–113.
  71. Santanu Das, "Imperialism, Nationalism and the First World War in India," in *Finding Common Ground: New Directions in First World War Studies*, ed. Jennifer Keene and Michael Neiberg (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 68. This marginalization is apparent in many publications; one of the more recent ones subsuming the contributions of Indian combatants and noncombatants under a section titled "Europe" is Morrow, "Imperial Framework."

72. Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 6.
73. *India's Contribution to the Great War*, 79.
74. Radhika Singha, "Finding Labor from India for the War in Iraq: The Jail Porter and Labor Corps, 1916–1920," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 2 (2007): 412–45.
75. Ravi Ahuja, "The Corrosiveness of Comparison: Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (1915–1919)," in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia*, ed. Heike Liebau, Katrin Bromber, Britta Lange, Dyala Hamzah, and Ravi Ahuja (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 131–66; for experiences of Indian POWs in Germany, see also various articles in Roy, Liebau, and Ahuja, *When the War Began*.
76. Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
77. Tan Tai-Yong, *The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab 1849–1947* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005).
78. Mark Harrison, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11, 13, 295; Mark Harrison, "Disease, Discipline and Dissent: The Indian Army in France and England, 1914–1915," in *Medicine and Modern Warfare*, ed. Roger Cooter, Mark Harrison, and Steve Sturdy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 185–203.
79. The majority of letters describe hospitals and care in Britain in a positive light, with the odd writer complaining about conditions in hospitals: Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War*, 38, 54, 59, 61, 62, 79; Samiksha Sehrawat, *Colonial Medical Care in North India: Gender, State, and Society, c. 1840–1920* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).
80. Jay Winter (ed.), *Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. I: *Global War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, eds., *1914-1918-online: International Online-Encyclopedia of the First World War*, retrieved 19 October 2017 from <http://www.1914-1918-online.net/>.
81. John Bourne, ed., *Routledge Studies in First World War History* (London: Routledge, 2018).
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*Chapter 5*

**GERMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY  
ON WORLD WAR I, 1914–2019**

*Christoph Cornelissen and Arndt Weinrich*



**Significance of World War I in  
German Memory and Memory Politics**

The public debate in Germany about World War I has featured distinctive periods of upsurges and pauses since the end of the war in 1918. In this regard, it is not all that different from what has occurred in the other countries previously engaged in this war, with new images of the world war consistently arising, in each case reflecting changes in the political and social contexts.<sup>1</sup> It is possible here to distinguish four phases, each with its own thought dynamic: the Weimar years; the Third Reich; the years from 1945 to 2000 (during which World War I gradually disappeared from collective consciousness); and finally a phase beginning approximately at the recent turn of the century that represented a “rediscovery,” whose high point for the time being has been marked by the centenary in 2014.

**Contestation and Polarization (1918–33)**

The Weimar Republic was a child of the war defeat, not just in the sense that it plainly would never have come to be without the German collapse in 1918, but also primarily for the reason that the defeat was so deeply

etched into the political culture of Weimar that the latter appeared to a great extent as a “culture of defeat.”<sup>2</sup> At no point could the Weimar society succeed in leaving the war behind, let alone even develop a marginally integrative narrative for commemorating it. What poisoned the atmosphere long-term was especially the issue of the causes of the defeat as expressed in the rightist camp’s “stab in the back” language repeated *ad nauseam* and its defaming of the republican politicians as “November criminals.”<sup>3</sup> And against the backdrop of the defeat, there were particularly agonizing questions about the meaning of the war and the loss of two million war dead; these provoked passionate controversies that ran along not only political but also social and confessional lines.<sup>4</sup> Emblematic for this polarization was the reality that it was not even possible to inaugurate a (to some degree) unified day of remembrance with a ceremony and a commemorative discourse that would have broad support among the social classes.<sup>5</sup>

The first and only larger-scale attempt by the Reich government to bring the “German people” together in a commemoration of the world war’s fallen troops (a large memorial service in front of the Reichstag on 3 August 1924), proved to be such a failure that the government made no further attempt to tread upon the minefield of World War I commemorations. In an endeavor to please everyone, the organizing committee had ended up failing on all fronts: the left, for one thing, complained about the date, saying that in the nationalist camp this could be seen as an invitation “to celebrate the start of the war.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, there was discontent with the concessions that had been made by the organizers to appeal to the moderate sections of the rightist camp: what had been planned as a civilian-dominated ceremony commemorating the German war victims had gradually been turned into a celebration of the fallen soldiers, with the German military, the *Reichswehr*, playing a much more important role than initially envisioned.

For the nationalist camp, these concessions could, of course, not go far enough. Downright hysterically, they declared that they could not take part in a celebration of “black-red-gold democracy” which they said would be a betrayal of the defeated empire’s black-white-red flag, symbol of the front fighters’ spirit. For the nationalists there was no doubt as to the fact that those who supported this symbolic “betrayal” were in fact the very groups that, “through a sabotaging of the German will to fight[,] . . . [had] destroyed Germany and had disgraced the remembrance of the fallen.”<sup>7</sup> In the end, the various negative responses to the ceremony ruined all hopes of uniting the German society behind the fallen soldiers. The moment encapsulating all these tensions was the scheduled minute of silence that failed lamentably: after communist sympathizers had started to sing

“The Internationale,” patriotically inclined participants responded not with something like the German national anthem but rather tellingly with “Die Wacht am Rhein,” the unofficial hymn of the empire.

In view of these rifts and tensions, it was no surprise that the middle-right national government preferred to turn over the organization of a large memorial ceremony inside the Reichstag building to a private association, the Volksbund für Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK), the following year, and it did this rather than have a government-organized ceremony. As a result, the “People’s Day of Mourning” (*Volkstrauertag*) that the VDK organized in the spring of the years 1925–32, came to have an almost official character.<sup>8</sup> The huge media response to it, as well as the fact that, parallel to the central VDK celebration, numerous regional and local festivities took place, all speak to its success. Yet this did not change the fact that this was ultimately a private initiative that was in no way non-controversial. To the extent to which the VDK—which originally had been brought into existence for the care and maintenance of the graves of German soldiers both within Germany and abroad—pursued, particularly in the second half of the 1920s, an overtly nationalist conservative agenda, the opposition toward the People’s Day of Mourning grew, especially in those German states led by the SPD and above all Prussia. So, at no point in time could the memorial day fulfill its aspiration of bringing all elements of the population together in a “dignified commemoration of the fallen heroes.”

### The “Honor of the Front” as a New *Raison D’Etat* (1933–45)

With the National Socialist seizure of power and the establishment of its rule, the context in Germany in which the politics of remembrance were played out changed radically: the government of the “simple corporal” placed massive emphasis on the politics of public ceremony to express the “restoration of the honor of the German combat soldier.” Launching the “Memorial Day for the Heroes” (*Heldengedenktag*) in February 1934 satisfied an old demand of the nationalist camp and especially of the VDK, whose People’s Day of Mourning by and large served now as a model for it.<sup>9</sup> In order to visibly honor the “front fighters,” in May 1934 a special mark of distinction was created, the “Cross of Honor,” intended for front fighters, war participants, and their surviving dependents.<sup>10</sup> It enjoyed tremendous success. And with the upgrading of the Tannenberg Memorial (built between 1924 and 1927) that became the Reich’s war memorial (*Reichsehrenmal*), Germany finally had from 2 October 1935 onward a central memorial site that the veterans’ organizations had so sorely desired.<sup>11</sup> Generally speaking, it is not overstating the emphasis put

on the recognition of those who fell in the war and the gratitude that the people owed to them to say they were virtually omnipresent themes in the first years of the Third Reich. Whether in the numerous speeches by the NS leadership or in the context of special rallies (such as, for instance, the numerous war victim commemorations, with some being truly mass marches that had up to two hundred thousand participants<sup>12</sup>), the message was clear: if the republic had not been able for fourteen years to appropriately commemorate the heroic deeds of “the front,” there was now finally a government that understood itself to be the bearer of the “spirit of the front” and to whose *raison d’être* now belonged the honoring of the German soldier of the world war, who was thought to have accomplished “the greatest feat that the [German] people have ever carried out in their history.”<sup>13</sup> Such an instrumentalization of World War I, first of all, offered a form of reintegration to especially the war veterans. Secondly, such a kowtowing to the generation of the frontline fighters was a message addressed to the activist parts of the NS revolution in the SA and HJ, who were in their overwhelming majority too young to have seen action during World War I: do not push too far with your sense of mission as national revolutionaries.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, by propagandizing a set of heroic images of frontline fighters along the lines of what Ernst Jünger, Franz Schauwecker, Hans Zöberlein, and Werner Beumelburg had written about in their war novels, the regime hoped to support the mental mobilization of the population, primarily of those age groups that were soon to be soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*.<sup>15</sup> Pacifist discourses and representations, which had been so present throughout the whole of the Weimar period, were correspondingly suppressed with full force after 1933. Writers who had made a reputation for themselves in the Weimar years as authors of pacifistic war literature were the first to suffer: on 10 May 1933, in the context of the “campaign against an un-German spirit,” their books were thrown to the flames as “literature which drags the experience of the front-line soldiers down into the dirt.”<sup>16</sup>

### A World War Is Forgotten (1945–2000)

The experiences of World War II led to a fading away of the memory of the years 1914–18, and after 1945 the memory of World War I further continued diminishing in importance. This was not just due to the fact that World War II was a more recent and incomparably greater catastrophe than the first one. Rather, it had to do above all with the fact that the utter delegitimation of German national history by the crimes of the Third Reich brought along with it a profound change for the political culture of the Federal Republic and a demilitarization of war commemoration. Now

this does not mean that World War I slipped into oblivion overnight starting in 1945. Under the banner of a strongly de-heroized commemoration of the victims of war (under the watchful eyes of the Allies), some forms of commemorating and memorializing discourse established after 1918 continued to have their appeal in German public opinion. As a consequence, the German victims of World War I initially could be integrated without difficulty into a wider narrative framework. That the VDK was successful in 1952 in reintroducing the “People’s Day of Mourning” (now dedicated to the “victims of both World Wars”) speaks volumes in view of the problematic history of the association.<sup>17</sup>

Yet this focusing on the German victims of the world wars within the context of the politics of public commemoration would not, however, continue. It ran up against (if nothing else) important legal trials (the Ulm *Einsatzkommando* trial in 1958, the Eichmann trial in 1961, and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials in 1963–65). The (West) German public (slowly) began to have a greater interest in the civilian victims of the German crimes in World War II. This was a process that proceeded in stages; ultimately, however, it was only with the onset of the “memory booms” (Jay Winter) in the 1980s and 1990s (which affected all Western societies) that led to the Holocaust gradually coming to dominate the Federal Republic’s culture of remembrance.<sup>18</sup> Against this backdrop, the fallen soldiers of World War I and World War II only counted in a limited way as legitimate victims, that is, as victims with whom Germans of the 1990s could in any kind of way identify. In the demilitarized commemoration of the dead in the later period of the Bonn republic and the early part of the Berlin republic, there was little room left for them. Along with the fallen, World War I on the whole disappeared from German collective consciousness.

### A Rediscovery? (2000–2018)

Even if World War I has still never come close to receiving a comparable memory culture status in Germany to that which it has in France or Great Britain, one nevertheless cannot fail to notice that in the last twenty years a rediscovery has taken place. One driving force of this, along with both the recent boom in genealogy or family history and developments in historical scholarship (which will be dealt with below), has been a perceptible shift in the way Germans have come to look at the sufferings of Germans in the bloody history of the twentieth century: these, to be sure, had never been totally absent from public discourse.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the way in which they came to the fore in, for instance, Günter Grass’s novel *Crabwalk* and Jörg Friedrich’s book *The Fire* (on the sinking of a German

refugee ship in early 1945 and the allied bombing raids against German cities respectively)<sup>20</sup> suggests a reconfiguration of German memory culture that indirectly allowed for the possibility of rediscovering the German soldiers of World War I and the horrors they endured fighting in the trenches.

That World War I, however, even in this recent and continuing phase, stands in the shadows of World War II is unmistakable. In 2004, when, in the context of the ninetieth anniversary of the outbreak of the war, a larger public interest in World War I began to stir once again, public perception pivoted primarily on the years 1914–18 as the “seminal catastrophe”<sup>21</sup> of the twentieth century. That meant that World War I was assigned a place relative to the (greater) catastrophe of World War II, and consequently was primarily being perceived as the cradle of the “Third Reich.” Even though today there is hardly anything left of this perspectival narrowing, the most important public debates about World War I continue to be overlain with memory-culture issues that only in a limited way have to do with World War I itself. There is no other way to explain, at any rate, the really overpowering concentration on the war guilt question that in 2014 eclipsed all other aspects of the war. Similarly, albeit under reversed conditions in comparison to the Fischer controversy of the 1960s, this is how it went with the debate unleashed by Christopher Clark’s book *Sleepwalkers*, which at its core dealt not so much with the question of the concrete responsibility in the July crises but rather at an incomparably more fundamental level with the clarification of a key question of the memory culture: to what extent does the issue of guilt necessarily have to be center stage when considering German history in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century? The discussion of Clark’s theses, which in wide circles within German public life were interpreted as an exculpation of the policies of the German Reich, resonated widely with the public. One might see here an indication of the advanced state of “normalization” in the way in which contemporary Germans look at their national history.

This new edition of the war guilt debate monopolized the media’s attention for all of 2014. Yet what should not be forgotten is that parallel to this, to an unprecedented degree, all imaginable aspects of World War I were being dealt with in books, exhibitions, lecture series, etc. What was especially remarkable was the number of exhibitions that dealt with the world war from a regional perspective or from the view of a particular city, doing so at a level that in many respects came “closer” to those living back then than did the large historical exhibitions on the general topic. If the impressive numbers of the Germany-wide program of exhibitions dealing with the topic came remarkably close to what one could find in

countries with a traditionally highly developed memory culture of World War I, there was still, of course, a crucial difference that delimited the boundaries of the German “rediscovery” of World War I: the great affective distance to the events in 1914–18 as reflected in, for example, the practically complete absence of a memory politics in the classic sense. Of course, in 2014, 2016, 2017, and 2018 members of the federal government, led by President Gauck, President Steinmeier and Chancellor Merkel, certainly did take part in various commemorative events, not without formulating a message that condemned war and reiterated the German commitment to European unity and integration. Yet tellingly, the major commemorative events they attended all took place abroad: in France, Belgium, and Great Britain. In Germany herself, there were few commemorative ceremonies in a narrower sense, the most important ones being those organized in the Bundestag. These included, on the one hand, the annual *Volkstrauertag*, which paid much more attention to World War I than usual. On the other hand, there were two ceremonies on 3 July 2014 and 9 November 2018 commemorating the beginning and the end of the war respectively. However, they did so in an idiosyncratic way: while the former proposed in fact a reflection on the last one hundred years of German history, where World War II occupied center stage, the latter was nearly exclusively concerned with the German revolution of 1918 and the birth of the Weimar Republic, barely mentioning the war leading up to it. Ultimately, this points to an important blank space in the German view of the world war: the far-reaching absence of an affective connection, of some form of identification with those who lived in 1914–18 (and in particular with the soldiers), something that conversely still lives on in other European countries. In the final analysis, the German rediscovery of World War I in recent years therefore is a historical one: World War I is (once again) seen as a key event in German history in the twentieth century. However, it does not occupy a central position in the Federal Republic’s memory culture.

## The German World War I Historiography

### The Historiography of the World War in the War Years 1914–18

The beginnings of German historiography about the world war date back to the years 1914–18, when not only university historians but also military historians, journalists, and interested private individuals took up the topic.<sup>22</sup> Initially it was primarily the idea of gathering documentation on the war that contemporaries quite early on understood as earthshaking in its consequences. The urge to make sense of the events unfolding (and,

eventually, to contribute to the mobilization of civil society) resulted in the creation of numerous war collections all across the country. Museums, libraries, and archives were among the collectors, yet there were also private persons doing so. What is especially important for historiography is the “World War Library” (*Weltkriegsbücherei*) of Stuttgart entrepreneur Richard Franck, which after World War II was expanded into the “Library for Contemporary History” (*Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte*), which still exists today.<sup>23</sup> Just in 1917, the number of comparable collections reached two hundred in the German Empire; however, after the defeat the majority of these were not continued or were only reconstituted later on.<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, professional as well as amateur historians attended to providing a first intellectual ordering of their contemporaneous experiences. The value of such materials was of course limited by the simple reason that they were required to adopt a subordinate role to the official propaganda and the censor. This was particularly the case for the semiofficial collection of documents and reports gathered between 1914 and 1919 under the title *Der Europäische Krieg in aktenmäßiger Darstellung* (The European War in Documentary Presentation). Even so, already in 1917, the Swiss publicist Hermann Stegemann penned the first edition (of what would be several) of a four-volume overview, which continued to enjoy great popularity among the German public into the 1930s.<sup>25</sup>

For historiography at the academic level, World War I initially did not immediately become a topic for the simple reason that contemporary history at this point had not yet evolved into a recognized field in history as a discipline. Nevertheless, one should not overlook in this case that the Bonn historian Justus Hashagen already in 1915 had proffered the programmatically formulated title “Das Studium der Zeitgeschichte” (On the Study of Contemporary History) as an adequate counter to the efforts primarily of the English and French in this field.<sup>26</sup> From his intervention one can draw a direct line to the “World War of Documents” in the 1920s and 1930s.

The fact that academic historiography did not at once engage with World War I, however, does not mean that German historians stood aside when the nation’s destiny seemed to be at stake: very much like their French or British counterparts, those historians that were too old to be mobilized immediately (e.g. the established representatives of the craft) offered to serve their nation as experts or as historically informed propagandists. In a “war of words,” they not only defended with numerous publications the German Reich’s invasion of Belgium, but they also provided historical arguments as to why the war that was raging well beyond Germany’s borders was in reality a “defensive war.”<sup>27</sup>

As to the later paths of the academic World War I historiography, what is also significant is that many young historians who (either for a short while or for the whole course of the war) served as soldiers had experiences themselves that left a lasting imprint on their lives. Those were the years, Hans Herzfeld said much later, “in which we absorbed into ourselves most intensely and unforgettably the external world.”<sup>28</sup> Similar assessments are on hand from many other historians who served as soldiers at the front and who returned home with deeply furrowed faces. After the war, they contributed actively to the raging campaign against what were called the “war guilt articles.” How strongly and passionately they took up the fight against the signing of the “painful peace” of Versailles is indicated among others by the fact that the Königsberg historian Hans Rothfels, even after World War II, ascribed truly “traumatic effects” to the 1919 treaty of Versailles.<sup>29</sup> Here lay a root cause for the broad campaign in which the German historians from two generations involved in World War I, from the fathers down to the children, were to take part.

### **World War I in the Historiography of the Interwar Period**

To a historically unprecedented extent, the treaty of Versailles sought to legitimize the political demands of the victors (such as the demand for reparations or land concessions) by taking recourse in moral categories. While the famous “war guilt” article 231 did not contain the notion of guilt but rather that of responsibility, there can be little doubt as to the fact that most allied representatives at the Paris Peace Conference considered the Versailles treaty legitimate precisely because Germany seemed to have done more than any other European power to bring about war in 1914. The Allied note of 16 June 1919, where Germany was found guilty of having unilaterally fomented a war that was referred to as the biggest “crime against humanity” any nation pretending to be civilized had ever committed, illustrates this point. Consequently, this fostered a massive politicization of the war guilt discussion. For if the legitimacy of the imposed agreement was to be derived from German war guilt, then from the German point of view it was quite clear that a refutation of the war guilt thesis would support German efforts to amend the treaty. It was especially the German Foreign Office, the *Auswärtiges Amt*, that pinned its hopes rather high on an objective (or if nothing else, scientific) edition of relevant German sources from the prewar period. What followed was a series of source editions that were to play a central role both in the “documents war” during the interwar period and in the historiographic assessment of the central question of war guilt being discussed at the time. Its genesis also highlighted the measure to which any such scholarly pursuits about

the world war in the interwar period would inevitably be a highly political matter. The first of these editions, Karl Kautsky's *Deutsche Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch* (German Documents to the Outbreak of the War), was already in hand by March 1919.<sup>30</sup> However, because of Kautsky's leveling of sharp criticism at the "careless and rash" Reich government, its publication was initially thwarted by the government at the time. In its stead, the officials commissioned a further collecting of documents, which by the end of 1919 yielded the politically desired results.<sup>31</sup> But the effort did not stop at that, for the Foreign Office commissioned a special report on war guilt tasked with systematically demonstrating Germany's innocence for the world war. The most important result of all these efforts was the forty-volume compilation of documents *Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette* (The Grand Politics of the European Cabinets), published by the orientalist Johannes Lepsius, the expert in international law Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, as well as the historian Friedrich Thimme. Irrespective of the overt political instrumentalization of this undertaking, Thimme was able to get the use of scholarly methods incorporated into the project and by so doing was consequently able to make sure that this edition provided a serious contribution to the "World War of Documents" that began in the 1920s.<sup>32</sup> Although Thimme was guided to the very end by the thought that the publication of the files might more than anything else serve "to discredit the dogma of Germany's sole guilt before the world," he held out the hope (in order to dissociate it from the "stupidly chauvinistic emotions of the rightists") that "we editors of the file material for once could grow into the role of the Aeropag for an understanding among nations."

Thimme's comments indicate that for him, as for the majority of German historians during the interwar years, providing arguments in favor of the revision of the Versailles treaty was by no means in contradiction with upholding rigorous scholarly standards. This is why he did not refrain from collaborating with *the* central German organ that in 1923 was at the forefront of work on the topic, namely, the journal *Die Kriegsschuldfrage* (The War Guilt Question), which then after 1929 was published under the title *Berliner Monatshefte*. He was not the only historian who provided academic credibility to a publication whose revisionist agenda was political rather than scholarly. Its publisher was the officer Alfred von Wegerer, who personally entered the public discussion in 1928 and then again in 1939 with major contributions on the war guilt question. Yet, these publications were aimed at a larger public; as far as the leading professional publications of historical scholarship in the interwar period (e.g. the *Historische Zeitschrift*) are concerned, only a few contributions appeared that dealt directly with this topic.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, when it comes to publications with a (primarily) scholarly audience, the backing of the German revisionist stance proceeded more indirectly: what was being addressed were the longer-term causes of the war: the foreign policies and rivalries of the European powers in the years 1871–1914, or more abstractly, the inability of the European powers to integrate the emergent German Reich (with its problematic middle position) into the European framework of nations.<sup>34</sup> The “dictate of Versailles,” this “negation of the historical existence of the German people” (Hermann Oncken) could in this view be interpreted as the result of an aggressive French policy toward the east reaching far back into history.<sup>35</sup> Parallel to this, numerous studies appeared in the 1920s and 1930s that were supposed to provide a legitimation for both the creation of a “lesser German state” as well as the actual peace policy of Bismarck and his successors. Surely the most impressive example of this push is Erich Brandenburg’s book *Von Bismarck zum Weltkriege* (From Bismarck to the World War), published in 1924. For, although the author identified several issues on the part of the imperial leadership—short-sightedness, the absence of a plan, as well as both a lack of caution and any psychological understanding for the nature of the others—Brandenburg nevertheless came to the conclusion that the German side at no “point in time wanted the war or worked to bring it about.”<sup>36</sup> Many of his colleagues argued in a similar vein, but it was no coincidence that in doing so they mostly reverted to Bismarck and his foreign policy. This could in every respect (especially among the younger specialists) go hand in hand with a marked critique of the domestic policies of the founder of the empire. However, the idea that German policies in any way bore a special guilt for triggering the world war was categorically rejected across the board. The bottom line is, in any case, not to be missed: consequent to the impression left by the war and the defeat, contemporary history (understood as the history of the years 1871–1914) experienced an extraordinary upswing.<sup>37</sup> The objective/scholarly emphasis on the longer-term causal chain that ultimately led to war surely contributed in this context to the fact that within the international (especially Anglo-Saxon) discussion of war guilt in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a “comfortable consensus” about a shared guilt was slowly able to gain acceptance. This shared view, which actually largely incorporated the German position, ultimately undermined the legitimacy of the Versailles agreement (and in this, the calculation of the German propaganda about its innocence proved successful).<sup>38</sup>

As with the question of war guilt, German university historians also initially noticeably abstained from scholarly appraisal of World War I as such, ceding the field instead to other authors and institutions.<sup>39</sup> Among these, one group was composed of the “general staff historians” who set

about (supported by the “Reich archives” first made available in 1920) to compile a collection of both official and private documents from the war years.<sup>40</sup> The fruits of their efforts appeared between 1925 and 1944 (and were supplemented in 1956 with two additional parts), bringing it to a total of fourteen volumes. Its approach very clearly breathed the tradition of the Prussian General Staff Reports from the nineteenth century. Although interviews with all kinds of witnesses and even modern approaches (e.g., allowing, in places, dramatic narratives) found their way into this and further ventures, what prevailed in the depictions was a narrow military history view and the guiding aim: defend the “honor of the German army.”

Along the same lines there is the ten-volume illustrated account *Der Große Krieg* (The Great War), compiled between 1921 and 1933 by the military author and retired lieutenant general Max Schwarte, as well as other multivolume series such as *Der große Krieg in Einzeldarstellungen* (The Great War in Individual Accounts) or *Schlachten des Weltkriegs—1924–1930* (Battles of the World War), which, with their unique mixing of military history and belletrist, served primarily to satisfy the desire that former combatants had to recall the events.<sup>41</sup> The success of the *Battles* series (on average forty thousand were sold per issue) shows that the calculus it used proved successful: leave behind the high hill of the field marshal in favor of the visual axis of the simple war participant. Especially well received by the public were four volumes from the pen of the author and former reserve lieutenant on the Western Front, Werner Beumelburg: *Douaumont* (1923), *Ypern 1914* (1924), *Loretto* (1925) und *Flandern 1917* (1927).

The reticence of the university historians certainly can be explained by their pronounced unease (shared with international colleagues) at any attempt to write an instant contemporary history, which was always fraught with the danger of a treading upon political terrain. This was an experience that was in no way limited to those scholars/historians who participated in the source editions about the prewar period mentioned above. In fact, there was another aspect of the war that was arguably even more politicized: the question as to why the German army had lost the war. Historians participating in this debate, for example, when testifying in their role as experts before the inquiry committee of the Reichstag on the causes of defeat, were aware of the political implications any public statement would inevitably have. Among them were Hans Delbrück, who opposed the nascent “stab-in-the-back legend”<sup>42</sup> and military historian Martin Hohohm, who submitted a critical essay on the “Soziale Heeresmißstände als Teilursache des deutschen Zusammenbruchs” (Social Injustices in the Army as a Partial Cause of the German Collapse),

denouncing quite sharply the misconduct (from his own experience) of the military leadership as well as its treatment of the soldiers. He linked this with the thesis that the resulting moral collapse gave rise among the troops to both a delegitimization of the state as well as the command apparatus.<sup>43</sup> Hans Herzfeld made an argument diametrically opposed to Hobohm's thesis in his study about *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die Auflösung der nationalen Einheitsfront im Weltkriege* (German Social Democracy and the Dissolution of the National United Front in the World War): had it not been for the "conscious work of the revolutionary drivers," the passive discontent among the people would hardly have spilled into a revolutionary "rebellion against the national struggle for existence." Therefore, the "collapse of the national unity front," in his view, constituted a decisive factor in the German defeat. Herzfeld was supplying a dressed-up scholarly version of the "stab-in-the-back" cover story, which had circulated in various versions in German public life since the end of 1918.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, there were also some substantively and methodologically innovative works by German historians as well as representatives from other academic disciplines. Revealingly, these emerged primarily from the context of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the American foundation that commissioned a series of studies about the German Empire.<sup>45</sup> Among them were principally investigations of the economic and social issues of World War I, especially issues about the availability of food (August Skalweit), about criminality in Germany during the war (Moritz Liepmann), or about the intellectual and moral consequences of the world war (Otto Baumgarten). However, these hardly received any attention within the German scientific community. In 1933, the National Socialist seizure of power in the German Reich prevented a continuation of these kinds of approaches, which would not be taken up again until the 1970s or 1980s.

### The Historiography of World War I in the National Socialist Period

Because in the Weimar period only a few historians from academic historical scholarship had pledged themselves to the republic, the National Socialist authorities hardly encountered any difficulties after 1933 when they transferred to the historiography of World War I the task of creating an intellectual basis for mental mobilization. What played an important role in the historians' relationship to the new regime was the fact that the prolonged struggles in large parts of Eastern Europe after 1918 had increased the historians' willingness to integrate ethnic (*völkisch*) ideas and even the principles of eugenics and racial perspectives into the canon

of the history curriculum.<sup>46</sup> It was primarily the younger representatives of the German historiographical community who had academic positions at what were called “borderland universities” (among them, for example, was Erich Keyser in Danzig) who became involved in such trends even back in the 1920s. After the NS dictatorship was entrenched, the expansion of such regional research communities followed as a consequence, with their goal being (among other things) to culturally reclaim for Germanness those parts of the empire that had been severed off after World War I.<sup>47</sup>

The instrumental character during the Third Reich of the historical research into World War I also manifested itself in other places. For example, the Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany (*Reichsinstitut für die Geschichte des Neuen Deutschlands*)—started in 1935 under the direction of Walter Frank) specified as one of three research foci the topic “Political Leadership in the World War,” intending to provide proof that “a political leadership which was growing increasingly weaker” had indeed pulled the “winning army” into the abyss.<sup>48</sup> That in this way the hymn of praise for the absolute Führer state was to be sung is obvious. In other university disciplines as well, the experiences of World War I played a significant role during this period. It was especially the newly created defense sciences (*Wehrwissenschaften*) that promised to draw from the years 1914–18 the correct lessons for the war of the future.<sup>49</sup>

In this regard, another noteworthy phenomenon surfaced: under the influence of the “successful” NS foreign policy, the historians who had for many years remained silent about their personal war experiences now began to openly recall these moments that they had experienced at such important stages of their own lives. In the aftermath of the remilitarization of the Rhineland and then above all in the wake of the *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938, several of them even fell into a veritable euphoria. Wilhelm Schüssler in Berlin said in this connection that this was the concluding moment in the great German revolution “that began in 1914 and which now makes us the ultimate victors of the World War.”<sup>50</sup> Similar tendencies show up in the contemporaneous comments of the historians Hermann Aubin, Siegfried Kaehler and Hans Herzfeld. Herzfeld even sought in 1934–35 to study the world war as “an introductory phase of a European world revolution”; however, as a Jewish historian he had to abandon this undertaking when he was ousted from his position.<sup>51</sup>

Irrespective of many reasons to balk, the cross-generational endorsements of the NS regime by many historians increased even further after the victory of the German army over France in July 1940. Even Friedrich Meinecke allowed himself to get caught up in the excitement. In a letter to his colleague Siegfried Kaehler at the beginning of July 1940, he

commented: “Joy, amazement, and pride in this army, surely must predominate even for me. And the recovery of Strasburg! How could that not stir one’s blood!”<sup>52</sup> The same was true for Gerhard Ritter, who at this stage lost for a while his critical distance toward the NS state.<sup>53</sup> Under the influence of the battles of World War II, he began to plumb more deeply what was for him the basic question of the relationship of politics and warfare. With this as the starting point, from the middle of 1940 on, he developed the central question of his later four-volume work, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk (The Sword and the Scepter)*, which at its core confronted the issue of the relationship of political and military thought, going from the power politics of Frederick the Great through World War I and up to the end of the German Reich in 1945. Admittedly, the volumes of *The Sword and the Scepter* (in which Ritter brought together a summary of his historical analyses of World War I), were not published until the middle of the 1950s, and (as it turned out) by the end of that same decade they ended up as part of the debate over Fritz Fischer’s theses of the German “grab for world power.”

### World War I Historiography in the Early Federal Republic (1945–64)

The scholarly engagement with World War I (that is to say, with the central question about the causes of the war) was distinguished initially after 1945 by its noticeable continuity.<sup>54</sup> While individual voices beginning in the 1950s made their presence felt (such as the Marburg historian Ludwig Dehio, who presented a critical portrayal of the Wilhelmine foreign policy and its efforts at hegemony in Europe<sup>55</sup>), nevertheless, at a fundamental level, hardly anything changed in the apologetically directed, general evaluation of German policies during the prewar period. In fact, German historians were confident enough to think that a consensus could be reached in principle even at an international level. Thus, in his opening address to the twentieth German Historians’ Convention in Munich in September 1949, Gerhard Ritter could speak (not without pride) of the “worldwide success of the German theses” in the discussion of war guilt.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, in his *opus magnum* published a few years later, *The Sword and the Scepter*, Ritter was definitely not stingy in his criticism of German militarism (of Ludendorff’s role in particular), and he raised a wealth of topics that were often not pursued until later by historical research (among them, for example, the questions about the militarization of the economy, the role of the deportation of Belgian workers, and the conflicts in German domestic policy in 1917 as well as morale on the home front). Nevertheless, he left no doubt about the fact that there was no room to talk of the Reich government having had a special guilt in the July crisis.<sup>57</sup>

The first pointed calling into question of this consensus actually came from the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer. With vigor, in his 1961 book *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (*Germany's Aims in the First World War*), Fischer proposed the thesis that Germany held a principal share in the blame for World War I. On top of that, he suggested that in his eyes there had been a broad continuity in the German efforts at expansion and hegemony reaching from the nineteenth century through to the Third Reich.<sup>58</sup> In the course of the debate, he sharpened this position further and in the end espoused the provocative thesis that the German Reich leadership had already (after what was called the “war council” held on 8 December 1912) worked single-mindedly toward a European war.<sup>59</sup>

The Fischer controversy proceeded to develop (until its high point in 1964) into a pivotal dispute in historical scholarship and was to a great extent argued out in the public realm, counting even today as one of the great turning points not only of historical scholarship but also of the history-culture in the Federal Republic. From Fritz Fischer’s point of view, this was a crisis in fundamental principles in which nothing less was at stake than the “meaning and role of historical research” in general.<sup>60</sup> His scholarly opponents, conversely, believed that Fischer’s thesis might well provoke a “national catastrophe,” and so they saw it as valid to use any means to counter to it. The critical conception of history represented by Fischer collided with the image of the established departmental chairs around Ritter, in whose view, even after 1945, historical scholarship still had a national duty to fulfill.

Now, after an interval of several decades, one can say that Fischer (to his abiding credit) heralded with his book a long-overdue change in direction in West Germany, one that brought an end to what to that point had been the predominant German-national apologia. The political dimensions of the controversy came to the fore for the wider public when a trip to the United States that Fischer was planning turned into a political issue because of an inept intervention by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Back then, leading West German politicians and journalists (among them Chancellor Erhard and Foreign Minister Schröder) insinuated themselves in the debate, something that lent the controversy an additional political dimension. What had long-term importance for historiography was that Fischer’s thesis in a (to be sure) toned-down form found its way both into general accounts of World War I and into schoolbooks. Yet, even more significantly, however, was its role in the genesis and emergence of the concept of the so-called “special path” (*Sonderweg*) that was being promoted up into the 1990s: a hardly uncontroversial but broadly accepted negative master narrative. If up until the Fischer controversy the Third Reich had largely been held to be something like an accident in German

history, explainable by the defeat of 1918 and the world economic crisis, what now came more strongly into view were the longer-term continuities in German history running from the Bismarck Reich through the Third Reich. This change in perspective can in many respects be recognized as the premise adopted by historical scholarship from out of which the National Socialist crimes would gradually come to occupy a defining place in the history culture of the Federal Republic.

### **West-German Social and Cultural History and World War I (1964–2000)**

During the Fischer controversy, Fischer had never relented from advocating an economic and social history approach to World War I, even if he himself only engaged in that kind of history in a limited way. In reality, both his works, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* and *War of Illusions*, were in the final analysis political history works in classical tailoring. And even after the Fischer controversy, it still took some more time until World War I was more closely studied from the perspective of economic and social history. As often happens, impulses from abroad were important for this. What had a significant influence in this regard was the study by the American historian Gerald D. Feldman about the interactions and connections between the military, the industry, and labor. In it he revealed, on the one hand, the complex network of state and private business enterprises in the German Empire during World War I and, on the other hand, the causes for the economic collapse. A few years after that, the Bielefeld historian Jürgen Kocka, with his book about the German wartime society as a class society, complemented Feldman's view.<sup>61</sup> With recourse to new methods of "historical social science" being discussed at the time, Kocka's *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg* (Class society at war) works through the growing inequality among the classes in the war years and designates this as the determinative reason why in the ranks of the organized workforce, but also in the middle-class strata, social protests increased during the course of the war, ultimately culminating in the revolutionary period of 1918–1919. Although Kocka was not spared the accusation that his focus on social and economic historical issues had far too much left the event of the war itself to fade from sight, one should not overlook that his foundational study was a milestone for getting a grasp on the social situation on the German home front and thus opening up the field for subsequent studies of, for example, the difficult situation with supplying food for the German populace during the war.<sup>62</sup>

Although it was completed considerably later, the *Capital Cities at War* project headed by Jay Winter und Jean-Louis Robert should also be

mentioned in this context. With its account of the socioeconomic and demographic developments in the three capital cities London, Paris, and Berlin, it had a strong influence on the international World War I-historiography. Especially the first volume that appeared in 1997, which was clearly rooted in a social history tradition, even if the cultural history paradigm had obviously been fully integrated.<sup>63</sup>

Kocka's *Klassengesellschaft* notwithstanding, during the 1970-1990-period, World War I never came to occupy a prominent place in the German variant of social history, where social historians of the Bielefeld School were more concerned with the structural deficiencies of Bismarck's Germany than with the contingencies of World War I and its impact on German national history. However, important impulses went out from social history to inspire the everyday- and cultural history (*Alltags- und Kulturgeschichte*) that started to emerge at the end of the 1970s, and that quickly maneuvered into an opposing position *vis-à-vis* the Bielefeld-based social history. Claiming that the quantitative approach of historical social sciences ultimately failed to understand the war and the way it left a deep imprint on all European societies, historians started to emphasize the importance of taking into account the individual war experiences of both the soldiers and the civilians.<sup>64</sup> In this regard, groups of sources that had previously long been neglected (such as letters from the front, diaries, but also newspapers for the front and for soldiers, as well as picture postcards and photographs) now became the target of historical research.<sup>65</sup> If initially the appeal for an everyday history served as a peg for the new movement, subsequently, in the wake of the linguistic turn and the emergence of new subdisciplines such as gender and cultural history, additional new perspectives moved into the purview of historical research. Ute Daniel presented an especially important product of these efforts in her 1989 study on the situation of women workers as part of wartime society. She is invoked here as representative of a gradually emerging fusion of social-, cultural-, and mentality-historical interpretive approaches.<sup>66</sup>

This overview of the 1970s and 1980s that saw, as we have said, a diversification of approaches to World War I, would not be complete without mentioning the works of Wilhelm Deist, who as a military historian at the Military History Research Office (Militär-geschichtliche Forschungsanstalt) and later on as its scientific director was a key advocate of the introduction of social and, later, cultural history methodologies into military history. In his own research, he was particularly interested in the interdependencies and interactions between the state, the military, and society.<sup>67</sup> In his most widely received and still enduring contributions, he reexamined the German defeat of 1918, politically a very sensible question during the interwar years that had somewhat receded to

the background after 1945. In this context, he was able to demonstrate to what extent the German admiralty had actually considered sacrificing the German fleet in a desperate and pointless final battle even after the collapse of the army on the Western Front had become obvious, thereby casting a more positive light on the actions of the mutineers who had prevented this battle from taking place.<sup>68</sup> His concept of a “covert military strike” (*verdeckter Militärstreik*) proved even more important, describing the way many German soldiers acted in the war’s final stages.<sup>69</sup> According to Deist, after the failure of the German spring offensive of 1918 and the beginning of Allied offensive operations in July 1918, up to one million German soldiers refused to return to the front line, considering that the war was lost. Deist’s “covert military strike” argument was a forceful rebuttal of whatever remnants of the “stab-in-the-back” legend there might have been. That the war was lost militarily, and that it was defeat that caused revolution (and not the other way around), is a well-established interpretation that has not been contested ever since, even if some recent scholarship has proposed an alternative reading of some aspects of the German army’s disintegration during autumn 1918. By insisting on the supposedly orderly character of German surrender and by suggesting that German soldiers have in fact been led to surrender by their disillusioned officers, Alexander Watson, for instance, has put forward a less chaotic narrative, suggesting that German soldiers did actually follow their officers’ orders up to the very end.<sup>70</sup> Most German historians, however, are not convinced by this re-reading of the German military defeat.<sup>71</sup>

Since the 1990s, the concept of “war culture” (*Kriegskultur/culture de guerres*) has sprung up, having been developed particularly by a group of historians working together at the Centre international de recherche de l’Historial de la Grande Guerre. Even though the concept *culture de guerre* has not become centrally important in Germany (differently than in French historiography),<sup>72</sup> what is unmistakable are the impulses coming from France leading to an initially tentative but then quickening shift in direction in German historiography toward a broadly understood cultural history of World War I. This analytic shift toward culture, understood as an ensemble of all meaning-giving operations with which the people living through 1914–18, collectively as well as individually, found legitimacy for their actions and located their different levels of experiences in a larger context, has also proved itself in the German context to be decidedly productive, and in the 1990s it led to a veritable rediscovery of the war. It was especially a series of anthologies in the Library for Contemporary History that had a pronounced influence on the dynamization of cultural history, since they showed that engaging with the war experiences of the people living at the time is indeed a *conditio sine qua non* for

an understanding of World War I.<sup>73</sup> That with this there would never be a loss of a social history sensibility was (in addition to other things) to the credit of Benjamin Ziemann, who (especially in his important research on the war experience in rural Bavaria) pointed out that throughout the whole of the war period, preexisting social-cultural milieus had had a special importance in the construction of soldierly (and civilian) interpretive frameworks; the experiential realities, for example, of a Protestant war volunteer from Berlin had little to do with that of a Catholic farmer from Bavaria.<sup>74</sup>

The cultural turn and the methodological empathy connected with this also had consequences for the research field dealing with the causes of the war, which had not suddenly ceased to exist because of the Fischer controversy and the critical view of German policies in the July crisis that had prevailed in the 1970s. Wolfgang J. Mommsen was in this context the first who assumed the presence of “unspoken assumptions” (James Joll) among those German elites who were in decision-making roles; in a remarkably influential essay he worked out the “*topos* of an unavoidable war” and showed how the war discourse in public opinion led the Reich leadership to view with increasing pessimism their prospects for being able to avoid a war in the long term.<sup>75</sup> This finding was quite compatible with an overall critical view of the German policies in the summer of 1914, but it stood to some extent at odds with the image outlined by Fischer of a German Empire unleashing a war in a Machiavellian move for the purpose of fulfilling its expansionist goals. All in all, Mommsen occupied himself intensively with the war guilt issue in a broader sense. This, in fact, was a connecting link for the “Mommsen School,” to which Gerd Krumeich belonged, along with Stig Förster, Gerhard Hirschfeld and Holger Afflerbach, some of the leading German World War I experts of their generation.<sup>76</sup> By taking seriously the subjective expectation horizon of the German decision makers in the July crisis, they nuanced Fischer’s thesis substantially. Belonging to this subjective plane (in addition to the *topos* of the inevitability of war), there was most notably the encirclement syndrome, which, along with the idea that Germany would not be able to handle Russia militarily in a few years, led to an equally fatalistic as well as fatal better-now-than-never state of mind. Now with this insight, the German *vabanque* policies in the July crisis seem in essence to have been defensively motivated.<sup>77</sup> It would go too far afield to deal further with this discussion, in which, starting in the 1980s, important works about others of the warring powers have also played a significant role.<sup>78</sup> What is interesting here is that Mommsen’s intellectual trajectory reveals much about the status of World War I in German historiography in general: Mommsen’s perspective on World War I was initially limited to the

causes of the war, and this was also true in the final analysis for those of his “disciples,” such as Gerd Krumeich, who in the 1990s played such an important role in implementing a cultural history perspective on the German war experiences. As to the war years themselves, it was not until relatively late that Mommsen researched and/or published about them.<sup>79</sup> In a certain sense, one sees here in microcosm what during this phase in general was true for the scholarly engagement with World War I, namely that (however it was conceived methodologically) it only emerged slowly from out of the shadow of the war guilt question that had overshadowed everything up until the 1990s. That this process still has not yet ended would be seen on the occasion of the centenary in 2014.

## Outlook on Current Research Trends

Since the turn of the century and especially in the context of the centenary, the research dynamic that prevailed until the end of the 1990s has confirmed its strength, such that a general sense of continuity predominates.

## Recent Developments in the Cultural History of the War

What should be mentioned first is the ongoing dominance of cultural history. It has continued to grapple with the soldierly plane of experience,<sup>80</sup> but beyond that it has opened up new fields of research, turning its attention to prisoners of war, disabled war veterans, war youth, women’s war experiences, and even refugees and deportees.<sup>81</sup> In particular, a special emphasis has been placed on violence against civilian populations. Of tremendous importance in that context was the large-scale study on the German wartime atrocities by John Horne and Alan Kramer, which for the first time carefully investigated the violent practices of the German army in its advance through France and Belgium, with around six thousand civilians falling victim to it. This has opened up an examination of World War I war crimes in general and provided important impulses for the German discussion about the connection between World War I and World War II, which in the context of the ninetieth anniversary of the war’s outbreak could be classified under various headings: “seminal catastrophe,” “the second Thirty Years’ War” or even “the Age of World Wars.”<sup>82</sup> Roughly at the same time, this question was also at the heart of Vejas G. Liulevicius’s research on German occupation policies in Eastern Europe. Analyzing the policies of conquest and colonization conceived and implemented in the context of the military state of *Ober-Ost* (Su-

preme Command of German Forces in the East and at the same time the territory it controlled), he pointed to the continuity between imperial space utopias from 1914–18 and those of 1939–45, and described *Ober-Ost* as a laboratory for the National Socialist *Lebensraum* policies. Liulevicius's far-reaching conclusions spurred further research and are thus an important milestone in the way the German (and international) community has come to reflect on the way the world wars are connected. More recent studies, however, tend to stress the important dissimilarities and discontinuities between the two German wartime occupations of Eastern Europe, in particular when it comes to ideology and the level of ideologically motivated violence.<sup>83</sup>

The single most important stimulus for the intensification of research on the causal links leading from World War I to World War II, however, goes back to the 1990s, when George Mosse coined a key term for this discussion, developing his thesis of a long-term, fateful “brutalization” of World War I soldiers—and especially of German veterans—brought about by the specific circumstances they encountered in trench warfare. According to Mosse, four years of killing and fear of being killed had led many (and especially the younger combatants) to a permanent cult of violence that made their return to civilian life impossible and led to their involvement first with the *Freikorps* and later with the paramilitary units of the extreme right. Their readiness for violence, their “attitude of mind derived from the war,” had prevented for the long term any kind of “cultural demobilization” (John Horne) and poisoned the political culture of the interwar period.<sup>84</sup>

Swift opposition arose to Mosse's sweeping conjecture of a linear development from war experiences in the trenches to the collapse of the Weimar Republic. As a consequence, what was correctly emphasized was that the reintegration of the “front soldiers” who were returning home was a relatively smooth process,<sup>85</sup> and that the uprooted civilian war volunteers and the *Freikorps* fighters, who are at the center of Mosse's analysis, generally were a quantitatively negligible phenomenon. The bulk of the soldiers returning home had in no way been brutalized by the war,<sup>86</sup> and if it came nevertheless to a brutalization of the political culture, then the causes for that should be sought less so in the war experiences than in the circumstances of the defeat or in the multiple experiences of violence in the postwar period.<sup>87</sup>

In view of these quite legitimate objections, it is not surprising that the brutalization thesis in its narrow version (barbarization of soldiers during wartime deployment) was rejected relatively quickly. Mosse's position, however, should not be reduced to this narrow interpretation of the brutalization thesis; for Mosse, the brutalization was a discursive,

memory-culture phenomenon in whose middle point stood the mediation, multiplication, and transformation of war experiences through the media into a central myth during the Weimar years that “provided nationalism with some of its most effective postwar myths and symbols.”<sup>88</sup> With this he was setting the focus on the “imaginative interpretation and . . . appropriation of history in a medium of identity-supporting narratives,” which, according to Aleida Assmann, are central for memory history.<sup>89</sup> This inspired (directly or indirectly) a large wave of research works about the memory culture of the world war as lived during the interwar period. These were starting to be published after the turn of the century and, among other things, also inquired into the political importance of World War I-related myths during the rise of National Socialism and the consolidation of NS rule.<sup>90</sup> In this context, the social range of the central interpretive framework of the National Socialist discourse about the world war in the polarized Weimar public sphere continues to be controversial. While Benjamin Ziemann, for example, in his works on the Social Democratic memory culture, emphasizes the relative resistance against the inroads of a heroic interpretive culture, Thomas Kühne and others, on the other hand, underscore more so the common areas in memory culture (especially after the seizure of power) that worked at system stabilization.<sup>91</sup> This discussion has certainly not ended; however, in general it seems apparent that the large gain in legitimacy the National Socialists drew out of an “imaginative re-fashioning of the ideas of public order derived from the World War”<sup>92</sup> is increasingly being recognized in the cultural historiography about the Weimar Republic.

Beyond the boom of *memory history*, the cultural history of the world war has dedicated itself as well to other research fields, reproducing diverse “turns” from international cultural historiography in general, for example, the “spatial turn,” the “animal turn,” or even the “material turn.”<sup>93</sup> Deserving mention here are especially the recent works from Christoph Nübel, who focused himself in a methodologically innovative way on the space of the Western Front or the manifold space-human person interactions, distinguishing among them three “layers of space,” three forms of epistemic access: the (geographical) “surroundings,” the (tactical as well as operational military) “terrain,” and the (aesthetic) “landscape.” Rainer Pöppinghege is another researcher who considered the place of animals in the cultural economics of the total war.<sup>94</sup> There are as well the many works about regional history—expressive of a strong history activism “from below”—that appeared in the anniversary year; given their focus and ambitions, these must be assigned to the genre of cultural history works.<sup>95</sup> In view of the fact that the microformat of city or region actually presents a wonderful exploratory field for experimenting on “total his-

tory” that could bring together different cultural, social, and economic history approaches (as Roger Chickering has shown in his monumental study about Freiburg during World War I<sup>96</sup>), this is something one has to regret.

### **Something New for an Old Question? From the Problematic of War Guilt to Revisionist Tendencies in German Historiography**

Looking at the research literature about the one-hundred-year-old issue of war guilt, or (as one says more appropriately today) the responsibility for the outbreak of the war, it is once again striking that continuity is what prevails. It does so in three respects: for one, the sheer number of works about this topic that have appeared since 2000 clearly attests to the fact that from the German point of view the issue of the causes of the war continues to be the most important single question.<sup>97</sup> Secondly, one is struck by the fact that what continues to dominate the genre are the relatively classical diplomatic and political history works. Thirdly, the revisionist or relativist dynamic, which was already looming before the turn of the century, has persisted or even gotten stronger. After the publication of a series of works that plainly cast a more critical light than previous studies on the Austrian, Russian, French, or British policies of the prewar period, a revisionist wave clearly built up before the centenary.<sup>98</sup> Other works also contributed to this, calling into question several long-established certitudes about the expectation horizon of people living during that period by pointing out detente tendencies in the immediate prewar period and counterposing to the “*topos* of the inevitable war” the “*topos* of an improbable war.”<sup>99</sup> After that it was not long until 2013/2014 when an avalanche of new publications about World War I descended upon the scholarly and interested public. In Christopher Clark’s *Sleepwalkers* (published in English in 2012 and in German in 2013), the revisionism of the previous decades strengthened so successfully that the book absolutely has to be considered as *the* international bestseller of the centenary. What certainly played a significant role in explaining its popularity among its German readers was the book’s emphatic claim that one should cease with the “blame game,” developing the idea that the German Empire had in no way done more to lead to the outbreak of the war than any of the other European powers.

What has been almost lost from sight is that other historians under the influence of this renewed debate have maintained the view that the German emperor, and Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, along with their military advisors, had definitely judged the constellation of factors in July as perhaps the last best opportunity to initiate a war under not completely

unfavorable conditions.<sup>100</sup> Methodologically speaking, many of the recent debates even seemed to be a step backward, such that what had already been achieved (not only the synoptic view of foreign and domestic political connections but also the influence of perceptions and mentalities) once again fell from view.<sup>101</sup> On balance, the discussion about Clark's book without a doubt shone a bright light on reinvigorated tendencies in German historical scholarship toward a national consciousness.<sup>102</sup> In many ways, one might even speak of a certain upswing in apologetical theses. So, for example, the vehemence is remarkable with which some German authors are currently demanding a reappraisal of the German atrocities in 1914. Breaking with the prevailing consensus, these authors argue that the excessive German violence against the Belgian and French civilian populations in the summer of 1914 was in fact a reaction to an irregular *franc-tireur* war (especially by the Belgian side), and so the excesses have to be understood in this context.<sup>103</sup> They take particular aim at the standard reference work on the topic, *German Atrocities* by Horne and Kramer,<sup>104</sup> which argues that friendly fire and a downright *franc-tireur* psychosis combined to make German soldiers believe they were dealing with irregular troops, and this mistaken belief then triggered brutal retaliation. This view is attacked with a stridency that appears totally exaggerated and indeed can only be understood against the backdrop of shifts in the ambient German memory culture.

It is for the time being not possible to foresee exactly to what extent the revisionist currents apparent here (and in no way supported just by German historians) will unfold in the years to come. It might have seemed plausible to think that after the "war guilt" question, other sensitive questions concerning the last year of the war as well as the peace treaties of 1919/1920 would be subjected to review. However, for the time being, there is not much evidence for this. As far as the Versailles treaty is concerned, a new wave of publications has certainly been building in the last months of 2018.<sup>105</sup> The main interpretation of the treaty as certainly imperfect but in many ways the best compromise people not benefitting from hindsight could agree upon (and surely in no way responsible for the rise of Nazism in Germany) that is well established in Anglo-Saxon historiography since at least twenty years<sup>106</sup> remains uncontested. Also, the decidedly negative assessment of the radical German expansionist policies, which after 1917 were increasingly determined by the Supreme Army Command (*Oberste Heeresleitung* or OHL), has not been called into question. The strategic mistakes of the military leadership supported by a national hubris and military arrogance are all too apparent, and they surely contributed their share to a totalizing of the war and to maneuvering the German Empire militarily and politically into a blind alley. Yet,

a few recently published works that describe this policy in its complex inter-German but also European contexts, in which the German military officers were by no means the only (nor always the decisive) *acteurs*, definitely suggest that a broadening view of this sort could lead to a shifting of accents that would situate German policy more strongly in a European norm (however that is defined in detail) than has been the case up to this point.<sup>107</sup>

### Further Trends

The points covered here are by no means all of the more recent developments in German research on World War I. It is worthwhile noting, for instance, that our understanding of the German perspective on the war has been considerably furthered by several recent biographies of German key figures: Military leaders such as von der Goltz, Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Moltke and Tirpitz have been subject to close scholarly scrutiny, not to mention the Emperor himself, whose influence on the course of German policy continues to be debated.<sup>108</sup> It is also striking that traditional military history (more strongly attended to in the Anglo-Saxon world) has experienced a palpable renaissance since the turn of the century. This does not mean just the “new” military history modernized by the adoption of the theoretical approaches of social and cultural science, which in the meantime arrive dressed up as an integrated social history of the war, but definitely also classical battle history dealing (among other things) with operations, weaponry, military efficiency, etc.<sup>109</sup> In this context, quite a controversy surrounded recent interpretations of the Schlieffen Plan, whose very existence was called into question by an American military historian. However, as important as this controversy might have appeared in the 2000s, it seems obvious now that it has not changed the prevailing historiographic narrative that considered the German war plan (and the tight temporal constraints it imposed on German decision making) to be a major factor in the escalation leading to war in any significant way.<sup>110</sup> Over the course of this renaissance there has been a rediscovery of some lesser-known sectors of the front, which in German historiography had long ago faded into obscurity. Once again the changed political context played an important role here: in the wake of the gradual integration of several countries of east and east-middle Europe into the European Union, the field of vision of German historiography likewise expanded to the east, bringing with it studies about the long-“forgotten” fronts of the war in the east.<sup>111</sup>

A last point that should be addressed here has a cross-sectional character: without any doubt, internationality (that is to say, the everyday

functioning of international research teams and networks) has been one of the essential concomitants of the developments in the last twenty years. That German research on World War I appreciates a special additional benefit from this is shown particularly in the fact that the largest and most ambitious international World War I project (the English-language online encyclopedia *1914-1918-online* under the leadership of Oliver Janz) is at its institutional core a German project. This internationalization of networks correlates in recent times with the rising attention being given (in Germany as well) to the colonial and global dimensions of World War I. While English and French historians had already opened up this field back in the 1970s in the wake of the newly arisen *Imperial History*, this was only much later the case in Germany (that is to say, in German historiography), occurring against the backdrop of differently positioned colonial/postcolonial tradition.<sup>112</sup>

Lately, in addition to the worldwide reach of the battles between 1914 and 1918 (all the way to China and South America), the multifaceted repercussions of the war on the world order have been considered.<sup>113</sup> In its systematic regard, the issue that once again came into view was the extent to which and over what channels the war in Europe connected with war events beyond Europe or whether actually much more can be made out of the developments outside of Europe actually having critical repercussions on the governments and populations of the European colonial powers.<sup>114</sup> Although an insistent entanglements history of all these phenomena is still outstanding, the new studies from the jubilee year have the advantage that their analysis of the global dimension is no longer merely limited to point-by-point treatments. Much more so they are strongly turning their view not only toward the territorial spread of the war events, the recruiting of overseas soldiers and workforces, but also to the repercussions of the world war on the imperial metropolises themselves. And on the same level with these, there are new contributions about the propaganda of the Central Powers against the Entente as well as extensive studies about the history of the world war in Africa and in Asia.<sup>115</sup>

The core findings from these developments have in the meantime also flowed into the large German-language syntheses of World War I. The synoptic accounts from Oliver Janz and Jörn Leonhard, both widely accepted works, do pursue a pronounced global history approach, clearly indicating the topicality of this strategy.<sup>116</sup> Over and above this, binational accounts about the history of the world war have in the meantime led to the breaking up of long-frozen national perspectives.<sup>117</sup> Whether, however, the three metanarratives of a nonmilitary and nonnational as well as transnational historiography will actually determine the future World War I historiography (as recently postulated by Iris Rachamimov) appears

by all means an open question in view of recent developments toward a re-nationalization of political cultures and also of academic communities.<sup>118</sup>

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27. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: De Gruyter, 1996). See also Klaus Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral: Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1969). On the infamous Manifesto of the Ninety-Three from October 1914 see Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg

- and Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf "An die Kulturwelt!": das Manifest der 93 und die Anfänge der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996). Medievalist Karl Hampe's wartime journal provides valuable source material on the wartime engagement of intellectuals in general and historians in particular: Folker Reichert and Eike Wolgast, eds., *Karl Hampe: Kriegstagebuch 1914-1918* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2004).
28. Christoph Cornelissen, "Die Frontgeneration deutscher Historiker und der Erste Weltkrieg," in *Der verlorene Frieden: Politik und Kriegskultur nach 1918*, ed. Jost Dülffer and Gerd Krumeich (Essen: Klartext, 2002), 311–37, with references to the quotations.
  29. Hans Rothfels, "Fünfzig Jahre danach," *Der Monat* 24 (1969): 53.
  30. See Ulrich Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage: Politische Öffentlichkeit und Kriegsschuldfrage in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 74–78.
  31. Max Montgelas and Walter Schücking, eds., *Die Deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt für Politik und Geschichte, 1920).
  32. Annelise Thimme, ed., *Friedrich Thimme 1868–1938: Ein politischer Historiker, Publizist und Schriftsteller in seinen Briefen* (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1994), 43–47, 228, 307.
  33. Gerd Krumeich, "Konjunkturen der Weltkriegserinnerung," in *Der Weltkrieg 1914–1918: Ereignis und Erinnerung*, ed. Rainer Rother (Berlin: Minerva, 2004), 68–73, 69.
  34. Wolfgang Jäger, *Historische Forschung und politische Kultur in Deutschland: Die Debatte 1914–1980 über den Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 81.
  35. Hermann Oncken, *Das Deutsche Reich und die Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1933), 1:17. See in addition Christoph Cornelissen, "'Schuld am Weltfrieden': Politische Kommentare und Deutungsversuche deutscher Historiker zum Versailler Vertrag 1919–1933," in *Versailles 1919: Ziele, Wirkung, Wahrnehmung*, ed. Gerd Krumeich (Essen: Klartext, 2001), 237–58.
  36. Erich Brandenburg, *Von Bismarck zum Weltkriege: Die deutsche Politik in den Jahrzehnten vor dem Kriege* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1924), v–vi, as well as 443. For the background, see Cathrin Friedrich, *Erich Brandenburg—Historiker zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1998), 254–70.
  37. Bernd Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges: Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (München: C. H. Beck, 1980), 31.
  38. For the international discussion of the war guilt in the interwar period, see Annika Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War: Controversies and Consensus* (London: Longman, 2002), 105–18.
  39. See Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage*, 78–87.
  40. Markus Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg; Die amtliche deutsche Militärgeschichtsschreibung 1914–1956* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).
  41. Markus Pöhlmann, "'Das große Erleben da draußen': Die Reihen Schlachten des Weltkrieges (1921–1930)," in *Von Richthofen bis Remarque: Deutschsprachige Prosa zum 1. Weltkrieg*, ed. Thomas F. Schneider and Hans Wagener (Amsterdam: Brill, 2003), 115–31.
  42. On Hans Delbrück, see Christian Lüdke, *Hans Delbrück und Weimar: Für eine konservative Republik gegen Kriegsschuldflüge und Dolchstoßlegende* (Göttingen: V&R, 2018).

43. The summarizing treatment by Hobohm has been published again in Wolfram Wette, ed., *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes* (München: Piper, 1995), 136–45.
44. Hans Herzfeld, *Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die Auflösung der nationalen Einheitsfront im Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1928), 189–95.
45. See *Summary of Organization and Work 1911–1941*, ed. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1941).
46. Erich Keyser, *Die Geschichtswissenschaft: Aufbau und Aufgaben* (München: Oldenburg, 1931), v and 7. For the background for the tendency toward *völkisch* history beginning in 1918–19, see Willi Oberkrome, *Volks Geschichte. Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft 1918–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).
47. See Michael Fahlbusch, “Für Volk, Führer und Reich! Die Volksdeutschen Forschungsgemeinschaften und Volkstumspolitik, 1931–1945,” in *Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Doris Kaufmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 2:468–89.
48. Helmut Heiber, *Walter Frank und sein Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1966), 367.
49. Frank Reichherzer, *“Alles ist Front!” Wehrwissenschaften in Deutschland und die Beliefizierung der Gesellschaft vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis in den Kalten Krieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012).
50. Wilhelm Schübler’s letter to Srbik from 13 März 1938. As to the reaction of German historians to the *Anschluss* in general, see Karen Schönwälder, *Historiker und Politik: Geschichtswissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1992), 127–30.
51. Cornelißen, “Frontgeneration deutscher Historiker,” 329; on Herzfeld, see Gerhard A. Ritter, “Hans Herzfeld: Persönlichkeit und Werk,” in *Hans Herzfeld: Persönlichkeit und Werk*, ed. Otto Büsch (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1983), 13–92, especially 28–30 and 34–45.
52. Ludwig Dehio and Walter Classen, eds., *Friedrich Meinecke: Ausgewählter Briefwechsel* (Stuttgart: Köhler 1962), 364.
53. Christoph Cornelißen, *Gerhard Ritter: Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2001), 309, as well as 597–622.
54. This chapter deals exclusively with the West German World War I-historiography. This is not to say, however, that East German historians did not engage with the 1914–1918 period. Although the German Marxist-Leninist historiography of that time suffers from a tendency to reduce the war’s complexities to a pre-history of communism in general and the GDR in particular, there have been some serious contributions to scholarly debate, the most important one being arguably the works of Fritz Klein, whose *Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg* (East Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968–1970) has been lauded as “the richest, most comprehensive account of Germany in the First World War” as late as in 2014 (Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 250).
55. Ludwig Dehio, *Gleichgewicht oder Hegemonie: Betrachtungen über ein Grundproblem der neueren Staatengeschichte* (Krefeld: Scherpe-Verlag, 1948).
56. Gerhard Ritter, “Gegenwärtige Lage und Zukunftsaufgaben deutscher Geschichtswissenschaft,” in *Historische Zeitschrift* 170 (1950): 16.
57. Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk*, vol. 3: *Die Tragödie der Staatskunst, Bethmann Hollweg als Kriegskanzler, 1914 bis 1917* (München: Oldenbourg, 1964).

58. Fritz Fischer, *Germany's War Aims in the First World War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967); on the controversy, see Konrad H. Jarausch, "Der nationale Tabubruch: Wissenschaft, Öffentlichkeit und Politik in der Fischer-Kontroverse," in *Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte*, ed. Martin Sabrow, Ralph Jessen, and Klaus Große Kracht (München: C. H. Beck, 2003), 9–40; Helmut Böhme, "'Primat' und 'Paradigma': Zur Entwicklung einer bundesdeutschen Zeitgeschichtsschreibung am Beispiel des Ersten Weltkrieges," in *Historikerkontroversen*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000), 87–139.
59. Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (New York: Norton, 1975).
60. Fritz Fischer, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 July 1967.
61. Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany: 1914-1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966); Jürgen Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg: Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).
62. Anne Roerkohl, *Hungerblockade und Heimatfront: Die kommunale Lebensmittelversorgung in Westfalen während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991).
63. Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds., *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914–1919*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997/2007).
64. Detlev Peukert, "Alltagsgeschichte—eine andere Perspektive," in Detlev Peukert, *Volksgenossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde: Anpassung, Ausmerze und Aufbegehren unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1982), 21–26; Peter Knoch, ed., *Kriegsalltag: Die Rekonstruktion des Kriegsalltags als Aufgabe der historischen Forschung und der Friedenserziehung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1989); Klaus Latzel, "Die mißlungene Flucht vor dem Tod: Töten und Sterben vor und nach 1918," in *Kriegsende 1918: Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung*, ed. Jörg Duppler and Gerhard Groß (München: Oldenburg, 1999), 183–99.
65. Klaus Latzel, "Vom Kriegserlebnis zur Kriegserfahrung," *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 56 (1997): 1–30; Bernd Ulrich, *Die Augenzeugen: Deutsche Feldpostbriefe in Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit 1914–1933* (Essen: Klartext, 1997).
66. Ute Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen in der Kriegsgesellschaft: Beruf, Familie und Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).
67. On Deist, see Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Laudatio: Wilhelm Deist zum 70. Geburtstag," *Militär-geschichtliche Zeitschrift* 60 (2001): ix–xvi.
68. Wilhelm Deist, "Die Politik der Seekriegsleitung und die Rebellion der Flotte Ende Oktober 1918," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 14 (1966), 341–68.
69. Wilhelm Deist, "Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreiches: Zur Realität der Dolchstoßlegende," in *Das Unrechtsregime: Internationale Forschungen über den Nationalsozialismus I*, ed. Ulrike Büttner (Hamburg: Christians, 1986), 101–29.
70. Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
71. For some criticism on Watson, see Benjamin Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier in the Great War: Killing, Dying, Surviving* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 135–56.
72. Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich, "Wozu eine 'Kulturgeschichte' des Ersten Weltkrieges?" in *Durchhalten! Krieg und Gesellschaft im Vergleich, 1914–1918*, ed. Arnd Bauerkämper and Elise Julien (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 31–53.
73. Gerhard Hirschfeld and Gerd Krumeich, eds., "Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch . . ." *Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Essen: Klartext, 1993); Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich, Dieter Langewiesche, and Hans-Peter Ullmann,

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  75. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “The Topos of Inevitable War,” in *Germany in the Age of Total War*, ed. Volker R. Berghahn and Martin Kitchen (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 23–45. On Mommsen and World War I research, see, for example, Gerhard Hirschfeld, “Wolfgang J. Mommsen und der Erste Weltkrieg,” in *Geschichtswissenschaft im Geist der Demokratie: Wolfgang J. Mommsen und seine Generation*, ed. Christoph Cornelißen (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), 137–46.
  76. See for example Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Großmachtstellung und Weltpolitik: Die Außenpolitik des Deutschen Reichs 1870–1914* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1993); Gerd Krumeich, *Armaments and Politics in France on the Eve of the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1984); Stig Förster, *Der doppelte Militarismus: Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik zwischen Status-quo-Sicherung und Aggression 1890–1913* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985).
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  78. John F. V. Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan Press, 1983); Dominic Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983); Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin Press, 1998); Samuel Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).
  79. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Die Urkatastrophe Deutschlands: Der Erste Weltkrieg 1914–1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002); Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ed., *Kultur und Krieg: Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: Oldenbourg, 1996).
  80. Two particularly convincing examples are Wencke Meteling, *Ehre, Einheit, Ordnung: Preußische und französische Städte und ihre Regimenter im Krieg, 1870/71 und 1914–19* (Baden-Baden: Nomos 2010), and Benjamin Ziemann, *Gewalt im Ersten Weltkrieg: Töten-Überleben-Verweigern* (Essen: Klartext, 2014).
  81. Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism and Authority in Germany 1914–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Siglinde Clementi and Oswald Überegger, eds., *Krieg und Geschlecht* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2015); Jens Thiel, “Menschenbassin Belgien”: *Anwerbung, Deportation und Zwangsarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen: Klartext, 2007); Uta Hinz, *Gefangen im Großen Krieg: Kriegsgefangenschaft in Deutschland 1914–1921* (Essen: Klartext, 2006); Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Christian Westerhoff, *Zwangsarbeit im Ersten Weltkrieg: Deutsche Arbeitskräftepolitik im besetzten Polen und Litauen 1914–1918* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012); Sabine Kienitz, *Beschädigte Helden: Kriegsinvalidität und Körperbilder 1914–1923* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008); Alfred Eisfeld, Guido Hausmann, and Dietmar Neutatz, eds., *Besetzt, interniert, deportiert: Der Erste Weltkrieg und die deutsche, jüdische, polnische und ukrainische Zivilbevölkerung im östlichen Europa* (Essen: Klartext 2013).
  82. John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); for the Eastern Front see Anton Holzer, *Das Lächeln der Henker: Der unbekannte Krieg gegen die Zivilbevölkerung 1914–1918* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2008); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “Der zweite Dreißigjährige Krieg:

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  84. George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 159.
  85. See Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
  86. Benjamin Ziemann, “Germany after the First World War—A Violent Society? Results and Implications of Recent Research on Weimar Germany,” *Journal of Modern European History* 1, no. 1 (2003): 80–95, provides a convincing résumé of this criticism.
  87. See Dirk Schumann, *Politische Gewalt in der Weimarer Republik 1918–1933: Kampf um die Straße und Furcht vor dem Bürgerkrieg* (Essen: Klartext, 2001). More recently this argument has been emphasized by Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016); and Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution 1918/1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
  88. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 181.
  89. Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (München: C. H. Beck, 2006), 41.
  90. See for instance Susanne Brandt, *Vom Kriegsschauplatz zum Gedächtnisraum: Die Westfront 1914–1940* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000); Beil, *Der ausgestellte Krieg*; 2004; Jesko van Hoegen, *Der Held von Tannenberg: Genese und Funktion des Hindenburg-Mythos* (Köln: Böhlau, 2007); Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Steffen Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat: Die “Ideen von 1914” und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2003); Elise Julien, *Paris, Berlin, la mémoire de la guerre 1914–1933* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010).
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92. Wolfram Pyta, "Die Privilegierung des Frontkämpfers gegenüber dem Feldmarschall: Zur Politikmächtigkeit literarischer Imagination des Ersten Weltkriegs in Deutschland," in *Politische Kultur und Medienwirklichkeiten in den 1920er Jahren*, ed. Ute Daniel, Inge Marszolek, Wolfram Pyta, and Thomas Welskopp (München: C. H. Beck, 2010), 166.
93. Roger Chickering provides a close to exhaustive overview of the literature authored in Germany during the centenary: "Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg: Betrachtungen zur Historiographie des Gedenkjahres," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 55 (2015): 395–444.
94. Christoph Nübel, *Durchhalten und Überleben an der Westfront: Raum und Körper im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014); Rainer Pöppinghege, *Tiere im Ersten Weltkrieg: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 2014).
95. Some examples for this: Thomas Schwark, *Heimatfront Hannover: Kriegsalltag 1914–1918* (Hannover: Stadt Hannover, 2014); Volker Standt, ed., *Köln im Ersten Weltkrieg: Veränderungen in der Stadt und des Lebens der Bürger 1914–1918* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014); Lars U. Scholl, ed., *Bremen und der Erste Weltkrieg: Kriegsalltag in der Hansestadt* (Bremen: Ed. Falkenberg, 2014); Frank Becker, ed., *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Städte: Studien zur Rhein-Ruhr-Region* (Duisburg: Universitätsverlag Rhein-Ruhr, 2015); Maren Ballerstadt, ed., *Magdeburg im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918: Eine Großstadt an der Heimatfront* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2014).
96. Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
97. For an overview of more recent literature, see Annika Mombauer, "Guilt or Responsibility? The Hundred-Year Debate on the Origins of the First World War," *Central European History* 48, no. 4 (December 2015): 541–64.
98. Günther Kronenbitter, *Krieg im Frieden: Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns* (München: Oldenbourg, 2003); Stefan Schmidt, *Frankreichs Außenpolitik in der Julikrise: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ausbruchs des Ersten Weltkriegs* (München: Oldenbourg, 2009); Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Andreas Rose, *Zwischen Empire und Kontinent* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011). See the splendid course book by William Mulligan, which in many respects comes close to Clark's thesis without, however, resorting to overstatements: William Mulligan, *The Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
99. Friedrich Kießling, *Gegen den "Großen Krieg"? Entspannung in den internationalen Beziehungen 1911–1914* (München: Oldenbourg, 2002); Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson, eds., *An Improbable War: The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).
100. Gerd Krumeich, *Juli 1914: Eine Bilanz* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014); Annika Mombauer, *Die Julikrise: Europas Weg in den Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: C. H. Beck, 2014).
101. See Michael Epkenhans, "Der Erste Weltkrieg: Jahrestagsgedenken, neue Forschungen und Debatten einhundert Jahre nach seinem Beginn," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 63 (2015): 135–65; Chickering, "Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg," 402. Nils Löffelbein, Silke Fehleemann, and Christoph Cornelißen, eds., *Europa 1914: Wege ins Unbekannte* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016), and Stig Förster, ed., *Vor dem Sprung ins Dunkle: Die militärische Debatte über den Krieg der Zukunft 1880–1914* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016), on the contrary, provide an analysis of the mental and cultural frameworks on the eve of World War I.

102. See especially Dominik Geppert, Sönke Neitzel, Cora Stephan, and Thomas Weber, “Der Beginn vieler Schrecken,” *Die Welt*, 3 January 2014.
103. Ulrich Keller, *Schuldfragen: Belgischer Untergrundkrieg und deutsche Vergeltung im August 1914* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2017); Gunter Spraul, *Der Franktireur-Krieg 1914: Untersuchungen zum Verfall einer Wissenschaft und zum Umgang mit nationalen Mythen* (Berlin: Frank&Timme, 2016).
104. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*.
105. See for instance Jörn Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden: Versailles und die Welt 1918–1923* (München: C. H. Beck, 2018); Eckart Conze, *Die große Illusion: Versailles und die Neuordnung der Welt 1919* (München: Siedler, 2018).
106. See for instance Margaret Macmillan, *Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War* (London: Murray, 2001). The book was translated into German in 2015.
107. Holger Afflerbach, *Auf Messers Schneide: Wie das Deutsche Reich den Ersten Weltkrieg verlor* (München: C. H. Beck, 2018); Borislav Chernev, *Twilight of Empire: The Brest-Litovsk Conference and the Remaking of East-Central Europe, 1917–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).
108. Carl Alexander Krethlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: eine Biographie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012); Wolfram Pyta, *Hindenburg: Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler* (Munich: Siedler, 2007); Manfred Nebelin, *Ludendorff: Diktator im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Siedler, 2010); Annika Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001); Patrick J. Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011). An early example of a biography on a German World War I-general that had a tremendous impact on the general historiography of the war is Holger Afflerbach, *Falkenhayn: politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994). On Wilhelm II see, most noticeably, John C. G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: into the Abyss of War and Exile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) and Christopher Clark, *Kaiser Wilhelm II: a Life in Power* (London: Penguin Books, 2009). The former vigorously upholds the idea that Wilhelm’s central position in the political system allowed him to weigh heavily on all major policy-decisions before and for the better part of the war, an interpretation he has consistently put forward since the late 1970s. The latter, on the contrary, diagnoses an important loss of power and control in the wake of the Daily Telegraph Affair (1908) and a subsequently diminished emperor, whose grip on German policy (and thus for instance on the decisions during the August crisis) was all but tight. The debate surrounding Wilhelm II is probably bound to last. It appears, however, that a more nuanced view of Wilhelm’s “personal regime” has a certain momentum in its favor. For the military entourage of the Emperor during the war see also Holger Afflerbach, *Kaiser Wilhelm II. als Oberster Kriegsherr im Ersten Weltkrieg. Quellen aus der militärischen Umgebung des Kaisers, 1914–1918* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005).
109. Christian Stachelbeck, *Militärische Effektivität im Ersten Weltkrieg: Die 11. Bayerische Infanteriedivision 1915 bis 1918* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010); Markus Pöhlmann, *Der Panzer und die Mechanisierung des Krieges: Eine deutsche Geschichte 1890 bis 1945* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016); Holger H. Herwig, *Marne 1914: Eine Schlacht, die die Welt veränderte* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2016).
110. Terence Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning 1871–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For the criticism on Zuber see, for instance, Hans Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, and Gerhard P. Groß, eds., *The Schlieffen Plan:*

- International Perspectives on the German strategy for World War I* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014). The negative assessment of the Schlieffen Plan goes back to Gerhard Ritter, *The Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1958).
111. Gerhard Groß, ed., *Die vergessene Front: Der Osten 1914/15; Ereignis, Wirkung, Nachwirkung* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006).
  112. Michael Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches: Ostafrika im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus 2010); Eckard Michels, “Der Held von Deutsch-Ostafrika”: *Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck; Ein preußischer Kolonialoffizier* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008); Rudolf Mark, *Krieg an fernen Fronten: Die Deutschen in Russisch-Turkestan und am Hindukusch 1914–1924* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2013); Tanja Bühner, *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika: Koloniale Sicherheitspolitik und transkulturelle Kriegsführung 1885–1918* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011); Uwe Schulte-Varendorff, *Krieg in Kamerun: Die deutsche Kolonie im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Links, 2011); Daniel Marc Segesser, *Der Erste Weltkrieg in globaler Perspektive* (Wiesbaden: marixverlag, 2010). For an example of the renewed interest in German colonial history in general see Jürgen Zimmerer, ed., *Kein Platz an der Sonne: Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2013).
  113. Stefan Rinke, *Im Sog der Katastrophe: Lateinamerika und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus 2015).
  114. Stephan Lehnstaedt, “Fluctuating between ‘Utilisation’ and Exploitation: Occupied East Central Europe during the First World War,” in *Legacies of Violence. Eastern Europe’s First World War*, ed. Jochen Böhrer, Włodzimierz Borodziej, and Joachim von Puttkamer (München: C. H. Beck, 2014), 89–112.
  115. Jürgen Bürgschwentner, Matthias Egger, Gunda Barth-Scalmani, ed., *Other Fronts, Other Wars? First World War Studies on the Eve of the Centennial* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Wilfried Loth, ed., *Erster Weltkrieg und Dschihad: Die Deutschen und die Revolutionierung des Orients* (München: Oldenbourg, 2014).
  116. Oliver Janz, *14—Der Große Krieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013); Oliver Janz, ed., “Der Erste Weltkrieg in globaler Perspektive,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40, no. 2 (2014): 147–307; Jörn Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora: Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (München: C. H. Beck, 2014). More recently, Leonhard extended his global history approach to the Versailles treaty and the post-1918 order: Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden*.
  117. Jean-Jacques Becker and Gerd Krumeich, *Der Große Krieg: Deutschland und Frankreich 1914–1918* (Essen: Klartext, 2010); Gerd Krumeich and Antoine Prost, *Verdun 1916: Die Schlacht und ihr Mythos aus deutsch-französischer Sicht* (Essen: Klartext, 2016).
  118. Iris Rachamimov, “‘Zivilhistoriografie’ des Ersten Weltkrieges: Der Erste Weltkrieg in der jüngeren akademischen Forschung,” in *Texturen des Krieges Körper, Schrift und der Erste Weltkrieg*, ed. Galili Shahar (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 28.

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Chapter 6

AUSTRIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY AND  
PERSPECTIVES ON WORLD WAR I

The Long Shadow of the “Just War,” 1914–2018

*Oliver Rathkolb*



**Remembrance of the World War as  
an Ambivalent *Lieu de Mémoire* in Austria**

After the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, the Republic of Austria, whose integration into the German Reich had been refused by the Allies, was condemned to be a “small country against its will.” Yet the sense of lost greatness and of the glorious past of an empire of fifty million people lingered, providing the backdrop against which the Austrian memory culture of the interwar years was played out. Two elements dominated this memory after 1919–20: the heroism of the Austrian soldiers on the one hand, and their suffering on the other. It was primarily the conservative forces in the postwar culture (which had fallen into two to three camps) that dominated the discourse about heroic masculinity in World War I and demanded the remilitarization of the society in view of the border conflicts with Italy and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. These forces quickly organized themselves into rightist-conservative and for the most part antidemocratic networks, primarily in the paramilitary Home Guard (*Heimwehr*) or in various veterans’ associations. These groups

brought together Christian socialists and “Greater Germany” backers as well as many former officers, most of whom had experienced a total loss of their previous social status.<sup>1</sup> The social democrats, on the other hand, stuck with the line that World War I had been a crime and a political mistake, and remained silent about their own sustained enthusiasm for the war and their loyalty to the House of Habsburg. When their participation with the Christian socialists in a grand coalition ended in 1920, they established their own paramilitary self-defense unit, the Republican Protective League (*Republikanischer Schutzbund*), which after 1923 was publicly active and visible. Up until 1920, the social democrats played an important role in the creation of a democratic transitional defense force (*Volkswehr*); however, this force quite quickly was given a different political coloration, directed in this case by Carl Vaugoin, the Christian socialist defense minister, a post he held almost continuously from 1921 to 1933.

Any commemorations of the world war were correspondingly politically riven and full of conflict; in the conservative camp, what was primarily celebrated was the image of the war hero in the Habsburg myth (particularly common were the depictions of the stalwart fighter toughing it out in the snow and glaciers of the Dolomites, or a Tyrolean *Kaiserjäger* or a daring horseman). In this regard, the loss of South Tyrol, which was separated off and given to Italy, seemed to have influenced the emotional supercharging of what had been an extremely bloody frontline in the Dolomites and on the Isonzo. What became an important symbolic connecting link in the remembrance culture were the world war memorials bearing the names of the fallen soldiers and officers. Remarkably, these were quickly erected even in the smallest villages, then becoming crystallization points for commemorations and veterans’ gatherings. Even the entertainment industry adopted this hero *topos*—such as Luis Trenker did with the film *Mountains on Fire* (*Berge in Flammen*), showing the superhuman Florian Dimai battling against “unyielding and white death” and rescuing his comrades.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, on the other hand, the inglorious Balkan and Russian fronts remained very much on the periphery of the remembrance culture even if they were extremely present in many of the countless regimental histories. There was one notable exception: stories from the prisoner-of-war camps in Russia and Siberia were quite popular.

These tendencies led to a passionate commemorative conflict with the social democrats, who were pushing the idea that there was but one lesson to be drawn from the war: pacifism. This conflict became apparent, for example, when the film *All Quiet on the Western Front* (*Im Westen nichts Neues*), taken from the world war novel by Erich Maria Remarque,

came to Austria. At its premier in the Apollo Theater on 3 January 1931 in Vienna, there was furious street fighting since the National Socialists had called in around two thousand demonstrators. Then, even though the social-democrat mayor of Vienna, Karl Seitz, supported the showing, and in spite of deploying 2,000 policemen in the days following, the minister of the interior ended up banning the showing of the film in Austria. Support for this ban, however, was already well in place: back in 1929 the christian-socialist minister for military affairs, Vaugoin, had banned Remarque's novel from all soldier libraries, and a parliamentary majority in December 1930 had recommended prohibiting the showing of the film in all federal provinces.

After the shattering of the democratic model in 1933 and the banning of the social democrats after the civil war in 1934, the heroizing of World War I was further promoted during the chancellor dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuß, who himself had been a lieutenant in the Tyrolean mountain division (*Gebirgsjäger*). Not only did the uniforms from the time of the monarchy come back into vogue as a form of symbolic reinforcement in the confrontation with National Socialist Germany, but a memorial to the fallen heroes was also built at the outer gate (*Äußeres Burgtor*) near the Heldenplatz in Vienna. Already during the war, laurel wreaths made "from an alloy not suited for deadly bullets" had been displayed there as "laurels for our heroes 1914–1916." Now in 1934, an open sky "hall of honor" with engravings on the walls of "the Austrian soldier" ranging from the Thirty Years' War to the world war was to honor the heroes who had fallen on the fields of battle. Wilhelm Frass, a sculptor with National Socialist sympathies, hewed a prone image of a fallen soldier out of red marble and hid within it an NS propaganda line (which was removed in 2012). On 15 March 1938, Adolf Hitler used this memorial for the laying of a wreath, symbolically launching the *Anschluss*. The longer World War II lasted, the more intensively did the *Wehrmacht* borrow old Austrian heroes such as Prince Eugene. However, the World War I museum in the *Neue Burg*, for which the Schuschnigg regime had concrete plans, never came to be. Instead, it became a depot for those artworks plundered from the private collections of Viennese Jews and intended for display in Hitler's planned museum in Linz.

The army was reestablished in 1955, but not as a volunteer army as it had been before 1938; it was now based on universal compulsory military service to what was now a neutral state. At this point, any attention given to World War I clearly diminished, and in the end, it was totally overshadowed by World War II and its aftermath. However, that notwithstanding, on the national holiday of 26 October, the federal government continued laying wreaths at the outer gate, until the Nazi inscription was

discovered in 2012. Then, after a brief pause, they again began laying a wreath at the outer gate in memory of all soldiers who had died.

It was not until 2014 that public interest in World War I and Austria's and the Habsburg Empire's role in the conflict emerged again (that is, beyond the small community of people interested in military history in general).<sup>3</sup> However, the opportunity to reflect upon the Austrian decision makers' shared responsibility for World War I was missed. Instead, Christopher Clark's "Sleepwalkers thesis" was embraced and internalized with great enthusiasm. This was all the more so the case with Clark's keynote address at the Salzburg Festival in 2014, a presentation that understood itself as a peace project arising out of the World War I.

In this context, leading Austrian politicians such as the social democrat chancellor Werner Faymann and Federal President Heinz Fischer did indeed urge a drawing forth of the "lessons of history" and emphasized the European Union's role in securing peace. Accordingly, the federal government published an independent position paper developed by historians that sought in concise and easily readable form to deconstruct any mythic creations.<sup>4</sup> Here both the key responsibility of Austria-Hungary by declaring war on Serbia and the escalating decisions taken by Germany, the Entente Powers (England and France), and Russia were critically analyzed.

There was also a dedicated attempt by the Vienna Philharmonic (at the initiative of its executive director, Clemens Hellsberg, and in conjunction with its conductor, Franz Welser-Möst) to put on in Sarajevo something along the lines of a commemorative concert on 28 June 2014,<sup>5</sup> the anniversary of the assassination of the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenburg. They sought to do this while still making it relevant to the present situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In spite of the concert's high artistic quality, it turned out to have no lasting political impact.

The public awareness of World War I received some strong stimulation from the organization of fourteen historical exhibitions,<sup>6</sup> which approached World War I in various ways (including fine arts and literature). These took place not just in Vienna but also in Linz, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Graz, Eisenstadt, Klagenfurt, and other locations.

The Museum of Military History, which from the beginning had never documented the effort by the army after 1955 to foster a sense of tradition, having focused instead on the monarchy, now used the anniversary for a revamped permanent exhibition of its World War I collection. Yet as frequently happens, military technology and uniforms were predominant, with much less about how inhuman everyday life was during the war or the war crimes committed.

What has been successful and deserves mention are a few newly prepared digital collections of material and sources—photographs, films, recordings available through Mediathek<sup>7</sup> and in the photo archive of the Austrian National Library,<sup>8</sup> which has access to its own war collection covering the years 1914–18. The Vienna Library as well offers impressive holdings that document quite vividly what everyday life was like in metropolitan Vienna during the war.<sup>9</sup> So, in 2014 World War I became in Austria a definite part of the culture industry in its historicizing aspect, doing so, however, without achieving any special importance in the construction of Austrian identity.

### **Between Apologia and Glorification: World War I Historiographies**

#### **1914–45**

There is no doubt that immediately after the war began, the war guilt question took center stage in the Austrian debate over World War I, a position that this topic (within certain limits) still occupies today. Even by the time the first “color books” began appearing in 1915–16,<sup>10</sup> a central thesis based on a clever presentation of documents had emerged. For many decades to come it would thereafter shape the historiography and also the public discourse in Austria. The thesis was: Serbia bore full responsibility for the declaration of war subsequent to the murder of the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, and his wife Sophie by a pro-Serbian terrorist. The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum of 23 July, which considerably escalated the July crisis, was viewed as a fair diplomatic note seeking clarification of the circumstances surrounding the assassination. In addition to that, beginning in 1915 accusations arose against Italy, initially an ally, but who in 1914 remained neutral and whose later entrance into the war was interpreted as a betrayal. At the same time, the close “brotherhood in arms” with the German Empire took center place in the portrayal of the war. Conversely, the Russian tsarist empire was represented as an *agent provocateur*, and even as early as 1914 a “Russian officer”<sup>11</sup> was imputed with having trained the group of assassins; however, this was a myth, and after 1918 it was no longer mentioned all that frequently. Yet, envisioning Russia in the image of the enemy continued to have strong currency after the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1917, and even intensified out of fear of a Bolshevik revolution.

After the war, the tradition of the “color books” was in many respects continued by selective document editions. It is noteworthy, however, that the first political guidelines issued by social democrat leader Otto Bauer,

then head of the Office of Foreign Affairs, actually insisted that the sole political responsibility for the war rested with the Austro-Hungarian leadership.<sup>12</sup> As a result, Roderich Goos, who had been an archivist in the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv before joining first the Austrian and later on the German diplomatic service, placed the Habsburg emperor's and the Austro-Hungarian government's responsibility at the center of his selection of documents and his line of argumentation. At the same time, the Republic of German-Austria was being presented as a new polity, which, on the basis of a legal opinion from Hans Kelsen, meant that it should not be considered as the legal successor of the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1921 Goos—at the time already a legation councilor in the German Foreign Office in Berlin—abandoned this primarily social democrat line of thought and shifted the sole responsibility for the war's outbreak on Serbia. From that point on his view was that the ultimatum to Serbia in 1914 was actually in accord with what at the time were the rules of international law. The Serbian government had, in its desire for territorial expansion, quite simply responded evasively and inadequately. Moreover, the destruction of Serbia was never supposed to have been a war aim; instead, the war was considered to be all about the preservation of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Being consistent, Goos in 1921, in the analysis he provided for the first German parliamentary commission of inquiry, also proffered his theses in opposition to those of the social democrats' Southeast Europe expert Hermann Wendel. The latter, in his assessment of the "Austrian-Serbian Problem," had placed blame for the war on Germany.<sup>13</sup> While Berlin may have focused on a local conflict in Serbia, it had nevertheless uncompromisingly advocated for a policy of military aggression.

What is fascinating, by the way, as a precise addendum to and wrinkle in the aggressive policies of the *hawks* at the federal chancellery, was the publication "1914: Das etwas andere Lesebuch zum 1. Weltkrieg" (1914: The somewhat different textbook about World War I) by Rudolf Agstner.<sup>14</sup> It contains some genuinely sensational source materials that document the Austrian miscalculation of the situation in Serbia and reveals from close up how totally overwhelmed the diplomatic bureaucracy in fact was.

The subsequent official government publications<sup>15</sup> after 1921 thus completed an apologetic change in direction and negated the war guilt thesis of the social democrat Otto Bauer, who as a lieutenant in the reserve had himself enthusiastically gone to war in 1914. Just as Austrian society after 1918 had fallen into two separate political factions (social democrat and Christian socialist), to be sure the question as to the war guilt remained ideologically highly controversial.

A high point in the increasing involvement of prominent historians such as Alfred Francis Přibram and Heinrich von Srbik came with the publication of a comprehensive nine-volume edition dealing with the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary from 1908 until the outbreak of the war. This highly patriotic, German-national-oriented project was intended to preempt the soon-to-expire embargo on the archives and once again with a governmental mandate buttress the official interpretation and response to the question of war guilt.<sup>16</sup> Přibram, who was of Jewish background and who had been harassed by anti-Semites at the University of Vienna, held a thesis that was similar to the anti-Semitic German nationalists Srbik and Ludwig Bittner, which was that the midsized powers were not to be ascribed any war guilt. But in 1938 this ideological German-national clique was riven once and for all. Přibram, who was also an internationally recognized historian, fled into exile to England in 1939, while Srbik and Bittner continued their careers in Vienna as staunch members of the NSDAP during the Nazi period. Bittner, as archivist, even had the “opportunity” to look through the “enemy archive” in Belgrade after the Axis’s military aggression against Yugoslavia. After having organized the transfer of 214 boxes of documents from Belgrade to Vienna, he declared in 1943, referring to the work of Friedrich Reinöhl on “The case Jeftanovitsch-Schola-Gavrila,” that Reinöhl had proven for the first time the “intervention of Jews in great power World policy.”<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the unreserved assignment of war guilt to Serbia (plus Russia) and the accusation of betrayal on the part of Italy, the totally unreflective positive assessment of the military performance of the imperial-royal army command around Chief of the General Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf shaped not only the war propaganda during 1914–18 but also the military historiography of the interwar period up until 1938. This can best be seen in the monumental official work on the history of the war edited on behalf of the Austrian ministry of war and the *Kriegsarchiv*.<sup>18</sup> German-nationalist officers were in the fore here, such as Edmund Glaise von Horstenau (who later on also served the National Socialists) and Ferdinand Stöller. As the only professors in military history at the University of Vienna, they both shaped for an extended period what was being taught there.<sup>19</sup> Hötzendorf himself (and later on his widow Gina), wrote their memoirs<sup>20</sup> to advance this myth, which was to last long after 1945.<sup>21</sup> However, it was common operational history that was particularly active in reinforcing the view that the army in actuality had not been defeated in World War I.<sup>22</sup> In the year of the *Anschluss* of the Schuschnigg dictatorship to National Socialist Germany, Hötzendorf was celebrated as a soldier *extraordinaire*.<sup>23</sup> It was not until 2013 that a first comprehensive and critical biography of him was published by Wolfram Dornik.<sup>24</sup>

Alongside the military memoirs that flooded the book market, it was the memoirs written by civilians—around one hundred works from the Austro-Hungarian decision-making elite are relevant here—that participated in constructing and consolidating this apologetic narrative. Very much like their military counterparts, they were only to a very moderate extent intended to be critical self-reflections. Foreign Minister Leopold Berchtold, for instance, denied any responsibility for the disaster; the special envoy Legation Councilor Alexander Graf von Hoyos, who in 1914 had conducted the decisive discussions in Berlin, was somewhat more self-reflective, even if he did not break with the prevailing consensus either.<sup>25</sup>

The National Socialist propaganda strategists, although decidedly oriented against the Habsburg Monarchy, cleverly made use of that regime's construction of military heroes in order to bolster the defensive will of those in the "Ostmark," the "alpine and Danube districts."<sup>26</sup> For this reason, the original "old-Austrian" fostering of military tradition was still being functionalized in 1943 in World War II by using heroic stories from the Military Order of Maria Theresa.<sup>27</sup>

### **The First Critical Historiographic Efforts after 1956**

With the Austrian State Treaty and Declaration of Neutrality of 1955, along with rearmament, the introduction of universal military service, and the reestablishment of the army, military historiography once again came back to life and started to exploit the new source material regarding World War I that had been made available.<sup>28</sup> What became quite clear in this (early postwar) period was the significant continuity in historiography. As before, what predominated was the school of thought of the veteran officers, who had started to work and publish on World War I in the interwar years, and whose view either withstood unscathed all political change or proved sufficiently flexible to adapt to new conditions. Rudolf Kizling is a case in point: this former imperial lieutenant colonel of the general staff had already back in 1920 enjoyed access to the war archives. In 1937 he had become the national archivist and deputy head of the war archives after the actual director of the archives, Edmund Glaise-Horstenau, was called by the NSDAP to serve as a minister without portfolio in the authoritarian government of Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg. Between July 1938 and May 1945 he was director of what was called the Military Archives Vienna,<sup>29</sup> which in fact was the Vienna branch of the Potsdam German Military Archives. In addition to this office, he became the director of the Prague branch of the German Military Archives in 1940 (a few months after the suppression of democratic Czechoslovakia).

As a “Banat German,” he was known to be emphatically nationalistic in his mindset, but he was not a member of the NSDAP. Although only an autodidact, he nevertheless dominated military historiography for a period of time (with over one hundred books and articles about World War I, the history of the imperial army, and the history of Austria generally). Moreover, he certainly did so into the 1950s, long after his forced departure in 1945 as director of the Military Archives Vienna.<sup>30</sup> The seven volumes of his main justificatory work *Austria-Hungary's Last War 1914–1918*, which appeared between 1929 and 1938, show primarily his hand at work even though in Germany the opus was largely attributed to Glaise-Horstenau.

However, in the mid-1950s the first cracks in this apologetic narrative started to appear. It was in particular the young historian Fritz Fellner, a veteran of World War II, who analyzed the matter quite differently, seeking to write a new critical history of the diplomacy during World War I and its pre- and postwar history. With his publication of the political notes found in the extensive diaries of the legal historian and politician Josef Redlich, he could reveal a first critical voice as to the political and social developments in 1914 and later on.<sup>31</sup> Redlich (1869–1936) had been a well-informed political networker with excellent connections to political and bureaucratic leaders, and he had served in various political positions: as a representative in the Moravian state parliament, as a member of the Austrian Imperial Council, as a participant in the provisional national assembly, and as finance minister for a few months in both 1918 and 1931. In addition to these, he had been a member of the Carnegie Commission regarding the Balkan region and had held a Harvard professorship for comparative public law from 1924 until 1934. In his diaries and letters he repeatedly and harshly criticized the policies pursued by the leaders of the state. Fellner, for his part, however, was to remain rather isolated in Austria, unable to build a group around himself.

It was not until ten years later that the studies from Rudolf Neck and Helmut Rumpler, at a broader level, produced a critical examination primarily of the domestic prehistory of the world war.<sup>32</sup> But even in this case, one remained captive to a bottom-line view that relativized Austrian war guilt. That is especially true of the biographies of the political *acteurs* published during this period, such as the study from Hugo Hantsch about Count Berchtold, who had been a particularly aggressive proponent of the war, and the biography by Ladislaus Singer of the imperial foreign minister Ottokar Czernin.<sup>33</sup> Concurrently, international historiography began for the first time to question these highly relativizing and uncritical writings about the imperial-royal monarchy. Someone who deserves special mention here is Solomon Wank, who in his dissertation at Columbia

University in 1961 used the example of Alois Lexa Graf von Aehrenthal (1906–12) in order to address the foreign policy *acteurs* of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1914. Then, two years later, with a short article on Graf Berchtold, he opened up new perspectives for a critical-analytical form of biography.<sup>34</sup> As a result, he remained an important reference person for historians writing critically about the end phase of the monarchy and its political *acteurs*.

### The Subcutaneous Fritz Fischer Controversy in Austria

Overall, however, there was no comprehensive discussion about the causes of the war and the question of war guilt that was comparable to the German Fischer controversy that began in 1961/1962 with the intense debate over the theses of the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer in his book *Germany's Aims in the First World War*.<sup>35</sup> Fischer's focus on Germany's aggressive aims and interests generated a huge debate that at the time was extremely politicized. Yet in Austria, the central "gatekeepers" of the discussion about World War I sought not to let any kind of doubt arise about a looming paradigm shift. Hugo Hantsch, for example, challenged Fischer only subtly and reservedly:

Your comprehensive and in-depth work definitely deserves recognition. You will indeed see that I cannot always share your opinion. I myself had my prejudices against Graf Berchtold. It should not be taken as an apology, but rather a factual processing of the source material . . . [that] neither the German nor the Austrian governments wanted to unleash the World War! . . . The basic reason for the decisions lay in fear. That this fear was not without foundation is something that primarily a reading of Sasonow's letters has shown me. France especially did everything she could to use Russia in the First World War as a tool for her plans. Things then became so matted together, and there was no great statesman present who could have altered the course of things.<sup>36</sup>

What made the situation complicated, at least from an Austrian point of view, was that Fischer's main antagonist in the German debate, Gerhard Ritter, whose conservative approach to the war's outbreak was very much in line with Hantsch's, was particularly severe in his assessment of the Austrian-Hungarian policy prior to World War I, considering that the German alliance partner had been preset on a military confrontation with Serbia well before 1914. However, this "secondary arena" did not play a role in the German debate. At the twelfth International Congress of Historical Sciences in 1965 in Vienna, the debate could well have exploded, yet it was left to the young Fritz Fellner to cautiously attempt

to initiate a discussion about the responsibility of the Austro-Hungarian diplomats and military leaders for the declaration of war on Serbia; yet once again, this was quickly stifled by Hantsch and others.<sup>37</sup>

### A Slow Paradigm Shift in the 1970s and 1980s

While it seemed at first as though Fellner (in the meantime a tenured professor of history at the University of Salzburg) would at this point in the discussion proffer a new perspective on the July crisis and the international decision-making processes, such a shift in approach was actually left to an article he published in 1976 about the Hoyos mission.<sup>38</sup> In international historiography, and on the basis of new archival research, a distinctly more critical view of the Austro-Hungarian policy in the summer of 1914 was gaining acceptance. In this context, it was surely not an accident that no Austrian publisher translated into German and brought to print the pivotal 1991 study by Samuel R. Williamson Jr. in which the author summarized and further developed his conclusions about the responsibility of the imperial-royal monarchy for the outbreak of the war, a conclusion he had previously published in part in essay form in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>39</sup> It was not until 1993 that a critical English-language study by the British historian John Leslie was at least published in a collection of articles in Austria, although not translated.<sup>40</sup> The reasons for this reticence of the Austrian historians to take up this central question about the international decision-making networks and to engage in a thorough analysis of the interests behind the causes of World War I is something Günther Kronenbitter sees (in addition to the conservative, rather Habsburg-friendly postwar school of thought around Hantsch) as also reflective of the neutrality sentiments in the midst of the Cold War. Here ultimately the victim theory predominated, namely that Austria was a victim of the Germans in World War II and the Holocaust.<sup>41</sup> A third reason lies (incidentally also coming from the United States from Carl Schorske, among others) in their imported discovery of the *fin de siècle* in Vienna (around 1900), and this would then shape the historiography and cultural studies of the 1980s and 1990s. This cultural turn influenced younger historians to move away from political and diplomatic history as well as from military history.

Initial cautious modifications of the long-held traditions (from the perspectives of military history, content, and methods) were apparent in the collections of essays about the history of the Habsburg Monarchy that came from within the framework of the Austrian Academy of Science.<sup>42</sup> However, what dominated in the individual articles was still just a comprehensive and detail-rich organizational and traditional military history.

## Rediscovery and New Appraisal—the 1990s

It was not until the 1990s that one recognizes a clear overcoming of fears about touching matters dealing with World War I and then, as a consequence, an embracing of a thorough, substantive reappraisal. In 1989, from the pen of Erwin Schmidl came the first study about Jewish soldiers and officers in the imperial army up until 1918.<sup>43</sup> This sudden research interest could well have been connected to the fierce discussion surrounding the reappraisal of the role of Austrians in the German army as it related to the wartime past of the former UN secretary general Kurt Waldheim. For the first time, as well, historians reflected on new perspectives and topics: for example, in Marion Breiter's dissertation<sup>44</sup> on the civilian population, or in structural history and labor history.<sup>45</sup> In that regard, Margarete Grandner's study on labor unions was particularly useful.<sup>46</sup> Last but not least, from Rudolf Jeřábek came the first critical biography of a person of high military rank, namely Oskar Potiorek,<sup>47</sup> revealing the possibility of a new history in the form of biography. Lastly, Fritz Fellner entered back into the discussion with individual studies based on his previous work in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>48</sup> An innovative method with new socio-political perspectives applicable especially to researching the world war and identity was offered in the ambitious social history study of the officer corps from the years 1848 to 1918 by the historian Istvan Déak (teaching at Columbia University at the time and coming from a prominent Hungarian noble family).<sup>49</sup> He gives an answer to the question as to how the army, in the face of its catastrophic inferiority and in spite of the conflict of nationalities and multilingualism, could militarily hold the line and actually embody a kind of transnational collective at its leadership level.

A change in the way military history was done was in the end set by Manfred Rauchensteiner, director of the Military History Museum. While he dealt less so with the international prehistory of the war, he took a new look at the military developments of the war and did not shrink back from any taboos.<sup>50</sup> One of the strengths of his book was the critical examination of the poor military leadership and the escalating use of force in the occupied regions (including against the civilian population). By 1993 this study was a standard work, later offered in an expanded edition in 2013<sup>51</sup> and an English translation in 2014.<sup>52</sup> What remained at the center of his analysis were the military *acteurs* (even down to the level of companies) and the war economy, even if in his new edition he assigns a more central role to Emperor Franz Joseph himself with regard to the decision in favor of war against Serbia in 1914.

From 1994 to 1996, what also became conspicuous were intensified bilateral efforts to seek scholarly examination of the war with Italy (which

started in 1915 and included the bloody Battles of the Isonzo).<sup>53</sup> Yet there still seemed to be very few new methodological initiatives—worth mentioning is Christa Hämmerle’s effort to develop a gender history of World War I.<sup>54</sup> More innovative were the critical views in the field of German studies (*Germanistik*) presented in a collection of essays about the functionality of *literati* with regard to propaganda both at the beginning and then during the course of the war.<sup>55</sup>

### **On the Way to an Internationalization: Intensive World War I Research 2000–2018**

The German historian Günther Kronenbitter, in his *Habilitationsschrift* in 2003, presented the first thorough and clear analysis of the *acteurs* within the Habsburg decision-making elite.<sup>56</sup> This study represented a clean break from the studies that had been revisionist and (after 1945) relativizing regarding the role of the military decision-making elite of the imperial-royal army. Kronenbitter painstakingly sought, using primarily the example of the Balkan policies of the Habsburg elite, to connect military and diplomatic history, and to reconstruct the influence of the military on foreign policy. Because of the abundance of material, however, what often retreats into the background are the important interactions between Conrad von Hötzendorf, Franz Ferdinand (the heir to the throne), and the Foreign Ministers Aehrenthal and Berchtold, as well as the conflicts over decisions among the general staff, the foreign ministry, and the military chancery of the heir to the throne. What faded away, however, (once again unheard) were the pleas for a new cultural history of World War I in Austria.<sup>57</sup>

By 2010, the approaching one hundredth anniversary of the start of World War I was already casting a shadow in advance of itself. Samuel R. Williamson Jr., in an English-language collection of articles, offered a new analysis of the role of Foreign Minister Berchtold. A group around Laurence Cole, Christa Hämmerle, and Martin Scheutz sought a course shift with regard to method—although taking a very broad approach that encompassed a time period from 1800 to 1918. The results, however, despite the high theoretical aspirations, remained rather fragmentary. In addition to these efforts, Fritz Fellner edited a complete edition of the Redlich diaries, and the espionage case of Colonel Redl was also further studied using new documents (this followed upon an initial attempt in 1997 by Verena Moritz and Hannes Leidinger). The strategic importance of the betrayal of the mobilization plans to Russian intelligence was made all the clearer.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Tamara Scheer at this time worked on the

Austro-Hungarian military administration and the War Surveillance Office (Kriegsüberwachungsamt).<sup>59</sup>

Between 2013 and 2018 there was an unprecedented boom in scholarly publications and historical exhibitions. For the first time, a history of emotions approach was attempted from a sociological perspective, with totally new and thoroughly valid interpretations of semiofficial regimental histories.<sup>60</sup> In 2015, the star violinist Fritz Kreisler's war recollections, *Four Weeks in the Trenches*<sup>61</sup> (which were frequently quoted in the Anglo-American arena as an authentic portrayal of the first weeks of the war on the front), were published and edited in German for the first time.<sup>62</sup> Although Kreisler's book ranks in English-language academic literature as an exceptional document for the modern history of the emotions of World War I,<sup>63</sup> it had not been responded to in German-language literature prior to the translation. At that moment, for many returning from war, the assessment of Walter Benjamin applied, namely, that "the men who returned from the battlefield had grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience."<sup>64</sup> Kreisler, on the contrary, belonged to those who had already overcome this immediate loss of words by 1914 and 1915.

In an exciting collection of articles,<sup>65</sup> the first efforts at a history of the experiences and perceptions of the imperial-royal soldiers from very different nationalities are being collected, yet further possibilities for a comparative analysis are surely still available for future studies. At the level of the memories of frontline soldiers, what stands out above others is an edition of an uncommonly precise source, *Franz Arneitz, Meine Erlebnisse in dem furchtbaren Weltkrieg 1914–1918* (My experiences in the horrible World War 1914–1918), published by Andreas Kuchler.<sup>66</sup> Based on his detailed recording of his war experiences, he reports about the disaster on the front in Galicia, and likewise reflects openly about the war crimes and about the senselessness of the war on the Italian front.

One distinctive feature of the centenary-related dynamics in research is the fact that new sources regarding regional aspects of the effects of the war have been worked upon quite intensely—frequently in connection with exhibitions. The studies being done on Vienna (the imperial capital and royal residence), and particularly on the effects of the war, took a form that was rigorous in research and source work. In *Epizentrum des Zusammenbruchs* (*Epicenter of the Collapse*), a team led by Alfred Pfoser and Andreas Weigl realized a comprehensive analysis of wartime Vienna, reconstructing all the facets of the downfall of one of Europe's thriving metropolises, a downfall and collapse that had started to become all too apparent as soon as 1917.<sup>67</sup> Quantitatively even more impressive are the publications about the diverse aspects of the war and its aftermath for

Tyrol,<sup>68</sup> as well as the actual impact that the memories of the bloody Battles of the Isonzo had on the political interpretation of history, the situation of the prisoners of war in Italy, and bilateral tourism. Tyrol and Italy form an unusually intense and joint arena for reflection about World War I.<sup>69</sup> More recent research is presented in a special issue of the *European Review of History*, edited by Tamara Scheer and Nancy Wingfield.<sup>70</sup>

By the 1990s there had already been relevant preparatory works for Tyrol; for Styria, Lower Austria, and Salzburg there are also relevant regional studies available about the consequences and the propaganda of World War I.<sup>71</sup> Of special importance was the reconstruction of the living conditions in the prisoner-of-war camps—for example, in Wagna near Graz. What are also fascinating are the new studies about the effects of the war on the periphery of the Habsburg Empire, for example in Galicia, Romania, and Bukovina, and the perspectives of the Ukrainians and the Jewish populations in the east.<sup>72</sup> Having potential as well are studies that investigate the Orient in more detail, where Austro-Hungarian imperialist plans are also clearly found, but which were not successful because of a lack of military strength. On the other hand, the propaganda and intelligence operations in the Near East have now been reconstructed quite well.<sup>73</sup> What becomes clear is that the holy war of all Muslims against the Entente was an impromptu program and consequently in the end was also not successful. The area of gender history, essentially carried on by Christa Hämmerle, was discussed intensively for the first time,<sup>74</sup> even if a comprehensive foundational study is still lacking.

Deserving special emphasis is the fact that unique, new possibilities for research in source material have opened up. So, the Austrian National Library, using the internet platform of the photo archive and the graphics collection, offered for the first time (on ANNO—AustriaN Newspapers Online) a full text search of all the digitally recorded print media, totaling 810,000 pages. Additionally, casualty lists as well as the complete material of the war collection and the albums of the war press bureau were made available.<sup>75</sup> The databank contains placards, flyers, postcards, special editions, children's drawings and school compositions, postage and sealing stamps, etc. The placards, Vivat ribbons, and postcards have already been catalogued.<sup>76</sup> The Vienna Library, on the other hand, has made available digitally over 120,000 newspaper clippings about everyday life in the years 1914–18, as well books and placards, and police reports on the public mood.<sup>77</sup> The Austrian State Archive is also displaying a few examples of its countless archival documents and short texts about World War I.<sup>78</sup> Something innovative in the Jewish museum in Vienna was a first exhibit about Jewish soldiers and officers in the imperial army, with a catalogue at the level of a scholarly anthology addressing new research.

Erwin Schmidl further developed his earlier studies on this topic in a new monograph.<sup>79</sup>

The most comprehensive overall examination of Austria-Hungary during the war comes in the revised study by Manfred Rauchensteiner, which in 1,223 pages and along the lines of the original presentation of 1993 forcefully lays out the interactions between domestic and foreign policies in the geostrategic decisions, putting more emphasis than before on the aggressive revenge strategy of Foreign Minister Berchtold.<sup>80</sup> From the Austrian perspective, the *leitmotiv* of Christopher Clark's best-seller *Sleepwalkers* did not really present anything new. The European or, for that matter, Austrian "tumbling" into the war fits nicely with the long-advocated victim theory.<sup>81</sup> This is true all the more so in light of the fact that Clark placed ultimate responsibility on Serbia, which he makes very clear and which he stressed primarily in the early interviews about the book. This view matches the traditional military history narrative in Austria up until the 1970s and 1980s.

In comparison to Rauchensteiner, Lothar Höbelt's book, which is interested more in the domestic policy debate, is much too entangled in the thesis that the state structures were actually relatively stable up until 1918, even if no push for reform in the nationalities question had been successful and that in the end it was the military defeats that influenced domestic policy. But he is not successful in providing a network analysis of domestic policy that addresses its valences and strength of influence, nor are the interdependent relations with foreign policy compellingly analyzed despite a plethora of details. The most interesting part of Höbelt's study is his analysis of ambivalent relations with the larger partner in the alliance, Germany. One can also agree with Höbelt's finding that Austria was not merely a tool of German militarism but had played a very active role in the war within the alliance.<sup>82</sup>

With regard to new analyses of the *acteurs*, Wolfram Dornik's biography of Conrad von Hötzendorf<sup>83</sup> surely deserves to be positively highlighted, and it uses new Russian archival material alongside Austrian primary sources. Back in 2000, Lawrence Sondhaus had offered a critical study in English on this topic.<sup>84</sup> First and foremost, Sondhaus laid out clearly the highly ambivalent and totally unsuitable personality of Hötzendorf for being in such a central leadership position, and in so doing he could finally deconstruct the myth formation from World War I and the interwar period that had been perpetuated for such a long time.

Still tantalizing for research is the figure of the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, who was murdered along with his wife in Sarajevo; however, no really new appraisals and analyses of his personality have been offered so far. This is true particularly of the biography from the French historian

Jean-Paul Bled,<sup>85</sup> who had earlier also made attempts at Emperor Franz Joseph and Crown Prince Rudolf. However, there was an intellectually quite perceptive approach to Franz Ferdinand offered by Richard Ned Lebow, professor for international political theory at King's College in London; his was a counterfactual history, envisioning what would have been if Franz Ferdinand had not been killed.<sup>86</sup> Also worth reading, extremely well researched, and excellently written is the biography of the Prague journalist Ludwig Winder from 1937—banned at the time by both National Socialist Germany and the chancellor dictatorship in Austria. The book was republished in 2013.<sup>87</sup> For the first time, in a comparative anthology, an overall analysis of the social and party-political causes of the war, that is to say, its repercussions on the political culture, has been made the focus of discussion.<sup>88</sup>

In international historiography on Austria, in terms of a critical diplomatic history and using a comprehensively source-saturated approach, what should first and foremost be mentioned is a dissertation by Marvin Benjamin Fried at the London School of Economics (accepted in 2011 and published in 2014). In his book he emphasizes the expansionistic aims of the foreign policy of the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the central warmongering role of diplomats, which were in contrast to the rather restrained reactions of the military with the exception of Hötzen-dorf.<sup>89</sup> He sees here a strong continuity in and an absolute intransigence among the leading *acteurs* in Austria-Hungary, which lasted up until May of 1917.

What remains extremely fragmented are studies about the war economy of the Habsburg Empire, which even in 2014 did not attract much attention.<sup>90</sup> The current historiography, with its starting point in the “visual turn,” is dedicating itself to the massive war crimes of the diverse units of the Habsburg army. First and foremost, it is the photo historian Anton Holzer who has contributed importantly to this.<sup>91</sup> A comprehensive examination of the war crimes and the brutal everyday life under occupation, along with the excessive military justice and extraordinary courts of the imperial-royal army—with due consideration of the situation of the prisoners of war and interned civilians—is something that Hannes Leidinger, Verena Moritz, Karin Moser, and Wolfram Dornik sought to do in 2014.<sup>92</sup> With respect to the immense abundance of the holdings of the war archive (now unfortunately becoming a challenge to work with because of deteriorating file cards), an important and methodologically valid first step has been made that rests on the preparatory work of the authors.<sup>93</sup> In this context, there is a dissertation dealing with Czech soldiers that delves further into aspects of the political high treason trials, and it rebuts generally the myth of the “duplicious Czechs” during World

War I.<sup>94</sup> New, innovative fields of research are also the history of medicine in World War I, and the postwar care for the victims of the war.<sup>95</sup>

In a collection of essays from Wolfram Dornik, Julia Walleczek-Fritz, and Stefan Wedrac,<sup>96</sup> there is an attempt at a comparative analysis of World War I between home front and military front, that is to say, a comparison between these two different “theaters” of the world war. While there are some innovative individual articles in this, the attempt to meet the high goal it set for itself is not successful. Yet out of just such experiences, quite innovative future research can arise.

All things considered, however, this volume seems typical of—with few exceptions—a research landscape of Austria in World War I that is made up of many small elements, now seeking increasingly to connect to methodological innovations in international research; but it still remains much too captivated by the “classical” themes and archival documents. With the exception of the book from Rauchensteiner, hardly any contributions were published in English, and moreover no compelling comparisons were sought with international research on the world war. What would be innovative would be if in future projects, the now functioning transnational cooperation with Italy could be expanded to include the other former foreign opponents (with a focus on Serbia and Russia) and also a comparative scholarly debate with what is found in Anglo-American, French, and German literature.

It was finally possible in 2014 to definitively overcome and deconstruct the remnants of the old victim doctrine. That Austrian authors by all means can make a difference in the overall history of World War I is something that Hannes Leidinger and Verena Moritz have shown with their concise and quite interesting paperback book about World War I.<sup>97</sup> It would be nice, however, if we could one day see the emergence of the next “Christopher Clark” from the region of the former Habsburg Empire.

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*Chapter 7*

## RUSSIA AND WORLD WAR I

The Politics of Memory and Historiography, 1914–2018

*Boris Kolonitskii*



### **World War I in Russian Cultural Memory and Memory Politics**

The memory of World War I is one of the most dynamic fields in the study of “cultural memory.” Daniel T. Orlovsky was the first to develop this theme as applied to Russia.<sup>1</sup> In Russia this war is often called the “forgotten war.”<sup>2</sup> The revolution and the civil war, and then World War II (the 1941–45 war was called the Great Patriotic War in the USSR), overshadowed the memory of the events of 1914–16. The memory of World War I was suppressed; many names and events were made taboo. Military cemeteries were destroyed, monuments were dismantled, and many prominent participants fell victim to Stalin’s purges. In many regards, the war was only taken into account as far as it helped explain the revolution.

However, the assertion that World War I was “disregarded” in the USSR is inaccurate and overstated. Both the policy of memory and historiography reflected features in the development of Soviet politics and education, science, and culture. And many processes that emerged during the Soviet period have their sources in the practices of 1914–17.

After the outbreak of the war in August 1914, patriotic propaganda often relied on the mobilization of historical memory. Memory of the war with Napoleon in 1812, the Patriotic War, was a pervasive element of

Russian historical consciousness. As a consequence, during the conflict, the 1914 war was often referred to as the Second and at times even as the Great Patriotic War.<sup>3</sup> Early on, Russian authorities and civil society both strove to develop initiatives whose objective was to perpetuate the memory of the ongoing war. Very much as in other warring nations, exhibits of the spoils of war and war museums opened throughout the country. Architects proposed plans for new churches and memorial complexes. Considerable amounts of money were donated for these purposes.<sup>4</sup>

The war influenced the development of literature, art, and philosophy, and the images and texts found at this time show the effect of this on historiography and the politics of memory. Famous writers were sent to the front as correspondents, and the war intruded into the creativity of writers and artists.<sup>5</sup> The poet Nikola Gumilev, for instance, went to war as a volunteer. He published his front correspondence in one of the leading capital newspapers, and a collection of his war poetry was also published. His case was by no means exceptional.

Some Russian cultural figures, such as art critic and artist Aleksandr Benua and the writer Maxim Gor'kii, early on adopted an antiwar position. Futurist poet Vladimir Maiakovskii initially supported the war enthusiastically, then created a series of antiwar poems. However, pacifistic views could not be openly expressed due to the conditions of censorship.

This is reminiscent of the situation in the other warring countries. But in Russia there were also other features that influenced memory of the war. The hostile attitude of many intellectuals toward the tsarist government, which influenced the attitude toward the war, had an effect. The sympathies of some writers were on the side of France and Belgium; this was reflected in their creative work, but they could not support the autocratic government unreservedly.

In Russia there were no idols for youth like the British poet and volunteer Rupert Brooke, and there were no bestsellers comparable to the book by the German front writer Walter Flex. Nothing in Russia resembles the fate of the British officer and poet Siegfried Sassoon, and not one Russian poet provoked a scandal during the war on the scale caused by his criticism of war. A European sensation, the novel *Le Feu* by Henri Barbusse (1916) was quickly translated and published in Russia; however, Russian literature did not create any notable antiwar works.

The peculiarities of Russian wartime culture can be understood if one takes into account the trends and dynamics of social development during the prewar period. The multifaceted cultural schisms and the multiethnic character of the enormous empire inevitably predetermined very diverse reactions to the immense international conflict. As a consequence, a consensus about the legitimacy of the war could emerge only to a very limited

extent, and there were no symbols common to the majority of Russia's population, even its educated part. The illiteracy of the majority of the population did also limit the popular perception of the conflict.

There existed one more factor that influenced the literary representation of the war: the realism of Leo Tolstoy set a high hurdle for a description of wars and prevented simplified understandings of the immense conflict. Several writers imitated Tolstoy; however, neither creative successes nor the recognition of readers brought up on the texts of the "Golden Age" of Russian literature awaited them on this path. The tragedy of a world war demanded new artistic methods to describe the immense catastrophe. Russian art and Russian literature displayed greater creativity when describing the 1917 revolution and the civil war than when portraying the tragic events of 1914–16.

The overthrow of the monarchy in 1917 significantly influenced the perception of the war. The Bolsheviks and other left-wing socialists condemned the "imperialist" goals of all the large warring countries. The Bolsheviks and other internationalists called for a new revolution, asserting that only this could put an end to the world war. At times this drew Bolshevik propaganda close to the ideas of pacifism, although Lenin rejected it. The fact that many military leaders ended up in the ranks of active opponents to Bolshevism influenced the memory of the war as well. However, in the 1920s there were different, opposing perceptions of World War I in the USSR. There were also elements of the patriotic discourse of 1914 that lingered on, at this time in censored texts, be it in concealed form.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time in the 1920s the romantization of the world revolution and glorification of the Red Army were combined with a repudiation of traditional patriotism. Young Communists named their children in honor of Jean Jaurès: the antimilitarism of the famous socialist even pushed his opportunism to the background in the eyes of those who favored the revolution.<sup>7</sup> "Patriotic" and "militarist" literature was removed from Soviet libraries along with "counterrevolutionary" and religious works. Desertion from the ranks of "imperialist" armies was viewed as a "virtue" in the texts of prominent Soviet authors.<sup>8</sup>

The predominantly antiwar and antiheroic discourse in the description of the world war in the 1920s was replaced in the 1930s by a discourse centered on glorification, nationalization, and militarization. One should not underestimate, however, the extent to which in the 1920s there was room for ambiguity and even a kind of relative pluralism as various commemorative projects and initiatives came into being and were publicly discussed. A polyphony of memory was displayed in fiction and memoirs, in museum exhibitions, and in foreign literature translation projects.<sup>9</sup>

The memory of the world war had special importance for emigrants who found themselves in countries that had been allies of Russia. Emphasis on Russia's contribution to victory and the heroism of Russian soldiers was thought to improve the status of the Russian diaspora. Associations of Russian veterans were created, memorable anniversaries celebrated, monuments unveiled, and memoirs and historical research published. In some of these texts, the civil war was described as a continuation of the world war, and the ideology of the White movement, which viewed the Bolsheviks as an instrument of the German government, was reproduced. Other veterans of both wars contrasted these conflicts: compared to the civil war the world war was a "real," "pure" war. Both scenarios of memory promoted the cultural and psychological adaptation of the authors and their readers.<sup>10</sup> However, the notable literature of the Russian emigration did not create famous literary works devoted to the world war. On the whole, the memory of World War I was clearly overshadowed by the memory of the revolution and the civil war, this generation of émigrés' incommensurate trauma.

On the other hand, the theme of heroism was present in the Soviet discourse on the world war as well. It was closely associated with the name of Aleksey A. Brusilov, the most popular military leader, who had given his name to the celebrated offensive of the Russian army in 1916. As the place of Brusilov in Soviet memory politics is quite revealing of the way the memory of World War I was at times used by the Soviet Union, it is useful to have a look at the way the Brusilov cult evolved over the years. During the Soviet-Polish War in 1920 the Bolsheviks made use of the authority of the popular military leader, and the famous general called upon Russian patriots to support the Soviet government. Brusilov was given a position in the Red Army. The military leader's death in 1926 demonstrated the contradictory attitude of the authorities toward World War I: The funeral was simultaneously religious and Soviet, and imperial and Soviet traditions were intertwined in the ceremony. The wreaths were decorated with ribbons of the colors of imperial orders, and Red Army soldiers mounted a guard of honor. Brusilov was buried on the grounds of a monastery; Soviet military leaders and the guard of honor remained outside the gates of the monastery. It is noteworthy that not one of the heroes of the civil war took part in the ceremony.<sup>11</sup>

The military leader had instructed that his memoirs be published two or three years after his death. Although the memoirs could not be called an example of a Marxist perception of war and revolution, its text legitimized the Bolsheviks' actions from a position of Russian patriotism. Accordingly, the memoirs were published in journals and later on in book form.<sup>12</sup> In permitting their publication, the Soviet government expected to attract

the attention of a wide readership to it, including foreign readers: the book was published in the same year by a Russian émigré publishing house (in Riga) and in French and English translation. This would have been impossible without preliminary negotiations and possibly special financing.

Soon after the publication of Brusilov's memoirs, there was a change in the political orientation that led to the general being difficult to integrate into the prevailing discourse. Already by 1930 the state publisher decided not to prepare a re-edition of the memoirs. This is explained by the growing repression of former officers who had served in the Red Army and the consolidation of Soviet control over historical science: now, deviations from the party line became dangerous, and the memory of the Bolsheviks' "fellow travelers" seemed less desirable. Historiography and propaganda of the mid-1930s again began to appeal to Russian patriotism, but Brusilov continued to remain in oblivion for some time, with Soviet historians stressing the colossal losses that Russia suffered as a result of his offensive.<sup>13</sup>

However, the figure of Brusilov was in harmony with the goals of patriotic mobilization, and during World War II the memory of the Russian army's most successful operation in the last war with Germany reemerged. Whereas at first the offensive of 1916 was celebrated without any mention of the general's name, the "Brusilov Breakthrough" was later on presented as an outstanding example for Russian military leadership and heroism. On the eve of Germany's attack on the USSR, an article devoted to the memory of the military leader appeared in the main newspaper of the Red Army.<sup>14</sup>

This conformed with the general change of tone in Soviet propaganda. The war of 1914–17/18 was no longer called "imperialist," and on 1 August 1939, the anniversary of the beginning of the war, the military newspaper glorified the heroism the Russian soldiers exhibited between 1914 and 1917. The conclusion of the Soviet-German pact tuned down this message, but it came back to the fore again after Germany's attack on the USSR. Wartime propaganda was keen to draw parallels between the Nazi policy and the actions of the German authorities during World War I, underscoring the importance of the Russian front between 1914 and 1917.<sup>15</sup> In this context, the instrumentalization of Brusilov's memory took on even greater proportions. Historical and historical propaganda works were published.<sup>16</sup> Brusilov's legacy was used when training officer personnel,<sup>17</sup> and plays and novels appeared.<sup>18</sup> The military publishing house prepared new editions of Brusilov's memoirs (politically dubious fragments being removed from them).

The presence of Brusilov's memory at this juncture does not mean, however, that all of a sudden Brusilov had become an uncontroversial figure. Quite to the contrary, the cult of Brusilov continued to be consid-

ered a challenge to Soviet orthodoxy, which eventually led to him being relegated to a secondary position . . . well behind other military leaders from the Russian past. This was of course connected with the Soviets' ambivalent overall attitude toward World War I: to ignore Lenin, who had called for turning the "imperialist" war into a civil war, and who had considered the defeat of the Russian government the least of evils for Russian workers, was a difficult task academically, and also seemed potentially dangerous. To say the least, the glorification of a tsarist general worried some Soviet historians, and the limits of his glorification were constantly renegotiated. However, other aspects of the memory of World War I were also used for the sake of national mobilization. The new military uniform introduced in 1943, for instance, was reminiscent of the prerevolutionary one. Shoulder boards, which previously in Soviet propaganda had been a marker of the class enemy, again became signs of rank. It even became acceptable to wear tsarist-era military decorations, whose possession, just a few years earlier, would have exposed their owner to severe consequences. Photographs of brave sergeants and officers proudly wearing the awards of the two wars were printed in magazines. Cavalrymen in the picturesque uniform of Soviet Cossack regiments watered horses in German rivers, and people of the older generation could not fail to recall the military cry of 1914: "We will water the horses in the Spree!" Consequently, some aspects of the Bolshevik perception of World War I were "forgotten." Even Mikhail Sholokhov's classical Soviet novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* suffered from this: in the 1941 edition, scenes that favorably described revolutionary internationalists were simply left out—they did not suit the goals of patriotic mobilization.<sup>19</sup>

After 1945, the cult of Brusilov was at first very much in line with the propaganda goals of the Cold War: the innovative nature of Russian military thought and its presumed superiority compared to the military art of the West were stressed. Academia was to promote the glorification of Brusilov, and in 1948 the publication of a collection of documents devoted to the military leader was prepared. However, the sudden apparition of an up-to-then unknown source prevented this. After the general's death, his widow had in fact withheld the second part of his memoirs. With the permission of the authorities, she had gone to Czechoslovakia for treatment and had not returned to the USSR. The general's manuscripts, among them the "second part" of his memoirs, had ended up in an émigré archive in Prague, where Soviet researchers were to discover after 1945 that the general had clearly held anti-Communist views. As a consequence, it became dangerous to support the Brusilov cult. The abovementioned collection of documents was dispersed, its archive classified, and the name of Brusilov became taboo.

De-Stalinization led to a rehabilitation of Brusilov's memory, as the image of the general was too important to abandon his use (the absence of Brusilov in propaganda and historical works had troubled many Soviet patriots). An "academic" justification also appeared; the Main Archive Directorate of the USSR carried out an expert examination "showing" that the second part of the memoirs was a forgery. The general was again included in the Soviet patriotic pantheon.<sup>20</sup> A new edition of the memoirs followed, and a biography written by an eminent military historian appeared.<sup>21</sup>

Fiction influenced the production of a cultural memory. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, a former inmate of the gulag, became famous after the publication of his "camp story" in 1962. Soon, however, his works started to be prohibited, but they were read in typescript and published abroad. Solzhenitsyn felt the influence of Tolstoy and intensified some of the methods used by the great predecessor. The author refused to create a traditional romantic protagonist, but he formulated the most important ideas on Russian society during World War I with the aid of a General Staff officer, Vorotyntsev, the most active character trying to avert catastrophe.<sup>22</sup> Vorotyntsev's views (and Solzhenitsyn's) reflect the spirit of the reforms of Pyotr Stolypin, the head of the Russian government between 1906 and 1911 (who had tried to reform the country), and were therefore diametrically opposed to Soviet orthodoxy, for which Stolypin was very much the embodiment of everything it loathed and feared in the *ancien régime*.

In autumn 1970 Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914*, a peculiar blend of literature and historiography centered on the beginning of the war and in particular on the Russian defeat during the battle of Tannenberg, was finished, and in June 1971 the novel was already published in a Parisian publishing house. It was immediately republished and translated outside the USSR; at the same time, it provoked attacks on Solzhenitsyn in the Soviet press.<sup>23</sup> However, criticism of the book on the pages of the official press provoked interest in the novel and its author. Some copies of the book managed to make their way to the USSR; in any case, typed copies of it were being handed around. *August 1914* was the first of several novels that were to form the Red Wheel series, narrating—and, to be sure, interpreting from the author's conservative point of view—World War I and the ensuing revolution as a pivotal moment of Russian history.

The KGB leadership decided to oppose the novel with a book by Nikolai N. Yakovlev. The son of a Soviet marshal, he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but was arrested at the beginning of the 1950s. Yakovlev was rehabilitated after the death of Stalin and began to study American history in academic institutes. He was recruited by the KGB to

carry out ideological operations. The Chekists supplied him with sources not available to other researchers, and the materials were subjected to substantial distortion in the process. For example, the transcripts of the interrogations of those who had been arrested were called “memoirs” and “records of conversations.” One hundred thousand copies of Yakovlev’s book, *1 August 1914*, were published.<sup>24</sup>

The leaders of the KGB believed that the orthodox Soviet canon of historical writing would not attract readers and recommended the introduction of a conspiracy story: Yakovlev devoted attention to plots by Russian Masons and gave the tone needed for propaganda on the Masonic theme: they said the Bolsheviks were carrying out a patriotic mission, casting out of power the cosmopolitan representatives of the bourgeoisie who had “stabbed the Russian army in the back.” A national Communist myth was counterposed to Solzhenitsyn’s majestic anti-Communist patriotism.

The book became a bestseller, and the large print run quickly sold out; a second edition followed the same year again with a print run of one hundred thousand copies. However, not all the consequences of the appearance of this book could be worked out in advance. The challenge to the orthodox historiographical canon worried both supporters of orthodoxy in the Central Committee of the Communist Party and academic circles, as well as secretly liberal historians. With some effort the KGB, using its political resources, was able to prevent a negative review from being published in a prominent academic publication. The conspiratorial interpretation of the history of World War I gained additional impetus, provoking half-hidden discussions.

These reminiscences of and references to World War I in Russia during the 1970s and 1980s highlight the fact that there was indeed some public awareness as to the importance of the 1914–17 period for Russian history. That does not mean that there was anything resembling even remotely a widespread cultural memory of the war years. With official Soviet memory politics glorifying the revolution and the Red Army’s victory over Nazi Germany, there was not much room, if any, left for the pre-revolutionary imperial war of 1914–17. In this regard, the idea of World War I being Soviet Russia’s “forgotten war” seems totally justified.

With Perestroika and even more so after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the framework of memory politics and cultures changed dramatically, even if the consequences for the Russian cultural memory of World War I were limited at first. Still, the declassification of the Brusilov archival holdings in 1987 was significant. In 1989, the second part of his memoirs began to be published in *Voенно-Istoricheskiĭ Zhurnal* (Military Historical Journal), followed by an academic publication of the memoirs.

Readers were also given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with previously forbidden publications, some of which were now reprinted in the USSR. In 1990, Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914* came out in the Russian market. Various editions followed. From 1993 onward, there was even an edition of the entire Red Wheel series in the publishing house of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense, synonymous with official recognition of the series' literary quality and interpretive value.

The conservative rehabilitation of some features of pre-revolutionary Russia that Solzhenitsyn had in mind struck a chord with many Russians, historians, civil society actors, and politicians alike, who, in the 1990s, were intent to develop a new patriotic narrative of Russian history. The Russian Orthodox Church that started to play an important role in identity and cultural politics soon after 1990 held a central position in that process. It is therefore no coincidence that the first major initiative to (re)inscribe the memory of World War I in the public sphere, the construction of the Moscow Memorial park complex of the heroes of World War I (the site had been a World War I cemetery before it was transformed into a park in the 1930s) started in 1998 with the reconstruction of a 1915-built memorial chapel that had been destroyed during the Soviet era. The re-erection of memorial plaques and different monuments nearby followed, and on 1 August 2004, the ninetieth anniversary of the beginning of the war, the Memorial Park was officially inaugurated.

In the years leading up to the centenary, the resurgence of World War I in cultural memory intensified, and there were several monuments being erected, the Brusilov monument in St. Petersburg (2007) and the Parisian monument in honor of the Russian expeditionary corps in France (2011) being but two of them. The unveiling of the latter monument—whose intention was to remind the French of the heroism of their former allies in the Entente—was timed to coincide with a visit to France by then-prime minister Vladimir Putin.<sup>25</sup> In late 2012, 1 August was declared Memorial Day for the victims of World War I.

The centenary of World War I brought about an unprecedented wave of monuments being planned and erected throughout the country, making Russia without any doubt the country where the centenary-related creation of a “commemorative infrastructure”<sup>26</sup> went farthest. In 2014, monuments were unveiled in Kaliningrad, Lipezk, Pskov, Rostov on the Don, Saint Petersburg, and Gussev, to cite but the most impressive ones. And in Moscow there were even two new monuments: a huge commemorative ensemble in honor of the Brusilov “Breakthrough” (*proryv*) in front of the monumental building of the Russian Ministry of Defense, located on the banks of Moskva River, and the still more important Memorial of the Heroes of the First World War as part of the Victory Park (*park*

*pobedy*) on Poklonnaia Gora, one of the most emblematic memorial sites dedicated to the Russian victory of 1945. Its inauguration on 3 August 2014 by President V. V. Putin marked the high point of the Russian centenary coordinated by a steering committee presided by Sergey E. Narychkin, the then president of the Duma and the Russian Historical Society, with the Ministry of Culture and the Russian Historical Society carrying the brunt of the organizational groundwork.

What stands out on the discursive level is the heroism of the Russian simple soldier who is, the memory of Brusilov and other military leaders notwithstanding, the central figure of the commemorative discourse. The patriotic mobilization of the orthodox clergy and the Sisters of Mercy (*sestry miloserdiya*) are another element found on many monuments. Their presence highlights the idea of a patriotic consensus surrounding the war and provides Russians nowadays with an example of state patriotism and sense of duty and sacrifice drawn from the Russian past.

Against this backdrop it is obvious that the memory of the Russian Revolution and, therefore, the centenary of 1917 was potentially problematic. It is by no means a coincidence that the state's decision to create a steering committee, with once again the Russian Historical Society and the Ministry of Culture playing a pivotal role, was announced rather late (December 2016, its first meeting taking place in January 2017). In his speech on 3 August 2014, President Putin had insisted on the idea that the revolutionaries of 1917 had betrayed Russia and her war heroes, setting the tone for the commemorations to come. As a consequence, the representation of the revolutions of 1917 that dominated the official discourse was one of chaos and state dissolution, the ensuing civil war adding yet another traumatic layer to the Russian experience of these years. This does not mean, however, that the organizers didn't attempt to develop a positive message more in line with the prevailing state-centered rhetoric. By extending the centenary of the revolution to the centenary of the end of the civil war, emphasis was put on the Russian state's ability to recover after years of turmoil and upheaval. That idea was maybe best expressed by a project that was thought to mark the high point of the Russian Revolution's centenary: the erection of a new monument on the Crimean Peninsula, from where what was left of General Wrangel's army had been evacuated in November 1920. "Reconciliation" (*primirenie*) was meant to crystallize the message that eventually both parties of the civil war, the "Reds" and the "Whites," embodied a form of Russian patriotism and that it is ultimately the reconciliation of the different memories of Russia's past that lead to national unity and, consequently, a strong Russia. Although the erection of the monument has been officially announced, its realization still stands out, due to protests on the local level (in particular

in Sebastopol), where the *de facto* rehabilitation of the White movement did not go unchallenged.

### Russian Historiography of Russia's Participation in World War I, 1914–90

Research into the history of the war had already started in 1914, when academia took on the task of mobilizing the Russian Empire. Very much like their counterparts in other warring nations, Russian historians lent a helping hand to Russia's diplomatic and propaganda efforts.

The war gave rise to a special genre of documentary publications; after the German "White Book," other collections of documents commissioned by the other belligerents' governments were published in order to justify their entry into the war. In this context, a Russian collection of documents came into being as well. These publications were nowhere near academic standards, the selection of documents was tendentious, and the sources were printed with the elisions not indicated. Applied "archeography" of this sort became an important aspect of the wartime propaganda effort.<sup>27</sup>

The request to expose and to publish "secret treaties" was a battle cry of the Bolsheviks. Lenin repeatedly demanded the exposure of "foreign policy secrets."<sup>28</sup> By November 1917 the Bolsheviks had already begun to publish the tsarist government's diplomatic documents in newspapers, and individual publications then followed.<sup>29</sup> Soviet historians later admitted to the latter's low scholarly quality. However, the publications became a real international sensation and had an impact on American relations with the Entente powers, as American government figures, including President Woodrow Wilson, were struck by the content of the documents. Under the influence of the Bolsheviks' actions and Wilson's appeals, German leftist socialists also demanded the publication of German secret documents. And in other countries, socialists, syndicalists, and pacifists demanded comparable publications. In Russia, a commission was created in the Socialist Academy of Social Sciences in the autumn of 1918 to study materials on the history of the war, and new publications were prepared. However, all such activity was halted. Possibly the Bolsheviks wanted to keep a free hand in diplomatic negotiations after the end of the world war.

Apart from the overarching question of responsibility for the war, the reflections and research on the war were at first very much limited to military aspects. In August 1918, the Red Army command created a military history commission, which included prominent generals, that began to

reflect on the war experience. Andrei M. Zaionchkovskii (1862–1926), who had commanded Russian army formations during the war, played an important role in this initiative. After 1917 he joined the Red Army and even collaborated with the Soviet special services. Zaionchkovskii published several books devoted to the world war and the preparations for it.<sup>30</sup> His works were repeatedly republished, and they exerted considerable influence on Russian World War I historiography.<sup>31</sup>

Another former officer of the Imperial Army whose reflections played an important role for the emerging Soviet historiography of the war was General Aleksey A. Manikovskii, the former chief of the Main Artillery Directorate.<sup>32</sup> In his very detailed analysis of the Russian armament and ammunition industry during the war, he pointed to the incompetence and weakness of the top leadership of tsarist Russia and condemned the pernicious influence of industrial monopolies. Obviously, these were the themes that were demanded in the Soviet period, and it is thus not surprising that the fact-ridden publication of this well-known specialist exerted a considerable influence on subsequent historians, all the more so because there were several re-editions.<sup>33</sup>

It was not before 1922 that the publication of tsarist-era diplomatic documents resumed. The editors were clearly pursuing political goals: exposure of the tsarist regime confirmed the legitimacy of the new order, and the exposure of France allowed French demands for the payment of pre-revolutionary debts to be avoided.<sup>34</sup> Once again the quality of the source collections left much to be desired;<sup>35</sup> it was criticized in Russian academic publications, and even Lenin assessed the publication as “slovenly.”<sup>36</sup> However, the importance of the documents presented in the collection preordained the interest of foreign readers. French publicist René Marchand published a “Black Book” in French in 1922–23 based on this publication.<sup>37</sup> The book was substantially expanded in comparison with the Russian edition: Marchand worked in the Soviet archives (possibly this is explained by the fact that he had collaborated with the Cheka in 1918). Then new “black books” were published by the French left-wing *Librairie du travail*. This could not have happened without the assistance of Soviet organizations.

Other collections of documents followed.<sup>38</sup> The publications corresponded to important shifts in Soviet diplomacy, and it can be surmised with confidence that such a “publishing offensive” was a conscious decision of the Bolsheviks, even if ongoing editing projects of other countries possibly influenced the decision to publish tsarist documents as well. In 1922, the publication of a German series of documents began, which exerted an enormous influence on comparable publications in other countries and on the World War I historiography of the 1920s in general.<sup>39</sup>

As Soviet publications in fact suited German diplomats striving for the revision of the Treaty of Versailles, it is unsurprising that many Russian source editions were translated and published in Germany. The fact that the appearance of a collection of Soviet documents coincided with the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo between Soviet Russia and Germany is striking. However, the circumstances in which the governments of the two countries collaborated in the matter of publishing tsarist documents require further investigation.

In any event, German-Soviet collaboration was conspicuous during the realization of another major Soviet source-editing project. In 1929, the USSR began preparing the *Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia v epokhu imperializma: dokumenty iz arkhivov tsarskogo i Vremennogo pravitel'stv, 1878-1917* (International relations in the era of imperialism: documents from the archives of the tsarist and provisional governments, 1878–1917), an impressive collection of source material conceived to outshine equivalent publications of other countries. It was divided into three series: 1878–1903, 1903–14, and 1914–17. Unlike the foreign publications, it included papers from the Ministry of War, the Naval General Staff, and the Ministry of Finance along with documents found in the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, even if several important documents already printed in the Soviet journal *Krasnyi arkhiv* (Red Archive) were absent. The first volume came out in 1931.

All volumes were translated into German as they were published. The German edition of the first volume was out on the market as early as 1931, which is indicative of a very high level of cooperation.<sup>40</sup> Professor Otto Hoetzsch, the editor of the German translation, a famous academic, publicist, and chairman of the German Society for the Study of Eastern Europe, played an important role in the development of Soviet-German relations. This Soviet-German cooperation even continued after Hitler came to power.

The *International Relations in the Era of Imperialism* were never completed. Three volumes of the second series and ten volumes of the third series came out, the last volumes being published in 1940 (they continued to be translated and published in warring Germany). The cessation of publication was of course linked to the beginning of the war with Nazi Germany in 1941. However, the initial approach, namely complete exposure of Russian imperialism and Russia's allies, had run counter to the designs of the leaders of Soviet foreign already since the mid-1930s. Unsurprisingly, the project was not resumed after the war.

One of the Russian historians particularly involved in the publication of tsarist source material was Mikhail N. Pokrovskii (1868–1932), editor of the aforementioned *International Relations in the Era of Imperialism* se-

ries. A professional historian and a social democrat since 1905, he had taken an active antiwar stance during the war years. After the Revolution, Pokrovskii participated in the publication of “secret treaties.” He became a deputy people’s commissar of enlightenment and then headed the Central Archive (the government agency to which all state archives were subordinate), the Communist Academy, and the Institute of the Red Professorate. Pokrovskii’s historiographical views changed depending on the political situation, but he remained faithful to his principles of the world war era. This was first of all a vigorous condemnation of the tsarist government and its expansionist goals, with a special emphasis on the Russian plans to seize Constantinople and the Straits. Pokrovskii considered tsarist Russia the chief culprit in the war, and his academic works and the various document editions he oversaw were to confirm this thesis. As Pokrovskii put it, “The war was directly provoked by the Russian war party.”<sup>41</sup>

In spite of his high position in the 1920s, Pokrovskii did not have a monopoly on the formulation of a historiographical narrative. One of his opponents was academician Yevgeny V. Tarle (1874–1955). During the war, the latter had supported the military efforts of the Entente and cooperated in a newspaper uniting left-wing liberals and moderate socialists. His thesis of the overwhelming responsibility of Germany for the start of the war was reflected in his book *Evropa v epokhu imperializma, 1871–1919* (Europe in the era of imperialism, 1871–1919): although for Tarle both sides were eventually guilty, the temptation to begin military operations was more pronounced in Germany and Austria than among the Entente powers. He also devoted special attention to Wilhelm II, whose influence and decisions were depicted negatively, while the policy of the Entente was at times portrayed sympathetically. The book, beautifully written by an erudite historian, found many readers, and was soon followed by a second edition.<sup>42</sup>

Tarle’s work provoked criticism by Pokrovskii, who characterized the book as “pseudo-Marxist” and “Ententophile” in the journal *Istoričeskii Markist* (Marxist Historian). At this time Tarle could still respond to Pokrovskii quite sharply in the same edition, although the editorial board characterized him as a “class enemy”; however, this did not prevent the second edition of the academician’s book from coming out.<sup>43</sup>

The disagreement between Tarle and Pokrovskii was part of a broader conflict between the “Pokrovskii school” and historians who either repudiated Marxism or rejected its Soviet version. The growing administrative resources and the increasingly active police apparatus were obviously on Pokrovskii’s side. Still, Pokrovskii’s supporters continued to seek more convincing evidence to be put forward in the ongoing debate.

Nikolai P. Poletika (1896–1988), a descendent of a famous noble family and graduate of Kiev University, became an ally of Pokrovskii in this discussion. Poletika carefully studied the sources on the history of the war, primarily the official German publication of documents. Like the “revisionists” in the West, he was greatly influenced by this edition. Initially Poletika engaged in history like an amateur; however, the young researcher, who did not refrain from engaging in debates with Tarle, attracted the attention of the “Pokrovskii school.” He began to work in Leningrad University, and his books were published.<sup>44</sup>

Poletika thought that the Serbian government had been involved in preparing the murder of the heir to the Austrian throne and that Russian representatives had been aware of the plot all along. He argued that by announcing general mobilization, Russia had escalated the local Austro-Serbian conflict into a European one and asserted, “The Sarajevo murder was organized by the Entente as a concealed attack on one of the members of the Triple Alliance, Austria-Hungary, and the thesis of Germany: ‘they attacked us’ . . . was entirely correct.” From Poletika’s point of view, Germany’s and Austria’s options were limited indeed, leaving them with virtually no alternative than to adopt the course they eventually adopted.<sup>45</sup>

On a sensibly different yet no less important aspect of the war from a Russian point of view, the tsar’s personal conduct during the war years, Pokrovskii and his disciples remained faithful to their viscerally negative view of the *ancien régime*. Pokrovskii at one point contended that the tsar had seriously considered what would have been tantamount to betraying Russia’s interests in the eyes of public opinion, that is to reach a separate understanding with Germany. It was Vladimir P. Semennikov who pursued this point of view especially actively.<sup>46</sup> Ideas about a “tsar’s conspiracy” had arisen already during the war, and the corresponding rumors were an important part of the sociopolitical atmosphere on the eve of the monarchy’s overthrow. To confirm his thesis, Semennikov called upon a multitude of sources he found in the archives; however, the historian could not offer unambiguous proof that the draft of a separate peace represented a serious plan. As the thrust of Semennikov’s research conformed to the Soviet policy of condemning the *ancien régime*, the absence of unequivocal evidence did not stand in the way of its scholarly (and popular) reception.

The study of the economic aspects of the war was another area of research opened up by Pokrovskii and his school, as the enveloping Marxism insistently demanded this theme be addressed. In the process, different objectives were pursued. First of all, the study of the economy of the prewar era was to show that the war was a natural result of impe-

rialism, imperialism being considered, along the lines of Lenin's famous *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916) as the ultimate stage of capitalism.

Secondly, research into the pre-revolutionary economy was to demonstrate Russia's "ripeness" for socialist revolution. Thirdly, the study of the economic aspects of international relations was to underline the innovative nature of Soviet historical science, which required a fundamentally new approach to the study of both domestic politics and the history of international relations. The Soviet debates about imperialism were of course linked to the overall debate about the origins of the war: within the framework of this paradigm, all the "imperialist" countries ended up guilty of causing the immense conflict to one degree or another.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, Soviet historiography could not fail to devote attention to the history of the class struggle.<sup>48</sup> The history of the working class and the history of the Bolshevik Party were studied thoroughly, a research dynamic that was not without distorting the view of the political situation prior to 1917. Another problem arose when the names of various high-ranking party members became taboo, which could make working on or even mentioning them quite delicate, even if there was a time when scholarly activity could occupy some of those whose ideas were "deviant" from the party line. Aleksandr G. Shlyapnikov is a case in point: on the eve of the overthrow of the monarchy in 1917, he had headed the Russian Bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee, but in 1920–21 he was one of the leaders of the "Workers' Opposition," which became an object of criticism by Lenin. Shlyapnikov switched to scholarly activity, and his multivolume publication, which combined historical research, memoirs, and the publication of sources, still retains its importance.<sup>49</sup> But scholarly work could only be a niche of survival for so long. At the beginning of the 1930s, Shlyapnikov was subjected to party criticism and subsequently arrested and shot.

Other historians were also being persecuted. The arrest of many eminent academicians, among them Tarle, occurred in 1930. In 1931, Tarle, expelled from the Academy of Sciences, was exiled. However, by the end of 1932 the scholar was able to return to Leningrad and resume academic and teaching activity. In 1937, the record of Tarle's conviction was expunged and his status as a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences was restored. His works on the history of international relations at the turn of the century gained a new life as they were now in line with the changed foreign policy realities.

Repression of scholars coincided with a tightening of the ideological diktat; this especially affected historical research and publications. Yet, as Tarle's case suggests, this did not turn out to be a victory for Pokrovskii,

whose views were subjected to harsh criticism soon after his death in 1932. Under the conditions of Stalin's tightening dictatorship, accompanied by the return to some geopolitical projects of pre-revolutionary times, the anti-Entente view of the "Pokrovskii school" had dropped out of favor.

In 1938, the *Kratkii kurs* (Short course) of the history of the Bolsheviks approved by the party's Central Committee was issued. In fact, the text had been edited by Stalin himself. In this text, wars were considered an "unavoidable concomitant of capitalism," particularly inherent to its "highest and final" stage, imperialism, that is, monopoly capitalism. It was pointed out that the world war had long been prepared by "all the imperialist countries": "The guilty parties were the imperialists of all countries." At the same time, it was stressed that Russia was dependent on Britain and France, turned into a "semi-colony" of these countries.<sup>50</sup>

The *Kratkii kurs* exerted an enormous influence on historical consciousness in the USSR. Even in the period of de-Stalinization, its influence was felt in various texts. In addition, the book exerted a certain influence on anti-Communists: in polemicizing with the Soviet version of Russian history, at times they reproduced its narrative structure.

Yet, what is important here is that some positions taken in the *Short Course* and in particular the relativist blaming of all "imperialist powers" for the outbreak of the war were reexamined quite rapidly. The main responsibility for the start of the war was now more and more laid on Germany (and Austria-Hungary)—a shift of interpretation that reflected the tensions between the USSR and Nazi Germany and that strengthened the critics of the "Pokrovskii school" among Soviet historians.<sup>51</sup>

The change in political and censorship conditions also influenced the study of the history of military operations. Had it been possible, in the 1920s, to praise some innovative elements of German military thought<sup>52</sup> (this positive assessment corresponded to the spirit of Soviet-German military cooperation at that time), this was not the case much longer. In the 1930s, such texts were removed from libraries, and after Hitler came to power, mention of the military capacities of the potential enemy seemed inappropriate and even dangerous. By contrast, the successful operations of the Russian army, primarily the Brusilov Offensive, were now to be put forward, even if that did not stop Soviet military historians from continuing to work and publish on the history of military operations on various fronts, with special attention devoted to the final stage of the war.<sup>53</sup>

Russian emigrants also studied the history of the world war. The Carnegie Endowment project on the social and economic history of the war was especially important in that regard. No less than twelve volumes of

this series were devoted to Russia. They were written by Russian researchers, government officials, and former officers who had become exiles. The well-received volume on the end of the Russian Empire, for instance, was written by former officer and historian Mikhail T. Florinsky.<sup>54</sup> A number of books were prepared by people who had a direct relationship with the subjects they described. One of the best-known volumes of this series was prepared by General Nikolai Golovin, one of the best Russian military theorists and historians.<sup>55</sup> Later on, Golovin wrote several studies devoted to individual operations of the Russian army. They were published in Russian and English.

The Russian exile historiography of World War I exerted a great influence on the foreign historiography of Russia, but it was also at least to some extent discussed in the Soviet Union. In the 1920s Soviet researchers still had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the works of émigré historians (some of their works were republished in the USSR). In the 1930s, however, this possibility was substantially reduced, and knowledge of foreign historical literature could create problems for Soviet researchers.

At the same time, Soviet and émigré historiography shared certain common features, even if they did not cite one another. Special attention was devoted to the fact that the Russian command had taken into consideration the requests of its French allies, adopting an offensive stance against Germany in 1914, a decision that had in many ways run counter to the Russian High Command's ideas of the conflict to come. Whereas Soviet authors condemned French imperialism, for which Russian peasant soldiers served as "cannon fodder," émigré historians tended to underline the "chivalry" of Russia that had allegedly saved the ally. Both in the USSR and in exile, authors often contrasted the heroism of the soldiers and ordinary officers with the incompetent top military leadership, even if there was an overall consensus that it had been the shortage of shells and heavy artillery that were responsible for the repeated military failures. Finally, both Soviet authors and émigré historians emphasized Brusilov's offensive as the most important aspect of the world war (although some émigrés despised the general for cooperating with the Bolsheviks, and individual Soviet authors pointed to the colossal losses and considerable desertion in the ranks of the Russian army).<sup>56</sup> In many ways, Soviet and émigré historiography shared an important common source, the patriotic discourse of the war era.

During the Great Patriotic War, research was considerably reduced as historians contributed to the goals of patriotic mobilization. Evgeny Tarle's approach turned out to be totally adequate in light of the new overall situation, and he published several articles devoted to the history

of World War I. Other historians also looked into the history of World War I in order to find encouraging analogies with the ongoing conflict. Accordingly, they emphasized the 1914–18 military successes of the Russian army and its allies. Others, highlighting the atrocities committed by German and Austrian troops in Belgium and Serbia during World War I, provided eloquent illustration of the timeless and thus “innate” brutality of the invading forces.<sup>57</sup> Via the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences, different brochures on World War I–related topics were printed as part of the wartime propaganda.<sup>58</sup>

After World War II, Russian historiography continued to provide Soviet diplomacy with “objective” arguments as to the legitimacy of Soviet claims. In this context, the *Istoriia diplomatii* (History of diplomacy), edited by Vladimir P. Potemkin, took on special importance. The first volume had already appeared in 1941. The second volume by Vladimir M. Khvostov that included an analysis of World War I was published in 1945.<sup>59</sup> Khvostov’s book, which set the tone for succeeding Soviet works, confirmed the reorientation of the Soviet discourse of the late 1930s on the origins of World War I that we have seen above and that had been reinforced during the 1941–45 war: although still citing the obligatory *Kratkii kurs* with its liturgical formula of “the imperialists of all countries,” Khvostov made perfectly clear that German ruling circles bore the main responsibility for the outbreak of the war. One of the book’s paragraphs was simply called “German imperialism decides to start a war.”<sup>60</sup> The book presaged not only the conclusions, but also the style of later Soviet academic works. Unlike the works of the early period, which widely used Soviet-style Marxist sociology, these texts were distinguished by dense factual description.

The approach suggested by the *Istoriia diplomatii* was further developed in the books written by Filip I. Notovich, who examined Germany’s expansionist ambitions and projects in Eastern Europe during World War I. His studies contained much factual material, which allowed many aspects of the history of the war to be clarified.<sup>61</sup> However, the circumstances of the immediate post-1945 period were all present in his analysis, and even Soviet authors were to admit later on that not all of Notovich’s conclusions have withstood the test of time.

The goals of postwar adjustment and the beginning of the Cold War influenced the history of international relations. Historians offered additional arguments to Soviet diplomats and propagandists. Russia now tended to be seen as the timeless and unselfish defender of the Slavic peoples.<sup>62</sup> This view necessarily entailed a more sympathetic interpretation of the foreign policy goals of Imperial Russia, although the tsarist government continued to be criticized for its inability to see them through.

These interpretational shifts notwithstanding, the idea of its imperialist nature remained the centerpiece of the Soviet concept of World War I, and “bourgeois” scholars were criticized for “concealing” the imperialist nature of the war.

Arkady L. Sidorov (1900–1966), the director of the USSR Academy of Sciences’ Institute of History from 1953 to 1959, determined the nature of the research of that time to a large degree. Himself a student of Pokrovskii, he had studied the economic history of World War I for a long time. Sidorov and his students carried out research projects to study monopolistic enterprises. The research had ideological significance that negatively impacted its heuristic value: the development of monopolistic associations was to “prove” that Russia “had become ripe” for socialist reforms. However, even a historian of such a rank experienced some difficulties: his doctoral dissertation, defended in 1943, was not published in book form for a long time, for its factual material did not seem to confirm the thesis required at that time, namely that the state apparatus of tsarist Russia was subordinate to the monopolies. Sidorov also carried out important research devoted to Russia’s financial situation in the war years.<sup>63</sup>

The narrow economic history and the history of international relations focused on the years 1914–17 that prevailed in the Soviet historiography of the 1950s explain why émigré historian Mikhail Florinsky was able to assert on the occasion of the re-edition of his Carnegie-funded book on the end of the Russian Empire<sup>64</sup> in 1961 that the Carnegie series’ volumes on Russia remained the most important scholarly contribution to the Russian history of World War I. For him, this state of affairs was due on the one hand to Western scholars’ lack of interest in pre-revolutionary Russia and, on the other hand, to ideological and censorship restrictions rendering genuine Russian research on the topic virtually impossible. He thought that this situation would last for the foreseeable future. The prediction, however, turned out to be wrong: it was precisely at that moment that both Soviet and foreign historiography started to turn to the history of the world war with a renewed interest, although this process was inconsistent and uneven.

The most important disciplinary subfield to remain interested in World War I was the history of international relations. For sure, de-Stalinization had not all of a sudden suppressed all the different restrictions from which Soviet historians suffered. As a matter of fact, access to archival sources remained limited, and sometimes researchers did not have the right to use material they had uncovered. Despite these circumstances, honest research devoted to foreign policy did appear in the USSR. Anatoly V. Ignat’ev, Valentin A. Emets, Vyacheslav S. Vasiukov, Raphael Sh. Ganelin and Yuri A. Pisarev studied various aspects of the history of Russian

foreign policy in their works.<sup>65</sup> The majority of Soviet authors now rejected the thesis of a “tsar’s conspiracy” that tried to conclude a separate peace with Germany. It is true that individual authors have asserted that “some government circles” and(/or) people in the tsar’s entourage, representatives of a “camarilla,” displayed interest in the prospect of a separate peace. Other debate topics were the issues of the distribution of power inside the Entente (primarily, Russia’s role in this alliance) and the differences inside it. For example, Valentin Emets asserted that the divisive tendencies in this alliance dominated the uniting ones, though his conclusions have been disputed by other historians.<sup>66</sup>

At this time, some foreign books on the history of World War I were translated and published in the USSR—along with a critical commentary, of course. For example, Russian readers were given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the books of Alan J. P. Taylor, Wolfram W. Gottlieb, and Barbara Tuchman.<sup>67</sup> However, the classic works on the diplomatic history of the war were not translated—for example, those by Luigi Albertini and Pierre Renouvin. Generally speaking, innovative research offering new methodological principles of the study of the history of international relations was unlikely to be published; the same was true for works provoking broad public discussion, such as that caused by Fritz Fischer’s book on German war aims in West Germany.<sup>68</sup>

It was indicative that Fischer’s book was also not translated into Russian, even though it seemed that the condemnation of German imperialism met with Soviet interpretations of the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>69</sup> As a modern researcher rightly noted, Soviet historians were “Fischerites” long before Fischer’s book.<sup>70</sup> However, due to censorship and other restrictions, Soviet researchers did not take part in the German and international debate around the German professor’s book. Clearly, a favorable opportunity for the reintegration of Russian historians into the international scientific community was missed here.

Interest in World War I also began to stir in military history, with a few comprehensive books coming out in the mid-1970s, some of which used new archive material.<sup>71</sup> The results and main theses of these studies were sometimes at odds with established ideas of the international relations school: Comparing the military strength and potential of the two opposing blocs, military historians Ivan I. Rostunov and Aleksandr A. Strokov, for example, argued that at the beginning of 1917 there had been a clear superiority in favor of the Entente. International relations historians Vladimir Khvostov and Anatoly Ignat’ev had always upheld the idea that at that juncture neither of the blocs had achieved superiority.

A “new direction” in the study of the socioeconomic history of Russia on the eve of the revolution had great significance in the historical

debates of the 1960s. The most prominent representatives of this field worked in the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, and many of them were pupils of Arkady Sidorov. One of the intellectual leaders was Konstantin N. Tarnovskii (1921–87), who had, like other members of the “new direction” current, begun his academic career with the study of the history of monopolies.<sup>72</sup> In the eyes of the “new direction,” however, subsequent research had demonstrated that excessive reliance on the study of “leading forms” of economic organization distorted the overall picture of Russia’s development. The term “multiformity” (*mnogoukladnost’*) became one of their key concepts. As a consequence, special attention was paid to pre-capitalist forms of Russia’s economic development. From the “new direction’s” point of view, the revolutionary conditions of 1917 were not so much the result of the Russian economy’s supposedly high level of development but of the contradicting dynamics that gave rise to multiformity. In the process, supporters of the “new direction” actively referred to the works of Lenin, but called for a new reading of his works. For some this was possibly just a necessary mimicry, but others genuinely expected a creative development of Marxism. The problem was that Lenin’s works contained many contradicting conclusions, and therefore it was hard to identify a winner in the “citation war” waged by the supporters and opponents of the “new direction.” Concrete research, however, tended to confirm some of the conclusion of the “new direction.” Yet it turned out that it was not the quality of the research that determined the outcome of this debate; after the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, various attempts to reform Marxism in the USSR were considered revisionist and therefore banished. The “new direction’s” defeat at the beginning of the 1970s was part of this process. Its supporters continued to work in elite academic institutions, but the publication of books and articles was forbidden, and research was made difficult—some doctoral candidates even had to face the impossibility to defend their dissertations.<sup>73</sup> On the balance, the “new direction” nevertheless managed to create a series of important studies that were impossible to ignore even after the suppression of this intellectual trend. This also relates to works on the history of World War I. Andrey M. Anfimov, a student of Arkady Sidorov, wrote a work on the history of the peasantry,<sup>74</sup> a major study that is still important to this day.

Another important research in this context was Kornely F. Shatsillo’s study on Russia’s preparations for war. He paid special attention to the development of the war industry and the financing of military programs. He was able to show in particular that the ambitious programs to develop the navy had a negative effect on the development of the army.<sup>75</sup> His famous article devoted to the case of Colonel Miasoedov is often cited.<sup>76</sup>

Shatsillo convincingly showed that the accusation of collaboration with the enemy that led to the officer's execution was fabricated by the headquarters of the Supreme High Command in order to distract public attention from the command's blunders. The article exerted great influence on the works of historians in Russia and abroad.<sup>77</sup>

On the whole, the defeat of the “new direction” beyond any doubt had a negative impact on Soviet historiography of World War I as research into the socioeconomic history was more and more restricted. However, important studies on Russia's domestic policy during World War I could see the light of day.

The book by Leningrad researcher Valentin S. Diakin (1930–94), *Russkaia burzhuaziia i tsarizm v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny* (The Russian bourgeoisie and Tsarism during the First World War), is in many ways representative of the way Russian historians approached World War I in general and domestic policy issues in particular during the last decade before Perestroika. On the one hand, it was carefully researched, and it relied on a broad source base, including rich archival material.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, it was carefully trying to be seen as a study continuing the Soviet tradition of examining political relations using a class approach—the title of the book exemplifies this, but even more so does the wording of the introduction and conclusion and the careful selection of Lenin quotations. As a consequence, it is quite difficult to distinguish between the genuine convictions of the author and the ideological camouflage necessary to see the book through to publication. In essence, the book is devoted to the study of the conflicts in the ranks of the Russian political elite. Other researchers, for example, Mikhail F. Florinskii, who highlighted the crisis of state administration in Russia during the war era,<sup>79</sup> and Taisia M. Kitantina, who studied the problem of food supply, followed in stride.<sup>80</sup>

Interesting works devoted to other domestic policy issues also appeared. Relying on rich source material, Stanislav V. Tiutiukin illuminated the attitude toward the problems of war and revolution in the ranks of the Russian socialist movement. The theme seemed quite difficult to research, for the abundance of assessments about these issues by Lenin required especially careful interpretation. However, the historian was able to show the diversity of ways in which a revolutionary character was formed among different groups of socialists, including the moderate groups that supported Russia's military efforts.<sup>81</sup>

The publication of historical sources was an important niche for the professional activity of historians in the USSR in the era of “stagnation.” Although the publication of diplomatic documents was hampered, researchers were able to publish collections of source material that improved our understanding of economic and political history.<sup>82</sup>

One cannot fail to recognize that the study of Soviet historiography on the history of World War I is an unusually complex task for a researcher. At times even quite respected academic works repeatedly cited by Russian and foreign researchers need rechecking. Meanwhile, the presence of ideological incantations and the abundant citing of Lenin were not necessarily indicative of a low scholarly quality. Some authors genuinely tried to combine a “Leninism” understandable in their fashion with serious research, and others used it as protective camouflage. Academic creativity represented a constant game—at times quite dangerous—with the censor and the reader. The reader had to hunt for ideas in the text that had been pushed through the censorship, armed with a special code for interpreting scholarly text. When this was done, ideas important to the author were not contained in the general conclusions—they were hidden deep in the text and at times shifted to the references.

On the whole, censorship and self-censorship, and the prohibition of various taboo subjects, were asymmetrical and fluctuating: at times some aspects of World War I were “slightly opened” for research. At times (when a “definitive” conclusion was already formulated) historians only had to confirm it with new empirical material. At the same time, it is impossible not to see that during the entire Soviet period differences existed between various academic schools and institutions, which led to different interpretations of various aspects of World War I.

Russian World War I historians have worked without the necessary contact with foreign colleagues, though in this regard the era of “stagnation” was mixed: the period of “détente” led to an increase in academic contacts. Although criticism of “bourgeois historiography” was obligatory for Soviet historians, widespread criticism sometimes promoted the transfer of ideas.<sup>83</sup>

## Post-Soviet Historiography of World War I, 1990–2018

The new public and academic situation after Perestroika required a historiographical reassessment. New research topics and methodologies had to be found, the discussion of “old” subjects more or less officially closed by Soviet historiography reopened. In the mid-1990s, these issues were discussed in academic journals but also in the general press. In this context, member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Yury Pisarev, pointed out the need to study the patriotism of the war era anew; he called for intra-bloc differences to be researched. His suggestions were hotly discussed in the professional environment, and the phrases “controversial problems” and “new approaches” were constantly heard in the course of the exchange of opinions.<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, the abolition of censorship restrictions and free discussion, broad access to the research literature and published sources previously inaccessible to the majority of historians, the republication of many historical works and sources (including those published in exile), translations of foreign books, and the opening of many holdings in the Russian archives all promoted the development of historiography, even if there were some negative side effects at first: Some publishers and authors, trying to satisfy readers' demands, tossed books of quite low quality on to the market. At times, the standard of editorial work was unacceptably low. For example, one provincial publisher published a translation of a classical book on the question of the outbreak of World War I by James Joll, but the book contained a large number of mistakes made by the translator.<sup>85</sup>

In the new conditions, some historians were able to formulate more openly the conclusions of their research during the Soviet period. This was the case, for example, of the well-known historian of the working class Yury I. Kir'ianov. During the Soviet era he had suffered from the defeat of the "new direction" and the ensuing restrictions. As a consequence, his book on industrial workers in Southern Russia during World War I, which still retains scholarly importance to this day, bore the imprint of the censorship restrictions of his time.<sup>86</sup> In his new works he was able to reexamine the deductions that he was forced to draw earlier.<sup>87</sup> He came to the conclusion that different sources show that there were practically no antiwar strikes in Russia despite repeated assertions to the contrary by Soviet historiography.

Direct contacts with foreign colleagues were also important. International conferences on the history of World War I were held in Russia—for example, the international colloquium in Saint Petersburg, which was part of a multiyear project of scholarly meetings between Russian and foreign historians, stimulated exchange with the international community.<sup>88</sup> And there were also some editing projects that resulted from cooperation between Russian and foreign researchers. For example, the publication of a very important source, the proceedings of the Council of Ministers during the war years, was the result of a Russian-American project.<sup>89</sup> As far as the study of the history of Russia during the world war is concerned, cooperation between Russian researchers and their foreign colleagues is at an appropriate level, with cooperation between researchers studying the events of 1917–18 being particularly significant. However, the task of integrating Russian history into the world historiography of the world war continues to be relevant, successful cooperation, for instance with the Great Britain–based large-scale publication project *Russia in the Years of the World War and Revolution (1914–1922)*<sup>90</sup> or the Berlin-based *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*<sup>91</sup> not-

withstanding. And a comparison of the situation in Russia with the situation in other countries might be especially promising.<sup>92</sup>

As for Russian research on World War I, one can detect a significant intensification of research and scholarly publications after the year 2000. Before that, the foundation of the Russian Association of Historians of the First World War (1992)<sup>93</sup> had already marked a renewal of interest in the years 1914–18; still, it took quite some time until new research projects were completed, and the corresponding results published. Slowly but certainly, a new generation of Russian World War I scholars has emerged whose representatives are engaging with new cultural history methodologies developed and applied by Western World War I historiography for quite some time already.

Moscow historian Aleksandr B. Astashov has carefully studied military censorship in the era of World War I. Handling a large quantity of archival material, he came up with important conclusions concerning different aspects of the frontline soldiers' everyday life and their expectations and representations.<sup>94</sup> In that regard, an important study on soldiers' letters by Ol'ga S. Porshneva offered complementary insights.<sup>95</sup> Working on soldiers' letters seized by military censorship, she provided a thorough analysis of the trajectory of the soldiers' morale throughout the war years. Both sought to reduce the historiographical gap between the Eastern and the Western Front of World War I.

Oksana S. Nagornaia is another case in point. A researcher from Cheliabinsk, she wrote a remarkable book dedicated to the Russian prisoners of war in Germany, using material she found in several Russian and German archives.<sup>96</sup> The fact that Nagornaia broadly used the vast literature, Russian and foreign, devoted to the history of the prisoners of war, applying interesting approaches tested when analyzing other sources, is certainly one of the merits of the book that can be considered a Russian contribution to the ongoing international research on World War I prisoners of war.

Russian military history of World War I has also seen some advances, be it in a more conventional way, such as the research conducted by Yevgeny Yu. Sergeev and Arutyun A. Ulunian,<sup>97</sup> who reconstructed the history of Russian military intelligence officers using previously classified archival material, or with a more critical approach, such as that demonstrated by Sergey G. Nelipovich, who took issues with a certain heroic vision of the Brusilov Offensive that Brusilov himself had done much to promote. Relying on various source materials, Nelipovich asserts that the enormous losses during the offensive did not lead to a significant improvement of the situation at the front, provoking a deepening of the general crisis in the country.<sup>98</sup> The researcher made an attempt to deconstruct the myth

about Brusilov, a myth important for both Soviet and émigré historiography and the politics of memory. Not all the author's conclusions have been substantiated to an equal degree; however, the dispute about such an important issue seems quite interesting.<sup>99</sup>

Another strand of World War I-related research worth mentioning is Russian regional history during World War I. Thanks to the works of Igor' V. Narski, Ekaterina Yu. Semenova, and others, we know a great deal more about the way different Russian regions reacted to the war.<sup>100</sup> The result is a more precise (yet still to be completed) picture of Russia as an empire with all its complexities and regional disparities, an aspect that has also been put forward in recent international historiography on pre-revolutionary Russia.<sup>101</sup>

Serious historical scholarship is obviously not alone on the market, and there are quite a few publications that use conspiratorial constructs of all sorts to make sense of World War I. For example, Oleg Yu. Danilov views the history of the war preparations as a gigantic plot by the British government, which supposedly aspired to destroy Germany, its most important rival, using Russia and France. In this description, when this was taking place, leading representatives of the Russian political elite acted as British agents: bribery and Masonic connections allowed London to exert its control.<sup>102</sup>

Many other conspiratorial interpretations also exist, and they have at times received wide circulation in contemporary Russian mass media. This particularity is not entirely disconnected from a certain kind of historiography: it is important to recall both the "Short Course" and the book by Nikolai N. Yakovlev, which used the conspiratorial constructs of the era of the world war and the revolution. The reaction of professional historians in this situation can be twofold. The conspiratorial constructs of early twenty-first-century historians and publicists ought to be subjected to critical analysis. On the other hand, it is also necessary to study the conspiratorial perception of the war era, continuing the research of Kornely Shatsillo. In so doing, Russian researchers enlist some approaches concerning the study of rumors that were being used by foreign colleagues as applied to the history of other countries.<sup>103</sup>

The centenary of World War I has seen Russian World War I historians engaged in many different ways. Research and publication activities of all kinds clearly intensified with a special emphasis on books and publications providing a comprehensive overview of the Russian experience during the years 1914–17. Two of the most interesting books in that respect are Aleksandr Astashov's monography on the "Russian front,"<sup>104</sup> where the author pushed quite far in his undertaking to touch upon nearly every aspect of soldiers' life at the front as well as in his desire to inte-

grate recent international (mostly Anglo-Saxon) historiography on the war experience, and Vladimir P. Buldakov's and Tat'iana G. Leont'eva's *Voina porodivshaia revoliutsia*<sup>105</sup> (The war that caused revolution), where the authors address and reassess many of the most important questions pertaining to World War I. Insofar as they allow the reader to access specific aspects of the war, different edited books<sup>106</sup> and, more importantly, a Russian-language encyclopedia, edited on behalf of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Association of Russian World War I historians, are also quite useful.<sup>107</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the historians' involvement in the centenary went far beyond the academic business as usual. In fact, some historians were particularly active in expressing the desire to remember the "forgotten war" and were also quite explicit about the importance of remembering, first and foremost, the heroism of the Russian soldiers, thereby moving the war's more tragic aspects to the background. Even in historical research, sometimes a naïve but dangerous desire was displayed to simply resurrect the patriotic debate of 1914 and use it as an analytical language of description. This could, at times, lead to a somewhat "celebratory" tone when it came to remembering the war's anniversaries.

In conclusion, the trajectory of Russian historiography on World War I is quite different from other national historiographies. For example, in the 1920s the concept of class in Russia was, for obvious reasons, much more important there than anywhere else. Also, it was comparatively late, e.g. only recently, that Russian historians attempted to write the history of the war as a national history (to some degree the Soviet vision of the "imperialist war" was much more global). This is partly explained by the fact that the national history paradigm of the Great War that had been so dominant in Western historiographies for most of the twentieth century had not been adopted by Russian scholars during the Soviet era. Turning to a national narrative after the end of the Cold War can thus in part be considered as a way of catching up with Western traditions. But this is only part of the story: the desire to overcome the deep-felt identity crisis after the fall of Communism was no less important in that process. The desire to remember a "forgotten" war at state level met and still meets with popular aspirations and demands for a national memory that are part of a quest for a new Russian national identity. However, this creates a certain tension between the politics of memory and contemporary trends in the development of historical science. The fervor to deconstruct political and historical mythology conforms with the professional training of a historian for whom the most important virtue is creative criticism—criticism of a source, criticism of historical mythology, and criticism of preceding historiographical concepts. A conflict between the desire of some

authors to construct and other authors' need for criticism is a conflict that might be manifested as a conflict of scholarly schools and generations of research; a conflict between historians of different specializations and supporters of different methods might lead to an interesting development in Russian historiography.

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## Notes

1. Daniel T. Orlovsky, "Velikaia voina i rossiiskaia pamiat'," in *Rossia i Pervaia mirovaia voina*, ed. Nicolai N. Smirnov (Saint Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999), 49–57. In the following years, the works of Aaron Cohen and Karen Petrone that are also cited in this article were published.
2. Anatoly I. Utkin, *Zabytaia tragediia: Rossia v Pervoi mirovoi voine* (Smolensk: Rusich, 2000). A film series devoted to World War II (2012, dir. V. Mikeladze) is also called *Zabytaia Voina*. The Moscow Publisher Iauza. Eksmo has been pursuing a book series project under a similar name.
3. See, for example, *Soldatskie voennye pesni Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny 1914–1915* (Harbin, 1915).
4. Karen Petrone, *The Great War in Russian Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 36–40.
5. Ben Hellman, *Poets of Hope and Despair: The Russian Symbolists in War and Revolution (1914–1918)* (Helsinki: Institute for Russian and East European Studies, 1995); Hubertus Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).
6. Petrone, *Great War in Russian Memory*, 20.
7. One such child was the famous dissident Zhores Medvedev (born in 1925); another is Nobel Laureate Zhores Alferov (born in 1930).
8. Petrone, *Great War in Russian Memory*, 20, 101.
9. *Ibid.*

10. Aaron J. Cohen, “‘Oh, That!’ Myth, Memory and World War I in the Russian Emigration and the Soviet Union,” *Slavic Review* 62, no. 1 (2003): 69–86.
11. Petrone, *Great War in Russian Memory*, 60–67.
12. Aleksey A. Brusilov, *Moi vospominaniia* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1929).
13. Petrone, *Great War in Russian Memory*.
14. N. Karzhanskii, “General Brusilov: Iz proshlogo russkoi armii,” *Krasnaia Zvezda*, 19 January 1941; Petrone, *Great War in Russian Memory*, 222–23.
15. Cohen, “‘Oh, That!’” 83.
16. Yury G. Veber, *Brusilovskii proryv* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1941); Vladimir V. Mavrodin, *Brusilov* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1942; subsequent editions in 1943 and 1944).
17. F. E. Kuznetsov, *Brusilov o vospitanii i podgotovke ofiterskikh kadrov* (Moscow, 1944).
18. Ilya L. Sel’vinskii, *General Brusilov: Drama* (Moscow, 1942); Sergey N. Sergeev-Tsenski, *Brusilovskii Proryv* (Moscow: Sov. Pisatel’, 1943); Igor’ V. Bakhterev and Aleksandr V. Razumovskii, *Russkii General: P’esa* (Moscow, 1946); Yury L. Slezkin, *Brusilov: Roman* (Moscow: Sov. Pisatel’, 1947).
19. Petrone, *Great War in Russian Memory*, 273.
20. See the articles of the chief of the Main Archive Directorate under the USSR Council of Ministers: G. Belov, “Pravda o generale Brusilove,” *Izvestiia*, 13 September 1962; G. Belov, “Russkii polkovodets A. A. Brusilov,” *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal* 10 (1962): 41–55; G. Belov, “Kak byl General Brusilov reabilitirovan,” *Ogonek* no. 31 (1964): 24–25.
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*Chapter 8*

## THE INVENTION OF YUGOSLAV IDENTITY

Serbian and South Slav Historiographies on World War I,  
1918–2018

*Stanislav Sretenović*



World War I played a key role in the history of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. One of its consequences was the creation of the common South Slav state, which existed first as a monarchy (1918–41) and then as a republic (1945–91). Proclaimed on 1 December 1918 and conceived as a liberal, democratic, and parliamentary political system, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes changed its character and name in 1929 when King Alexander I Karadjordjević proclaimed a dictatorship and renamed the country the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The cornerstone of the new country was the Kingdom of Serbia, which had emerged victorious from the Great War, to which the territories of the Kingdom of Montenegro and the ancient territories of Austria-Hungary were added. The new state was heterogeneous: it included territories populated by Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, all with common and yet also different cultures, religions, and traditions, as well as diverse experiences of the Great War. This heterogeneity could, in times of domestic political crisis or foreign interference, be a factor of weakness for the new country. The principal problem in the internal politics of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was the lack of national cohesion. Before 1918, the South Slavs did not possess

political unity or any shared experience of living in a common state. The founding, defining event of the new state was therefore the unification that occurred at the end of the Great War. In this way, the Great War became the most important symbol of the realization of (supposed) national unity and the centuries of aspirations of the South Slavs, to borrow from the terminology of that period. Under the new circumstances, it was important to legitimize the young state and its regime, as well as to support ideologically the discourse and the symbolism on which national unity was to be built and disseminated throughout society.

Although it did not entirely disappear, interest in World War I diminished considerably after World War II. For the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and its omnipotent leader Josip Broz Tito, history began with their victory over “foreign invaders” and “domestic traitors” during the war and their subsequent assumption of power. World War I also became integrated into the memory and symbolism on which the new “socialist” identity was to be constructed, but it was very much secondary to the more important World War II, which served as a source of legitimization and ideological reinforcement for the new Communist regime, both internally and externally. Yet after the 1960s, the memory of World War I became a way of critiquing the new regime. Following Tito’s death in 1980, this trend gained momentum, and the number of works dedicated to the war of 1914–18 increased considerably, while the common South Slav state plunged into the interior crisis that led to its tragic dissolution in the 1990s.

## **World War I between Popular and Political Culture, 1918–2018**

### **Popular Culture Immediately after the Great War (1918–21)**

The expression of popular feelings relating to World War I in Serbia was most pronounced in the period immediately after the war, between 1918 and 1921, when the new and uncertain state was under construction. Until 1921, the state had no constitution and no stable international borders. During that period, the expression of popular feelings shows the desire to testify to the profound pain generated by the loss of family members and the sincere respect for the sacrifices of the comrades who fell in the war. Any organized ideology of the new state was absent or very rare. Construction of monuments was initiated by local people, local administrations, or Crown Prince Alexander, yet was based on a very spontaneous grassroots wish to remember the death of the country’s soldiers. These monuments consisted of simple crosses and were without official

state symbols. The most significant and common references with which they were inscribed concerned the heroic death of those to whom they were dedicated, as well as their personal courage in defending their family, property, or town.

In the period immediately after the Great War, literary works represented the war in all its absurdity, disillusionment, and psychological and physical consequences for human beings. This is the common pattern for all the authors who served in the opposing Serbian and Austro-Hungarian armies. The poet and novelist who graduated from the Military Academy in Belgrade (1901) and served in the Serbian army as an officer in the Balkan Wars and then the Great War, Milutin Jovanović (1881–1935), gained a literary reputation in Serbia with his works on the everyday life of soldiers during war.<sup>1</sup> The writer and journalist Stanislav Krakov (1895–1968) participated as a Serbian army officer in the wars and was wounded, becoming an invalid. During the war, in 1917, he wrote a novel under the title *Kroz buru* (Through the storm), publishing it after the war, in 1921.<sup>2</sup> The lawyer and novelist Dragiša Vasić (1885–1945), who served in the Serbian army as a reserve officer during the wars from 1912 to 1918, wrote a novel where the main character dies in a mental hospital after the experience of the war and the suffering during the Serbian army's retreat through Albania in 1915.<sup>3</sup> The poetry of Milutin Bojić, written at the Salonika front in 1917 and published under the title *Pesme bola i ponosa* (Poetry of pain and pride),<sup>4</sup> exalted the personal devotion and sacrifice of Serbian soldiers during the war. His poem "The Blue Crypt" remains one of the most beautiful Serbian poems on the Great War, thanks to its artistic qualities as well as its exemplary nature of the testimony of a poet who participated in the war. It is dedicated to the soldiers who died of exhaustion, starvation, and disease on the Greek island of Vido near Corfu after the Serbian army's retreat through the Montenegrin and Albanian mountains, popularly known as the "Albanian Golgotha." They died in such large numbers that there was no space to bury them all on land; their bodies were instead thrown into the sea, which became their everlasting resting place, their "blue crypt."

The South Slav writers and poets from Austria-Hungary, who experienced the war in the ranks of its defeated army, mostly expressed the sentiments of exhaustion, disgust, and apocalyptic anxiousness.<sup>5</sup> These feelings are expressed by the Serb writer Miloš Crnjanski (1893–1977) in the poems published in 1919 under the title *Lirika Itake* (The Lyric Poems of Ithaca).<sup>6</sup> Crnjanski was born into a Serbian family in the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary. Afraid of his "national activism," the authorities arrested him and sent him to the Eastern Front where he participated in the battles of 1915 and experienced the horrors and miseries of the war.

His poems evoke the fatigue and disappointment of the Homeric hero who finds destruction and humiliation when he returns home. The experience of Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981) was similar to that of Crnjanski. Impregnated by “national feelings,” he tried, without success, to integrate into the Serbian army during the Balkan Wars. He was arrested in Belgrade as an Austrian spy and sent back to Austria-Hungary. During the war, he fought in the Austro-Hungarian army on the Eastern Front and experienced combat. He expressed his opinion of the war in the poems he wrote during the war and published subsequently in 1918.<sup>7</sup> In the poems he criticized the war, making allusions to its bloodiness, sickness, and insanity.

In the period immediately after the war, the various initiatives to construct monuments dedicated to the war demonstrated the sincere wish to express respect for, as well as the pain arising from, the sacrifices of the soldiers who had perished. The women from the villages around Mount Avala near Belgrade assembled spontaneously, by themselves, to deplore the loss of their loved ones around the grave and simple cross of wood with the inscription “Ein Unbekannter Serbischer Soldat” (an unknown Serbian soldier), which the Germans erected after the occupation of Belgrade in 1915 out of respect for the their enemies’ courage.<sup>8</sup> In 1917, Prince Alexander ordered the construction of the ossuary at Mount Kajmakčalan at the place where the Serbian army broke through the enemy front line in 1916. The chapel-ossuary was dedicated to the glory of the soldiers buried within it. Its construction was finished in 1925. Another noteworthy example is the small cross dedicated to the Unknown Soldier on the hill of Hisar, near the town of Leskovac, in Southern Serbia. The cross was erected on 28 June 1922, on the day of Saint Vitus (Vidovdan), date of the Battle of Kosovo against the Ottoman Empire in the fourteenth century and thereby linked the “heroes who died gloriously” defending the town in October 1915 to the foundation myth of Serbian nation-building.

South Slav memories of the Great War were also cultivated beyond Yugoslav national territory. In 1922, the navy of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes placed a memorial cross on the Greek island of Vido in honor of the thousands of Serb soldiers who died there.<sup>9</sup> On the cross, the inscription was simple: “To the everlasting heroes, the Navy of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.”

### Political Culture of “Symbolic Syncretism” (1921–41)

With the adoption of the first constitution, symbolically on 28 June 1921, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes gave the impression of

internal stability. A common memory of World War I among Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was constructed with the support of the state. The king and the government wanted to represent the peasant-soldiers as the pillar of the country, which was designed as a parliamentary, democratic, and liberal monarchy. The state insisted on “symbolic syncretism”: Orthodox-Catholic or Serb-Croat-Slovene to transcend these peoples’ opposing memories of the war.<sup>10</sup> The monument to the Unknown Soldier, inaugurated on 1 June 1922 on Mount Avala at the place where the remains of an unknown Serbian soldier were confirmed to lie by one parliamentary commission, had a carefully chosen symbolism. It was constructed in simple stone, much like the traditional graves of Serbian peasants, with a base in the form of a Byzantine cross, upon which a pyramid-shaped monument was erected. At the top of the pyramid was a cross with six branches, combining the Byzantine and Latin crosses. The monument was an expression not only of the religious-secular and Orthodox-Catholic syncretism but also of a specific culture based on the peasant-soldiers who constituted the major part of the Serbian army and the army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The monument-ossuary in the village of Tekeriš, commemorating the Serbian victory over Austria-Hungary in the Battle of Cer in August 1914, was inaugurated on 28 June 1928,<sup>11</sup> a time of deteriorating relations between Serbs and Croats following the assassination of Croatian deputies in parliament by a Serb deputy from Montenegro. This monument, made of stone in the form of a semicone, brought together the remains of Serbian and Czech soldiers, enemies during the war. It was erected by the Association of Reserve Officers, bearing the Serbian coat of arms from the period of the Great War and an inscription “18th August 1914—your deeds are immortal.” At the top of the monument was an eagle with a laurel garland, the symbol of peace. The inaugural ceremony celebrated the Serbian soldiers who fell for the creation of the new state.<sup>12</sup> In 1929, the association of war veterans finished construction of the monument-ossuary at the village of Gučevo,<sup>13</sup> commemorating the Serbian army’s defense of a key front line from September to November 1914 in battles that saw the first trench warfare in the Balkans. The ossuary, in the form of a pyramid with a large laurel garland and cross, contains the remains of Serb soldiers, but also the remains of Croat soldiers from the ranks of the opposing Austro-Hungarian army.

This memory of peasant-soldiers was contrasted with the memory of Gavrilo Princip, a young Serb with Yugoslav leanings from Bosnia-Herzegovina and citizen of Austria-Hungary, who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 leading to the Austro-Hungarian attack on Serbia one month later and the outbreak of the world war.<sup>14</sup> The state’s reluctance to refer to Princip’s legacy was linked

not only to its internal policy but also to its external policy. In the post-war period, at times, particularly in discussions on German reparations (1924, Dawes Plan; 1929, Young Plan; 1931, Hoover Moratorium), scholars and journalists from the United States, Great Britain, and Germany taking part in the drawn-out war guilt discussion accused Nikola Pašić's 1914 government of knowing about the preparations for the Sarajevo assassination.<sup>15</sup> The royal government and the Serbian intellectual elite rejected any direct link between the Sarajevo assassination and the outbreak of the Great War. In fact, it was feared that such accusations would undermine Serbia's claim of reparations and eventually lead to a reduction of the Serbian share of German reparations that had been fixed in 1920. At the same time, Serbia's war allies demanded repayment of the Serbian debt, refusing to link it to German reparations. What is more, the problem of German reparations and interallied debts had its effect on internal policy: the Croats refused to participate in the repayment of Serbian war debts while the Serbs' response was that they had spilled blood for the common liberation and thus relieved the Croats of paying their reparations.<sup>16</sup> Under these circumstances, the memory of Gavrilo Princip was maintained by private initiatives without any support from the state, though the latter did not object to keeping this memory alive. In fact, after the war, the memory of Princip was actively supported by the Yugoslav nationalists from former Austria-Hungary, mostly from Bosnia and Dalmatia. In 1920, for instance, they organized the solemn transfer of Princip's remains and those of five of his followers and helpers from the prison in Terezin now in allied Czechoslovakia to Sarajevo. In 1928, they set up and unveiled the memorial plaque for Princip at the place in Sarajevo where he committed the assassination.<sup>17</sup>

From 1929 on, with the installation of King Alexander's dictatorship and the change of the country's name, official involvement in interpreting the memory of the Great War increased. The monument-ossuary of Mačkov kamen, celebrating one of the bloodiest battles in the vicinity of the Drina River, which halted the Austro-Hungarian offensive in September 1914, was constructed of simple stones in 1929. The inscription on the monument made reference to the new "Yugoslav" identity of the soldiers, which, by then, the state was actively seeking to construct. King Alexander involved himself personally with the promotion of the new, official memory of the Great War. He ordered changes to the old monuments in order to reflect the strong messages of "integral Yugoslavism," the concept that one Yugoslav Nation existed rather than three branches of one nation (Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes). King Alexander also ordered the removal of the first monument to the Unknown Soldier and the medieval fortress at Mount Avala in order to pave the way for a new,

imposing monument. Designed by Croat architect and sculptor Ivan Meštrović, the unofficial sculptor of the Karađorđević Court, this monument full of “Yugoslav” symbolism was consecrated on 28 June 1934 by King Alexander and unveiled exactly four years later.<sup>18</sup> The Serbian Unknown Soldier became the “Unknown Hero” of the state whose identity was under construction.

After the assassination of King Alexander I in Marseilles in October 1934, the memory of the Sarajevo assassination was integrated into the official celebration of Vidovdan for “all Kosovo heroes and to all the fighters who fell for freedom” in the whole country. There was an international dimension to the strengthening of an official Serbian memory of the war: The Zejtinlik military cemetery near Salonika in Greece, with the remains of Serb soldiers who perished on the Salonika front, was constructed from 1933 to 1936 and inaugurated on the anniversary of the Armistice, 11 November 1936.<sup>19</sup> On the memorial chapel are verses by Vojislav Ilić the Younger,<sup>20</sup> the semiofficial poet on the Serbian war victory that led to the creation of the South Slav state. And in 1936–38, on the island of Vido, near Corfu, next to the memorial cross dating from the immediate after-war period, a memorial complex was constructed. It bore the inscription “Yugoslavia to Serbian soldiers.”

During the dictatorship of King Alexander, the writer Stanislav Kravkov directed the film *Za čast otadžbine* (For the Honor of the Fatherland), presented for the first time in Belgrade in 1930.<sup>21</sup> The film contained documentary material from the Great War and immediately afterward, presented in the “poetic” manner of Russian modernism as personified by individuals such as Sergei Eisenstein. The two most popular Serbian melodies from the Great War—“Na Drinu” (On the Drina) and “Tamo daleko” (There, Far Away)—were performed on official and unofficial occasions during the whole interwar period. The author of the melody-march “On the Drina” was Stanislav Binički, a composer and conductor who served in the Serbian army during the war as the conductor of the military orchestra. He composed his “On the Drina” after the Serbian victory at Cer in August 1914. The optimistic and victorious march became popular among Serbs after the war. The song “There, Far Away”, on the other hand, was the sad and nostalgic song popular among the Serbian soldiers on Corfu and the Salonika front. Its author is unknown, but he is widely believed to be a Serbian soldier having taken part in the Serbian retreat to Corfu.

During the interwar period, the official celebrations of Armistice Day organized every year in Belgrade on 11 November had both an external and an internal aspect. The celebrations were organized regularly at the allied war cemetery in Belgrade. This was also an occasion to celebrate

the Franco-Serbian alliance during the war, which officials sought to represent as the basis of the Franco-Yugoslav friendship under construction after the war. The royal government emphasized the Franco-Serbian alliance during the Great War in order to show that France still stood behind the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes during the fierce Italian diplomatic pressure of 1927: the treaty of Franco-Yugoslav alliance and friendship was signed symbolically on 11 November 1927.<sup>22</sup> Regular contacts were maintained between the associations of Serbian war veterans and French associations, especially with the association *Poilus d'Orient* of the former French soldiers serving on the Balkan Front and with the Inter-allied Federation of Ancient Combatants (FIDAC), which had a strong French influence. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the breaking of the Salonika front in the Great War was an occasion to underline France's support for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes at a time of internal crisis after the assassination of Croat deputies in parliament.<sup>23</sup> After the installation of the royal dictatorship in 1929, the celebrations of Franco-Yugoslav friendship based on the memory of the Franco-Serbian alliance during the war increased considerably. Symbolically, on 11 November 1930, the monument of gratitude to France was inaugurated in Belgrade, with much excitement.<sup>24</sup> The government wanted to show that France had not abandoned Yugoslavia following the establishment of the dictatorship. During the same period, the monument to Napoleonic Illyria (1809–13) was erected in Ljubljana in an attempt to invent a tradition, or memory, in the former Austro-Hungarian territories that predated the Great War.<sup>25</sup>

The expression of continuity in Serbian memory of the Great War, which had an extensive impact on the consciousness of a large proportion of Serbs in Yugoslavia and became the symbol of the Great War for ordinary people, was the novel *Srpska Trilogija* (Serbian Trilogy) by the Belgrade University professor of botany Stevan Jakovljević, published in 1937.<sup>26</sup> Jakovljević was a Serbian army officer during the war who collected the testimonies of his comrades, which were the inspiration for his novel. It consisted of three parts: *Devetstočetnaesta* (Nine Hundred Fourteen), *Pod krstom* (Under the Cross) and *Kapija slobode* (The Gate of Freedom), published separately from 1934 to 1936.<sup>27</sup> The author tried to tell the story that he and his comrades lived during the war and left the testimonies to speak for themselves. His heroes do not like the war, which they see as imposed by their enemies. They suffered, doubted, and sometimes felt for their enemies. The author depicted the idealized image of the Serbian peasant who had the goal of defending the fatherland and a sense for the state, but who after the experience of the war does not sing of the glory of the war or the nation. Many common people and

peasant-soldiers could identify personally with his heroes, and the book was one of the most successful literary projects during the interwar period. It was said that every Serbian house had a copy of this book. The adaptation of his novel for the theater was also a great success in Belgrade and in Serbian provinces.

During the early stages of World War II, for the first time since 1918, high-ranking state representatives were sent to an event in October 1939 linked to the memory of Princip and his friends: at the end of the month a new chapel of remembrance to the Heroes of Vidovdan, where their remains had been moved, was consecrated at Koševo Orthodox cemetery in Sarajevo. The state sent a high-level civil and military delegation to the chapel inauguration ceremony trying to homogenize the country wherever possible in the menacing external and internal situation.

### **The Use of Memory during the Communist Period and the Yugoslav Breakup (1945–91)**

The memory of the Great War did partially reemerge in 1945 with the rise to power of Josip Broz Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. For the Yugoslav Communists, their ascent to power was legitimized on the basis of their heroic struggle in the “war of national liberation and revolution” and the “struggle against the foreign invaders and domestic traitors.” World War II became the almost exclusive point of reference for the new rulers. The new Communist regime renounced the heritage of the defeated “Serbian bourgeoisie” in all respects, except when it came to memory of the Serbian soldiers’ struggle against foreign invaders during World War I. The Communists’ narrative was that the Serbian soldier was an ordinary person, a peasant or a worker, who had a natural, inbuilt sense of freedom and liberty that foreign invaders had wanted to deprive him of over the centuries. This image was also projected without any critical sense onto the other South Slav peoples. It also served the ideological purposes of the new regime, in terms of both foreign and domestic policies. In foreign policy, such narratives gave cover to the pretensions of Yugoslav Communists to the territories of Italy (Trieste, Istria, and Zara) and Austria (Klagenfurt, Villach)

On 13 May 1945, a few days after Germany’s capitulation, Marshal Tito along with Soviet academician Nikolai Sevastianovič Deržavin (1877–1953), philologist and historian, specialist on Bulgaria, and partisan of Soviet pan-Slavism, visited the Monument to the Unknown Soldier on Mount Avala.<sup>28</sup> On this occasion, the monument to the Unknown Hero from the Great War served both to impress the foreign visitor and to symbolically integrate the Bulgarians into what could be called

Tito's "pan-South Slavism." Yet it also had a domestic function. Even if the visit was presented as spontaneous, the date was chosen with a great deal of care. The day of the visit was one week after the Orthodox Easter. Traditionally, it was the day when ordinary Serbs assembled at cemeteries to remember their dead. The Communists chose this day to impose themselves symbolically on the Serbian peasants in the area around Mount Avala, who during the war had generally supported the monarchist resistance movement of General Dragoljub Draža Mihailović.<sup>29</sup> A similar symbolic "conquest" of the memory of the Great War was the burial in the Serbian war cemetery at Zejtinlik near Salonika of 126 Yugoslav partisans shot by the fascists during World War II.

After 1945, the Sarajevo assassination came back into the public sphere but with a different connotation than in the period of monarchy. During Communism in Yugoslavia, Princip was seen not only as an ordinary but courageous young man, fighting for liberty against foreign imperialism, but also as a predecessor to the Communist revolution. The reemergence of Princip's memory came with the first partisan units that liberated Sarajevo in April 1945. On 7 May 1945, one day before the capitulation of Hitler's Germany, the partisan authorities unveiled a new memorial plaque for Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo at the place of the assassination to replace the plaque that the German troops had taken down in April 1941. The new plaque had the following text inscribed in golden letters: "As a sign of eternal gratitude to Gavrilo Princip and his comrade fighters against Germanic conquerors, the youth of Bosnia Herzegovina dedicate this plaque—Sarajevo, 7 May 1945." Very much in the same vein, the importance of *Mlada Bosna* (Young Bosnia), the irredentist and national-revolutionary movement in Bosnia before World War I, was stressed.<sup>30</sup> That involved representing the movement in Marxist fashion as a predecessor, albeit an unconscious one, of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which brought about the liberation of the country from foreign invaders and a social revolution. Putting Young Bosnia on a par with Princip could be explained by the Yugoslav Communists' wish not to jeopardize the leader cult of the only "true" hero of the people and the revolution—Josip Broz Tito.<sup>31</sup>

With the Tito-Stalin split of 1948, the "fight against imperialism" deeply rooted in the history of all "Yugoslav peoples" also became one of the main arguments in the ideological struggle against "Soviet imperialism." When it came to domestic policy, it served as proof that Yugoslavia's independence was only possible under the Communist Party. After the sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1952, the party proclaimed that it was turning to Marxist sources and changed its name to the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia. Marx was added to the list of the

revolutionary literature that Princip and his friends had supposedly read. Princip became an inspiration for artists and poets and represented a young idealistic freedom fighter, a model for the Yugoslav youth on whom the future of the Communist system rested. In this context, in an ironic twist, the well-established anti-imperialistic thrust of the Princip and Young Bosnia narrative could be turned against the USSR and indeed against Stalin himself. That is why the celebration of the thirty-ninth anniversary of the Sarajevo assassination in 1953 was particularly well prepared by the organizing committee under the authority of the Committee of the Sarajevo Communists' Union.<sup>32</sup> On 28 June 1953, the Museum of Gavrilo Princip and Young Bosnia, the work of the Zagreb-born and Vienna-educated architect Juraj Neidhardt, opened in Sarajevo in the house in front of which the assassination had been carried out. Inside was a bust of Princip that inspired artists and literary critiques to all sorts of artistic-political reflections that, in fact, celebrated Tito's regime.<sup>33</sup> Probably on that occasion, the plaque from 1945 was replaced by a new one that excluded direct mention of Germanic imperialism and underlined the role of the people in the struggle for freedom that was well rooted in history. The inscription was the following: "From this place on 28 June 1914, Gavrilo Princip fired a shot that stands for a symbol of People's protest against tyranny and their secular aspirations for liberty." During the celebration, many wreaths were laid in the crypt containing Princip's and his friends' remains by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sarajevo as well.<sup>34</sup>

The memory of the Serbian World War I-soldiers did also serve other purposes: on the occasion of his visit to Greece in 1954, during the negotiations over the Balkan pact between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, Tito visited the island of Vido near Corfu and placed a garland in the "blue crypt" immortalized in the poetry of Milutin Bojić. Through this gesture, in line with his goal of building an alliance with Greece, he sought to pay respect to the continuation of the Serbo-Greek alliance from the Great War. Still, beyond the symbolic gestures and initiatives mentioned above, the memory of the Great War was condemned to be forgotten by the Communist regime. In the field of literature, for example, World War II became without any doubt the primary source of inspiration. The literary works of "class enemies" such as Dragiša Vasić, shot by Tito's partisans in 1945 as a member of the monarchist movement, were prohibited. The Yugoslav Communists understood literature as part of the ideological struggle in the construction of a socialist society within the country. The official view on literature was that art is a result of the artists' view of the world and the artists' ideology. Consequently, all art was perceived as ideology, politics, and an extension of the political strug-

gle. If art was following the regime's line of interpretation, then it was to be nurtured. If not, it should be destroyed.

As the tension in the strained relations with the Soviet Union abated in 1955, the memories of the Serbian soldiers and of the Sarajevo assassination paled into insignificance and were totally overshadowed by two state holidays with dates close to 28 June, both of which had direct reference to World War II: 4 July, the day of Yugoslavia's fighters, and 7 July, the day of the insurrection in Serbia.

With the ideological relaxation of the 1960s, however, the memory of World War I began to reemerge. In 1963, Yugoslavia adopted a new constitution that reinforced the concept of federalization of the country. The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Kolubara, the Serbian victory over Austria-Hungary in December 1914, was an occasion for the war veterans of the Great War to organize themselves. The war veterans from the battalion of thirteen hundred young corporals who changed the outcome of the Battle of Kolubara to the advantage of the Serbian army formed an association. Organized within the same ideological framework, they wanted to have the same benefits as Tito's partisans. They sought permission to collect public donations in order to erect a monument to their comrades on the mountain of Rajac, alongside monuments from World War II that were being built after 1945. In the same year, 1964, the film *Marš na drinu* (March on the Drina) directed by Žika Mitrović was released. It was a great success and contributed to Binički's march becoming the anthem of Serbian national consciousness in Communist Yugoslavia. A local Communist and director of a music ensemble, Miloje Popović, provided the lyrics to Binički's music. Rather tellingly, the title changed from "On the Drina" to "March on the Drina", as if to underline its military aspect. Popović's lyrics spoke of the heroism and the courage of the Serbian soldiers during the Battle of Cer. Interestingly, however, it was the Turks, who were explicitly mentioned as the enemies, not the Austro-Hungarians, probably out of consideration for the Croats and Slovenes. In 1966, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the Salonika front after the Serbian army's retreat through the Albanian mountains, a group of interested people from Serbia visited the "historic battlefields and holy places" in Greece: Corfu and the island of Vido, the Salonika front, and the Zejtinlik military cemetery. More and more groups of war veterans began to organize themselves institutionally: in 1967, the Association of the Bearers of the Albania Medal was officially established in Belgrade. Sensitive about its image in the West, the Yugoslav government did also send a detachment of the Yugoslav People's Army to march past on the Champs-Élysées in Paris on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Armistice signed in Rethondes, in the

footsteps of the victorious Serbian army of 1918.<sup>35</sup> The reemergence of the memory of the Great War left its traces in literary history as well. In the second part of his novel *Zastave* (The Flags), published in 1967 (the work had been published in parts in the literary journal *Forum* from 1962 onwards), the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža described the period from 1912 to 1922, where the only hope for the national and social problems of his romanticized characters was the emergence of Leninism in Soviet Russia.<sup>36</sup> These characters depicted Serbia as a corrupt, militaristic, primitive country that beat the well-organized Austro-Hungarian army in the spring of 1914. The novel provoked angry reactions from Serbian war veterans, a fact that underscores the extent to which the memory of the war still had the potential to provoke controversy.

In the context of preparing the new constitution adopted in 1974, which federalized the country, the question of past Serbian sacrifices for the construction of Yugoslavia was brought up. The multi-part novel by Dobrica Ćosić—*Vreme smrti* (A Time of Death)—published from 1972 to 1979<sup>37</sup> was entirely dedicated to the history of Serbia during World War I. Ćosić was following the footsteps of Jakovljević, describing the Serbian national tragedy during the Great War. The awakening of Serbian national feelings was, in a sense, a critique of the Communism of 1970s Yugoslavia. Ćosić was a disappointed member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, from which he was excluded in 1968 because of his opposition to the official line regarding Albanian nationalism. In his work he argued for a return to the traditional values of the Serbian peasantry that had secured the unity of the South Slavs and had specific views on Yugoslavia. The works of Ćosić had an impact on historiography. Following that period, the number of works arguing that the Serbian government's only goal during the Great War was Yugoslav unity (rather than, for example, a separate peace involving only Serbia) increased dramatically. During the same period, the authorities finally gave their support to the war veterans by permitting the construction, in September 1973, of the abovementioned Monument to the Young Officers (thirteen hundred corporals). The monument was erected on the mountain of Rajac near Valjevo in western Serbia.<sup>38</sup> The symbolism of the monument, which celebrated the courage and devotion of the youth, a subject dear to the Yugoslav partisans, was very similar to the symbolism of partisan monuments from World War II.

The pattern of suffering for a “better future” was also characteristic of the book titled *Trnovit put Srbije, 1914–1918* (The Thorny Road of Serbia, 1914–1918), published in 1974 by the Association of War Veterans who crossed through Albania in 1915–16. It consists of testimonies about the heroic works of “a generation pre-ordained for acts of great her-

oism” and had a pedagogical purpose aimed at the younger generation. In his introduction, Kosta Todorović, university professor and president of the association, underlined that along with periods of heroic history, the Serb people had also experienced hard periods of “slavery,” heavy losses, and population upheaval.<sup>39</sup> For him, Serbian history had a linear progression leading to the realization of Yugoslavia: the “idea of liberty” always “heartened the heart” and “reinforced the spirit” of “our people” not only to assemble their enslaved compatriots but also to realize the “historical mission” of unification of all the South Slavs. For the author of the introduction, the example of Serbia in the Great War confirmed the “historical law” that realization of “great works” requires great sacrifices in terms of human lives. It was a modest critique of the more and more federalized Yugoslavia, where Serbia did not have a place that corresponded to what it was supposed to have invested in its creation. The book was published thanks to donations and was popular among Serbs. Clearly, the early 1970s were a moment when some disillusioned Communists began to revisit the origins of the creation of Yugoslavia. The gradual return of the memory of the Great War that manifested itself in this particular context was indicative of a desire to show what Yugoslavia might have looked like had revolution broken out in Serbia in 1917 as it did in Russia. That is why in this period references to the peasantry, to Lenin, and to the founding fathers of the revolution were particularly recurrent. The publication in 1975 of John Reed’s book of testimonies from Serbia in 1916, where he was a journalist, confirms this general tendency.<sup>40</sup> The origins of Yugoslavia were also the subject of the memorial book on the commemorative complex and the war cemetery at Zeitinlik near Salonika, published by the Institution for Preservation of Monuments of the Socialist Republic of Serbia in Belgrade on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the forcing of the Salonika front in 1918.<sup>41</sup> For the author of the book’s preface, the aim of the publication was to “preserve the remembrance of the huge efforts and heroic exploits” of Serbian and allied armies but also Serbian soldiers and the Yugoslav volunteers who “left their lives all around the Balkans.” The “freedom-loving patriotic heroism” of Serbian soldiers becomes that of Yugoslav volunteers too. This representation was in accordance with the official representations of the war that underlined that the achievements of the Serbian army, the Yugoslav volunteers, and the other allied forces on the Salonika front were all equal.

After the death of Josip Broz Tito, the Pandora’s Box of different, opposing memories was opened. The “war of memories” started along with the aggravation of the political and economic situation. To be sure, this memorial struggle was primarily played out in the field of World War II-memory and concerned, among other things, the number and weight of

Serbian losses during the Independent State of Croatia (1941–45). For the Serbs, however, there was a World War I-dimension to it, as the memory of the Great War could be mobilized to serve as proof of the high price paid for the common state. In the ensuing proliferation of all kinds of memories, one book stands out: the book by two local historians from Smederevska Palanka in the region of Šumadija in the heart of Serbia, titled *Tri sile pritisle Srbijcu* (Three Powers Pressed Small Serbia).<sup>42</sup> It offered a collection of testimonies by those who participated in the Serbian army's retreat through Albania and the Salonika front produced at a distance of almost seventy years. The soldiers were peasants who did not think about high diplomacy and the creation of the new states, but who experienced the war during the retreat, in the trenches, in direct combat with the enemy. Their testimonies were full of emotions: patriotism, courage, and humanity were substituted for brutality, fear, and cowardice. In fact, it was a testimony to the absurdity of the war in the context of the increasing tensions in the country in the mid-1980s.

### Memory during the Transition in Serbia after 2000

After the political changes in 2000 in Serbia, the memory of the Great War reappeared, but within the framework of the country's new domestic and international position. This memory will once again be examined with reference to the Monument to the Unknown Soldier on Mount Avala. The first official visitor who came to the Monument to the Unknown Soldier at Avala after the democratic changes in Serbia was Prince Alexander Karadjordjević, the grandson of King Alexander, who had erected the monument. This event marked, symbolically, the new government's wish to make a break with the dictatorship that had existed in Yugoslavia for more than sixty years. With the democratic transition in the country, a kind of "war of memories" ensued regarding the monument. Nevertheless, the references to the past continued to be drawn not from the Great War but mainly from World War II and the First Serbian Uprising in 1804. However, the memory of World War I resurfaced on different occasions. On the ninth anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, on 11 September 2010, for instance, a high-ranking delegation of the National Guard of the United States placed a wreath at the monument to the Unknown Soldier, reminding everyone that "the Serbian soldiers were steadfast allies of the United States during the First and Second World Wars." As in the interwar period, the Serbian Unknown Soldier from World War I was accorded international recognition within the context of Serbia's altered domestic and international environment.

International recognition was also given to Binički's "March on the Drina" that was played in its original instrumental-only version in the United Nations General Assembly in New York during the 2013 New Year's Concert.<sup>43</sup> Still, controversy arose when the Congress of North American Bosniaks protested against the march being played in New York, saying that it was a war song under which "war crimes and genocide" had been committed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, and asked for the president of the sixty-seventh session of the UN General Assembly, the Serb Vuk Jeremić, to be replaced. Jeremić's cabinet argued that the Serbian popular march from the Great War, often played by artists such as Cliff Richard and Chet Atkins, had been transformed into a message of peace, like the "Radetzky March" played at the New Year's Concerts in Vienna.

The consequences of the war in the 1990s were also at the heart of the symbolic and political disputes between Muslims and Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina that surrounded the commemoration of the centenary of the outbreak of World War I in Sarajevo on 28 June 2014.<sup>44</sup> While the city of Sarajevo hosted a huge international commemorative event, "Sarajevo 1914–2014—Heart of Europe," that saw a multitude of different cultural events being organized with international partners all across the city and that insisted on World War I being a European catastrophe, the city of Eastern Sarajevo, capital of Republika Srpska, held its own celebrations: having refused to attend the EU-funded festivities, Bosnian Serbian and Serbian authorities preferred to celebrate the memory of Gavrilo Princip, and a two-meter-tall bronze statue was erected to that effect.<sup>45</sup> One year later, on 28 June 2015, on the 101st anniversary of the Sarajevo assassination, Republika Srpska offered to the Republic of Serbia yet another monument to Gavrilo Princip that was erected in Belgrade in the presence of the highest political representatives from Banja Luka and Belgrade.<sup>46</sup> Once again, the memory of the Great War in the Balkans reflected the controversies over other historical periods with different political messages at stake.

## Historiography of World War I

The period after the Great War in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia was characterized by the publication of memoirs and autobiographies by the participants in the war, as well as official documents. Historiographical publications written by authors from the Kingdom of Serbia, victorious in the war, were also most numerous. With the first publications, the first controversies between the participants regarding

the interpretation of certain events arose. In historiography, these concerned first and foremost military, political, and diplomatic history. Historians were especially interested in the reasons for the Serbian victory in the war and how and why the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians was created.

In post-World War II Communist Yugoslavia, the field of historiography was constrained by Marxist ideology, with certain taboos that were best not touched upon. Instead, the focus was placed on the history of workers' parties and socialist movements. Military history of World War II, as well as the history of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, was given great importance and studied by specialized institutions. With the decentralization (though not democratization) of the Yugoslav system from the 1960s, the writing of history became the subject of controversies between the rulers of the parties in the various Yugoslav Socialist Republics. Contrary to literary works that began to corrode the stereotypical representations of World War II and to oppose the ruling ideological concept, historiography maintained a black-and-white approach to the history of Yugoslavia during World War II. Historians dug deeper into the past in order to use the Great War to support their views on World War II concerning the "aspirations of imperialistic powers" or the "progressive" or "opportunistic" role of some actors in the past.

### Political and Diplomatic History

Political and diplomatic historians have focused on two main subjects: Serbia's foreign relations in terms of alliances during World War I and the creation of the common South Slav state.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the pro-Yugoslav Croatian historian Ferdo Šišić published a collection of documents titled *Dokumenta o postanku Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, 1914–1919* (The Documents on the Creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes),<sup>47</sup> with an accent on documents on the mostly political and diplomatic activity of the South Slav émigrés from Austria-Hungary regarding the creation of the common South Slav state. These documents suggested that, alongside the Serbian government, South Slav émigrés during the war were also a decisive factor in the creation of the common state. Roughly at the same time, the Serbian historian and professor at Belgrade University Stanoje Stanojević worked on the assassination of the Austrian crown prince in 1914 and on the diplomatic background to the start of the war, denying any implication of the Serbian government in the plot leading up to Sarajevo.<sup>48</sup> Slovenian historians, on the other hand, put the focus on Slovenian political life during the war years,<sup>49</sup> seeking to explain how the

Yugoslav idea prevailed among Slovenian politicians. The publication in 1925 of the translation of Czech historian Milada Paulová's book on the activities of the Yugoslav Committee,<sup>50</sup> which consisted of South Slav political and intellectual émigrés from Austria-Hungary, and its relations with the Serbian government also had a significant impact on historiography in the interwar period in Yugoslavia, especially among Croats and Slovenes. Paulová argued that during the war the Yugoslav Committee had to fight for an equal position with the Serbian government, while the behavior and attitudes of Serbian politicians regarding the Yugoslav question were hegemonic and colored by Serbian nationalism. The hypothetical question of who was more "Yugoslav" during the war—the Serbian government or South Slav émigrés from Austria-Hungary—dominated debate during the whole interwar period.

During the Communist era, after an initial period dominated by narrow military history, the question of the relationship between the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee reemerged at the end of the 1950s, when the activities of both the Serbian government and the Yugoslav Committee were examined within the context of the wider political and military history of World War I.<sup>51</sup> At the beginning of the 1960s, the relaxation of the political climate helping, the debate over the sense of Yugoslavism and the commitment of different World War I-actors to the Yugoslav cause clearly gained momentum among senior party officials and historians. The third congress of the Union of Historians of Yugoslavia, held in Ljubljana in December 1961, is a case in point.<sup>52</sup> On that occasion, the first public signs of disagreement between Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian historians became evident. Croatian historian Franjo Tudjman, for instance, criticized the report by Serbian historian Jovan Marjanović, arguing that the Serbian government had shown "pretensions to hegemony" during World War I, contrary to the other actors who were working for Yugoslav unity. The polemics between historians from the various Yugoslav republics continued in 1964, after the publication of *Pregled istorije Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Survey of the History of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia).<sup>53</sup> Historians from Serbia criticized the authors of the book for not discussing the "progressive role" of Serbia and Montenegro in opposing "Austro-German" imperialism during World War I. Using Leninist interpretations of the war, they also criticized the authors for failing to note that Serbia and Montenegro had fought a "defensive war for justice and liberation," as well as for not mentioning their sacrifices and efforts. The historian Savo Skoko criticized the authors for not discussing the "great problems" of that time, such as the Great Powers' struggle for hegemony in the Balkans, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Balkan Wars, or World War I in a broader sense.

A significant number of historiographical works were published around the time of the fiftieth anniversary of World War I (1964–68). At the conference “The Yugoslavs and World War I,” held in Belgrade in December 1964, a violent polemical discussion about the character of Yugoslav unification was sparked. Although unification was described as the result of the efforts of the “bourgeoisie” rather than the “broad masses,” it was still evaluated as a “great progressive act.” Some historians argued that because of the risk of a Bolshevik revolution, the creation of Yugoslavia was the result of the Great Powers’ diplomatic activities.<sup>54</sup> In 1964, the historian and biographer of Tito, Vladimir Dedijer, who had broken with the regime and immigrated to the United States to become a member of the Russell Tribunal, published an article on the Sarajevo assassination and its responsibility for the war’s outbreak in 1914.<sup>55</sup> Two years later, he published a book on the same subject matter, putting the assassination into the broader context of European history and highlighting the complexity of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s political, economic and social situation prior to 1914.<sup>56</sup>

Parallel to this, the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the Salonika front saw the publication of memoirs written by war veterans and dedicated to their comrades, who were described as ordinary people who “heroically created the Great Yugoslavia.”<sup>57</sup> Likewise, the fiftieth anniversary of the Yugoslav Committee’s creation was greeted by the Yugoslav Academy of Science and Arts of Zagreb with an edited volume highlighting the committee’s importance for the creation of Yugoslavia.<sup>58</sup> The introduction to this publication discussed the question of responsibility for the two world wars, referring to the Fischer controversy in Germany. The author gave support to Fritz Fischer’s views and accused the West Germans of remaining stuck in their “militaristic, Prussian attitudes.” The following year, the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, along with other academies from Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo, edited *Jugoslovenski narodi pred Prvi svetski rat* (The Yugoslav Peoples before the First World War).<sup>59</sup> The introduction argued that, contrary to the point of view of European historiography, the animosity and clash between the Habsburg Monarchy and Yugoslav peoples preceded the Sarajevo assassination.<sup>60</sup> The editor was academician Vasa Čubrilović, one of the participants in the Sarajevo assassination in 1914, who had escaped a death sentence because he was a minor. The book’s most important aim was to show that the creation of the Yugoslav state was rooted in the period before World War I. Much the same approach was taken in historians Bogumil Hrabak and Dragoslav Janković’s 1968 work of popular history on Serbia in 1918, with references to Lenin’s interpretations of the causes of the war.<sup>61</sup>

The suggestion by Serbian historians to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Serbian army's breakthrough on the Salonika front with an academic conference in Belgrade was opposed by several Croatian, Macedonian, and Serbian historians, who saw in the proposal a revival of "Serbian bourgeois hegemony." It speaks to the importance of this anti-Serbian impulse that, at the same moment, some Macedonian historians interpreted the Serbian army's breakthrough on the Salonika front as the beginning of the occupation of Macedonia.<sup>62</sup> Later that same year, Serbian historians again suggested the organization of a conference celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of Yugoslavia in Belgrade on 1 December 1968. The idea was this time opposed by Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, who was close to senior officials within the party. To avoid the flaring up of tensions, the event was relocated from Belgrade to Zagreb. Its title read "Academic Conference on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the Creation of the Yugoslav State."<sup>63</sup> Tellingly, some historians seemed more interested in the breakup of Austria-Hungary than in the creation of Yugoslavia.

With the opening of official Yugoslav archives under the fifty-years rule, the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s saw a proliferation of historiographical works on World War I. The question of the unification of Montenegro with Serbia during the war was explored in the publications by the Historical Institute in Titograd in a series about Montenegro's past.<sup>64</sup> Serbian historians selected documents that had been published in a voluminous collection during the interwar period and then forgotten, editing them in 1970 in Belgrade under the title *Veliki rat Srbije* (The Great War of Serbia).<sup>65</sup> The series of internal crises in Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1970s, which led to the adoption of the new constitution in 1974 and came close to turning the country into a confederation thanks to the powers it gave to the republics, also had an impact on the historiography of the Great War. The question of the creation of Yugoslavia remained the most important issue through which historians "proved" the merits of their own nation. Historiography reflected the internal crisis and national conflicts. In 1973, Milorad Ekmečić published *Ratni ciljevi Srbije 1914* (The War Aims of Serbia), in which he argued that the unification of Yugoslavia was the "constant aim of Serbian history."<sup>66</sup> Dragoslav Janković argued that the "Yugoslav question" was one of the main causes of the war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia in 1914.<sup>67</sup> He criticized Paulová and her successors for their interpretations of the relationship between the Yugoslav Committee and the Serbian government and put forward the idea of a gradual deterioration of this relationship between 1915 and 1918.

During the second half of the 1970s, several books examined Serbia's political and diplomatic relations with other powers during World War I. The question that interested historians was to what degree these powers did, or did not, support the Serbian government's Yugoslav program. Until the Revolution of October 1917, Russia was the allied power that most strongly supported Serbia in its policy,<sup>68</sup> while the Vatican was the most opposed to Serbia's plans.<sup>69</sup> The international aspect of Yugoslav unification was one of the subjects of the Yugoslav historians' conference held in Ilok (in Croatia) in 1979 on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the unification of the Yugoslav peoples.<sup>70</sup> However, the most discussed and controversial subject was the nature of the creation of the Yugoslav state. Historians from Belgrade insisted that the only goal of Pašić and King Alexander had always been the unification of all Yugoslav peoples, while historians from the other republics' capitals argued the contrary.

After Tito's death in 1980, the Pandora's Box of South Slav history was open. All periods of history became the subject of political disputes between the different Yugoslav republics. Propagandist historical publications increased in number, while works of real historiography were disputed. The conference titled "The Creation of the State of Yugoslavia in 1918," held in December 1988 in Belgrade on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the creation of Yugoslavia with the support of the highest state institutions such as the parliament, was the last attempt to present the results of historical research on the consequences of the Great War in a state that was disappearing before everyone's eyes.<sup>71</sup>

## Military History

Military history was predominant during the whole interwar period in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia. With a population made up of almost 90 percent peasants, who had been actively involved in the war, the interest in a military history of the Great War was easily understood. The writing of military history by high-level officers (who took care to underline their own wartime merits) could also be appreciated by superiors and bring promotion in military hierarchy. In 1921–22, controversies over the Serbian victory in the December 1914 Battle of Kolubara left Colonel Svetislav Milosavljević<sup>72</sup> (assistant to the wartime commander of the First Army Vojvoda Živojin Mišić, 1855–1921) and General Živko G. Pavlović<sup>73</sup> (assistant to the head of the General Staff of the Serbian Army Vojvoda Radomir Putnik, 1847–1917) opposed to each other. Following the death of Mišić, Colonel Milosavljević argued that the offensive that led to success in the battle was the result of a decision by his direct superior, Vojvoda Mišić. On the other hand, General Pav-

lović argued that the success was the result of decisions by the General Staff and its head, Vojvoda Putnik. In reality, behind the personal rivalry the controversy was really over the efficiency of the Serbian army's command structure and decision-making process during the war.

The publication of documents from the war was supposed to help resolve these kinds of controversies. The whole interwar period was characterized by the publication of voluminous document editions, the most important one being *Veliki rat Srbije za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca* (The Great War of Serbia for the Liberation and Unification of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians).<sup>74</sup> Published by the Historical Department of the General Staff of the Army, it consisted of documents mostly dealing with military operations, but it also contained documents that dealt with diplomatic questions, particularly in regard to the relationship between Serbia and its allies. Information on the state and morale of the Serbian army during the war, on the volunteers and prisoners of war, as well as on the situation in occupied Serbia could be found in these documents as well. The whole collection underlined the military and diplomatic role of Serbia in the creation of the state of the South Slavs. Albums of photographs from the war were published as well.<sup>75</sup> The military history provided support to Croatian and Slovenian nationalists, operating under the cover of Yugoslavia, in their struggle with Italian nationalists over their rival claims to the disputed territories of Istria, Quarnaro, and Dalmatia after the war. The speed with which the Serbian army moved to take possession of the disputed territories before the Italian army could do so, following the breakthrough on the Salonika front, served as a pledge of its commitment to the interests of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and the common state. The capacity of Serbian officers to oppose the Italian army was explained by their ability and courage and as part of their war "mentality." The example of the return home from captivity of one Serbian lieutenant colonel who opposed the Italians in front of Ljubljana was often analyzed as a particularly illustrative example of devotion to the Yugoslav cause.<sup>76</sup>

The difference in population losses and material destruction during the war on Serbian territory on the one hand and the former Austro-Hungarian territories on the other was one of the topics of political struggle in the kingdom between the two wars, and it was no coincidence that the murder of Croatian deputies in the parliament in Belgrade in 1928 occurred after a dispute on Serbian war losses.

Serbia paid the highest price during the war on its territory and the period of occupation by Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria. The historiography of the time examined the problem of the occupation of Serbia from several points of view: memoirs,<sup>77</sup> terror conducted by occu-

pation forces,<sup>78</sup> and civilian resistance, especially during the Toplica Uprising in 1917.<sup>79</sup> The historian Vladimir Ćorović argued that the suffering of the Serbian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina was deeper than was the case with other South Slavs of Austria-Hungary.<sup>80</sup> The Salonika front was also the subject of numerous articles in the historical journal *Ratnik* (The Warrior), issued by the kingdom's army, which examined how the Salonika front had come about, the Serbian army's operations on the front, participation of volunteers, preparation of the offensive, and the breaking of the front in September 1918.<sup>81</sup>

During Communist Yugoslavia, military history remained the most important approach in historiography, but its focus shifted to World War II and the victory of Tito's partisans. Among the earliest references to World War I were those in a propagandist historical piece signed by Tito himself. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the creation of the Red Army, Tito claimed that the birth of the Red Army was a consequence of the struggle against "imperialistic powers during the First World War."<sup>82</sup> The explanation was typical of Soviet propaganda based on Soviet historiography of the interwar period, underlining the global and historical significance of the Bolshevik revolution. Explanations of the Red Army's victories during World War II were also present in historical publications of a more popular kind. Apart from the heroism of ordinary soldiers, the use of modern technology—particularly the tank—was also glorified. The origin of the use of tanks as a modern weapon in World War I was underlined to explain the Soviet victory in World War II.<sup>83</sup> In fact, it was suggested that the Yugoslav People's Army should develop them on the Soviet model. The Yugoslav Communists thought that the tanks, used for the first time during World War I, along with the traditional instinct for "liberty" of the "people" would be the strongest offensive arm of the army in the future.

Exaltation of the merits of the army in the victory over the "fascist invaders" and "domestic traitors" was supported by historiography in the context of Yugoslav pretensions to the territory of Italy and Austria after 1945. In 1950, after the Paris Peace Conference of 1947, which failed to resolve the Trieste question and demarcation of the Austrian-Yugoslav border in line with Yugoslav wishes, the Historical Institute of the Yugoslav People's Army in Belgrade published a book dedicated to the 1918–19 military actions in Koroška (Carinthia).<sup>84</sup> The authors were senior army officers. They were not satisfied with the decisions taken in Paris, which they called the "dictate of the great powers" and argued that the decisions of 1949 concerning Koroška would be clearer if the "historical development" of the "unjust resolution" of that question were to be understood from the end of World War I. This book was published in the

context of the exaltation of Yugoslav nationalism after the split between Tito and Stalin in 1948. Going back to Leninist origins and terminology, the authors compared “imperialistic great powers” to “small nations” and their rights and “just” and “unjust” wars. The Soviet Union was added to the group of great imperialist powers who, ever since World War I, had failed to respect the rights of small nations. Adored until 1948, the leaders of the Soviet Union become detested because of their supposed “anti-Marxist, counter-revolutionary and unfriendly politics” towards Yugoslavia. Another consequence of the 1948 rift with the Soviet Union was that, in addition to works published after 1945, historiographical works from interwar Yugoslavia also began to be referenced, yet this time without mentioning their “imperialist and bourgeois” content.

The federalist concept of Yugoslavia and the ideology of its peoples’ “brotherhood and unity” could not be legitimized simply on the basis of the liberation struggle of World War II, and this caused historians to dig deeper into the past in order to find firmer grounds for legitimizing them both. This led them to World War I. That is why some authors examined the relationship between the Serbian and Montenegrin armies during World War I. In 1953, for instance, Petar Š. Vlahović published the brochure *Sandžaka vojska i bitka na Mojkovcu 1915* (The Army of Sandjak and the Battle of Mojkovac, 1915).<sup>85</sup> The author wanted to distinguish precisely what was part of Serbian history and what of Montenegrin in 1915. He argued that the fighting of Montenegrin troops after the capitulation of their king and government permitted the successful retreat of the Serbian army to the Albanian coast, and thus belonged to Montenegrin history. According to the author, the Montenegrins had shown a feeling of “brotherhood” and a sense of common interest between the Serbian and Montenegrin peoples, contrary to the calculations of their king and government. It was one of the many common events that bound the two peoples’ pasts, equally important to both of them. The idea of sacrifice was also present in the author’s interpretation: when the two armies were tired of fighting, the only option that remained was to sacrifice one for the other, and that is why the Montenegrins sacrificed themselves to protect the retreat of the Serbian army.

The number of works dedicated to the Montenegrin and Serbian disaster of 1915 increased from 1954. Military historians and senior officers of the Yugoslav People’s Army tried to explain contemporary events and those of World War II with reference to their origins during World War I. General Milan Zelenika (1885–1969), for instance, dedicated an entire book to the war of Serbia and Montenegro in 1915, published by the army’s publishing house.<sup>86</sup> Zelenika wanted to respond to the wish of

“all our people,” especially Serbs and Montenegrins, to understand the “real causes” of the “national catastrophe” that, in the memory of some people, was akin to a “second Kosovo,” alluding to the Serbian defeat of the fourteenth century. His methodological question was why the retreat of the Serbian army and capitulation of the Montenegrin army occurred in the autumn of 1915. His point was that at the beginning of the war, the Central Powers were well prepared and organized, while “our side” was less well prepared but had better capacity for drawing on the support of its coalition allies. In 1915, the general argued, responsibility for the Serbian and Montenegrin disaster lay with their allies, especially Italy, which failed to help. In fact, the first part of the 1950s was a period of tensions in Italian-Yugoslav relations over the question of Trieste. In the mutual accusations, the Italian and Yugoslav press took the history of World War I as material for constructing their own arguments. The Italian side claimed that Serbia had been victorious in World War I purely thanks to the support of its allies. In 1952, Stevan Jakovljević, writer of the above-mentioned bestseller *Serbian Trilogy* (1937) and World War II POW in Italy, reacted to the “dishonest and cynical distortions of truth in Italian public opinion”<sup>87</sup> concerning the Serbian army during World War I. General Zelenika also took part in this dispute, attacking the Italian daily *Il Tempo* for accusing the Serbian World War I-army of weakness.<sup>88</sup> On the contrary, he argued, it was precisely the Italians who had benefitted the most from the support of their allies. After criticizing the role of the Serbian high command, he underlined the role of the “Serbian people,” who, even after their defeat in 1915, did not lose “faith in themselves and in victory.” The communist regime drew on this “excellent tradition” of the patriotism of simple peasant-soldiers in every moment of international crisis, real or invented. General Peko Dapčević, who entered Belgrade in 1944 with the Soviet armies, wrote a book for the army’s own publishing house on the Serbian army’s operations during World War I and those of the Partisans during World War II to prove his theory of the importance of the Serbian and Yugoslav side’s high maneuverability.<sup>89</sup> He argued that high maneuverability and mobility was one of the most important factors behind “our success” in two world wars, in contrast to the Soviet army whose strength lay in its sheer force; according to his argument, in the mountainous terrain of the Balkans, mobility and maneuverability were of equal, or greater, value. To support his theory, he gave historical explanations based on his analysis of the maneuverability of the Serbian army in 1914–18, which had led to the two victories in 1914 and had prevented the complete destruction of the Serbian army during the retreat of 1915.

Many propagandist works of history with partial academic qualities looked at World War I through the prism of Leninist orthodoxy. The ideological approach was more important than the available sources. Bosnian historian Fuad Slipčević wrote a book on World War I and the creation of the Yugoslav state using only secondary literature from the interwar and postwar period, without any reference to primary sources.<sup>90</sup> Using Leninist references, such as the responsibility of all imperialist states for the war and the difference between “just” and “unjust” wars, the author set the Serbian king and the political elite on the one hand against the Serbian people on the other. For him, the mobilization of the Serbian army in 1914 was a success because of the experience of the soldiers and the “patriotic feeling of the people who were conscious that what was at stake was their freedom and the independence of their country.”

In this context, the analysis of the World War I occupation of Yugoslav territories was often informed by the experience of the Axis powers’ occupation policies during World War II: foreign invaders implemented ruthless policies of divide and rule toward the South Slavs, setting them one against the other.<sup>91</sup> The enmity between the government and the “people” was the subject of a book on the military relationship between Montenegro and Serbia in 1914–15, until the capitulation of Montenegro.<sup>92</sup> The author of this work, based on military and diplomatic archives, was Nikola Škerović, from the Historical Institute of the People’s Republic of Montenegro, former deputy in the Montenegrin parliament during the war, who in 1915 had taken part in the discussions regarding capitulation. He accused King Nikola of Montenegro of “betrayal” in contrast to the “people” who wanted to continue the fight just as Serbia did. Thus, the military history of World War I was deeply oriented by official ideology and served the domestic and foreign policy objectives of Communist Yugoslavia. It served the same purpose as that of some historians who developed a narrative integrating the two world wars into the larger framework of a military struggle for the freedom of all “Yugoslav peoples” lasting from the nineteenth century until 1945.<sup>93</sup>

Against this backdrop it is not surprising that the question of the responsibility for the war’s outbreak, very present in German historiography after 1945,<sup>94</sup> was not discussed in the Yugoslav context of that period, even more so given the fact that most Yugoslav historians had no doubt as to Germany’s overwhelming responsibility for the escalation of tensions during the July Crisis. Still, some South Slav historians discussed the character of the Serbian participation in the war in the tradition of the ideological struggle between the Bolsheviks (Lenin) and the German Social Democrats (Rosa Luxemburg). In that perspective, Serbia’s

initially righteous defensive war changed its character into an imperialist war once Russia became involved.<sup>95</sup> The infantry colonel of the Yugoslav People's Army and war historian Savo Skoko opposed that view calling on Lenin's interpretations of the character of the Balkan Wars and World War I and the national liberation character of Serbia's war.<sup>96</sup> Along with war historian Petar Opačić, Skoko published a highly successful biography of Vojvoda Stepa Stepanović, one of the most important Serbian war commanders, who participated in all wars that Serbia waged from 1876 to 1918.<sup>97</sup>

### **Economic, Cultural, and Social History**

Until the end of the 1980s, World War I was not looked upon through the lenses of economic, cultural, or even social history. As has been argued, World War I crystallized ideological struggles between Yugoslav historians instead of being investigated seriously. However, there are exceptions to that rule, the most notable one being Andrej Mitrović, a professor of contemporary history at Belgrade University. In his 1984 book *Srbija u Prvom svetskom ratu* (Serbia in the First World War),<sup>98</sup> Mitrović discussed several allied loans (French, British, Russian, then American) that permitted Serbia to continue fighting during the war. He also gave a sociological analysis of relevant social groups in Serbia during the war, such as the Sarajevo conspirators, Serbian and Yugoslav politicians, Serbian army officers, and Toplica rebels. The author depicted the historical background of the decision-making process and the Serbian actors' different mentalities and cultural backgrounds. He also took issue with the official figures of Serbian losses, which he considered inflated, while his colleagues, such as Vladimir Stojančević, argued that those figures were essentially correct.<sup>99</sup> Mitrović also touched upon the war guilt question, rejecting, very much in line with Yugoslav historiography on that matter, any Serbian responsibility for starting it. In an interview given on the occasion of his book's publication, Mitrović noted that the idea of Serbian guilt for World War I's outbreak was resurfacing in the context of the weakening of the Eastern bloc. Serbia being traditionally seen as a Russian client state across East-Central Europe, the idea of Serbian responsibility in the outbreak of World War I was therefore instrumental in the weakening of Communist rule. In his introduction to the Serbian edition of Fritz Fischer's book *Alliance of the Elites*, Mitrović accordingly endorsed all of Fischer's arguments.<sup>100</sup> In 1987, he pursued his exploration of the history of Serbia during World War I by publishing a book on the *Uprisings in Serbia from 1916 to 1918*.<sup>101</sup> Explaining how the struggle for

freedom gradually became a *topos* deeply inscribed into Serbian culture and mentalities, Mitrović challenged widely held ideas about the extent of popular resistance against the occupying powers. By doing so, he gave a new impulse to the rich historiography on Serbian resistance against the Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian occupier.<sup>102</sup>

During the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, several books on World War I were re-edited in the form of short, popular editions serving various propaganda purposes.<sup>103</sup> Taken out of context, parts of these books were used to “prove” the repetition of history in the Balkans in 1914 and 1991, the right of one people or another to a particular territory, and the “historical excellence” of one people in comparison with the other.

### Revisiting Historiography after the Political Changes in Serbia

After the year 2000, Serbian historiography enriched its research on World War I in three main directions: on medical issues in Serbia during the war, on Serbian refugees after the occupation of the country in 1915, and on Serbia’s diplomatic and military relationship with its allies. The French military and diplomatic support for Serbia played a key role in the Serbian recovery during the war and in the creation of the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes at the end of the war.<sup>104</sup> One important book—*Nevoljni ratnici* (Involuntary Warriors)<sup>105</sup>—examined the attitudes and actions of the Allied Great Powers on the Salonika front. Taking into account the very rich military historiography that described the battles, the movement of troops, the victories, and the defeats on the Salonika front, the author’s aim was to explain what happened in the background, the decision-making processes, and the struggle for ideas, concepts, and attitudes within General Headquarters and ministerial councils, parliamentary sessions and commissions. Contrary to previous historiography that concentrated on the allied forces’ successful offensive, the author highlighted the differing interests, aims, strategic concepts, and especially material capacities between politicians and soldiers of the Great Powers (France, Great Britain, Italy) on the one hand and the smaller countries (Serbia, Greece) on the other. A particular interest concerns the attitudes of the Great Powers toward the smaller ones, which the author explained in relation to cultural factors and the heritage of colonial attitudes. The interests of the small powers were not taken into account by the great ones, and the Allies were less concerned with the common good than with their own interest. This is also the line taken by the book on British-Serbian relations during World War I with the characteristic title *Neizabrana saveznica* (The Non-Voluntarily Chosen Ally).<sup>106</sup>

The cultural aspects of World War I in Serbia have been examined in the book *Top, vojnik i sećanje* (Cannon, Soldier, Memory), published in 2014.<sup>107</sup> With the centenary of the outbreak of the war, several international conferences were organized in Belgrade, and Serbian historians took part in international World War I conferences abroad (Paris, Bucharest, Sarajevo, Banja Luka). In the same period, Christopher Clark's book *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*,<sup>108</sup> which was particularly critical of the Serbian government's actions prior to and during the July Crisis, brought the "war guilt" question back to the fore, provoking reactions from Serbian historians and the general public alike. Several critiques of Clark's book were published in specialized reviews.<sup>109</sup> Clark, along with Serbian historians, took part in the conference held in Belgrade in May 2014 on the lessons learned from the Great War. Some of them returned to editing the archival documents on the Sarajevo assassination, arguing that no proof exists there of Serbia's official involvement in it.<sup>110</sup> A short history of Serbia between 1914 and 1918 has been published in English, Russian, and Serbian.<sup>111</sup> Aiming to make available to specialists and the interested public the basic results of historiography on the Great War in Serbia, an encyclopedia of World War I in Serbia has been published in 2015.<sup>112</sup> The question of foreign war testimonies and perceptions of an allied country and people has been discussed in the bilingual French-Serbian critical edition of French texts on the Serbian retreat of 1915–16.<sup>113</sup> In October 2016, a group of French and Serbian historians discussed the question of History and Memory of World War I in Zaječar in Eastern Serbia where the cemetery of the French *Armée d'Orient* is located.<sup>114</sup> In November 2016, there was also a series of lectures on Serbia and its Allies in 1916 based on the results of the research of a younger generation of historians and supported by the French *Mission du Centenaire*. Overall, there have been numerous World War I workshops organized by major historical research institutions including those from Republika Srpska.<sup>115</sup> It is also worth mentioning and speaks to an increased international overture of the Serbian discussions on World War I that quite a few studies have been translated into Serbian: Christopher Clark's aforementioned book on the war's outbreak, Robert Gerwarth's study on the vanquished during the 1917–23 period, and John Paul Newman's work on war veterans in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians/Yugoslavia are cases in point.<sup>116</sup>

Today, the Great War does not play the unique role that it once did in shaping memory and historiography in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Other events appear more important and more controversial, such as

the wars surrounding Yugoslavia's breakup, World War II, or events more remote in time yet which play a role in the "invention of tradition" for the identities of the newly created states in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the memory and historiography of the Great War has been relieved of the ideologically impregnated concept of Yugoslavism to become the object of dynamic and discussed memory in societies on the path to democratization, and the object of historiography based on critique of sources and in constant search of new methodological approaches.

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*Chapter 9*

## A SEMINAL “ANTI-CATASTROPHE”?

Historiography on World War I in Poland, 1914–2019

*Piotr Szlanta*



### Memory/Commemoration of World War I

In commemorating World War I, Poland, like many countries of East-Central Europe, focused predominantly on the regaining of independence.<sup>1</sup> Having dragged on, the war had exhausted the human, material, and fiscal resources of the belligerents, destroyed existing social and political systems, and led to the fall of the East-Central European multinational empires. The resulting political vacuum was filled by national states.

Despite the extensive material and human losses (in the ranks of Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German armies, four hundred thousand Polish soldiers were killed and eight hundred thousand wounded, not counting Polish volunteers who died fighting in the Polish Legions or the Polish army in France),<sup>2</sup> the war's result turned out to be the fulfilment of the dreams of four Polish generations deprived of their own statehood.

As a consequence, after the war, nobody in Poland questioned the sense of it at all. From the Polish point of view, it was a “sacred war” that resulted in the almost miraculous reestablishment of an independent Poland. For a few generations of Polish activists in the long nineteenth

century, a European War between great powers had seemed to be the only opportunity to fight for independence and rebuild their own statehood. One of the architects of Polish independence, Roman Dmowski, the chief ideologist of National Democracy, put this idea as follows:

If, for the whole world, the 1914–1918 war was an unexpected, stunning catastrophe, so from our point of view it represented something which crossed the borders of our most daring, most unrealistic expectations. . . . Concerning Poland, who could even imagine that we are on the eve of a war in which one of the powers who partitioned Poland, would be incapacitated and unfit for fighting, and that the two others would have all great powers against themselves? Who could foresee that at the peace conference after this war, all three powers, which partitioned Poland, would be absent, but Poland would be present?<sup>3</sup>

On the tenth anniversary of independence, one of the most popular newspapers in Poland reminded the public: “A storm of Great War horror, a gigantic struggle, was decided 10 years ago; as the clock struck an hour of triumph of historic justice on the twitching body of the devil, the Archangel of Freedom planted his blazing standard. And in this hour of confusion of events, among the crash of failing thrones, from a sea of blood, Poland was raised.”<sup>4</sup>

Controversies arose, however, over the question of whom the Poles owed for this historical success. As a consequence, the discussion about the events during the Great War was strongly politicized right from the beginning. In official propaganda, school programs, and books, the role of Józef Piłsudski in regaining independence was emphasized, especially after the May 1926 coup, to the disadvantage of the other political camps such as the National Democrats.<sup>5</sup> Those “historical contributions” served as one of the most important legitimizing means, for antidemocratic and authoritarian circles, of “sanatorzy.” On the other hand, National Democrats just accused Piłsudski of being an Austrian agent.<sup>6</sup>

It was not until 1937 that 11 November was declared an official holiday, Polish Independence Day. It is worth noticing, however, that this national holiday does not commemorate the Armistice on the Western Front but rather the seizing of executive power by Piłsudski from the hands of the Regency Council and the disarmament of the German garrison in Warsaw, which happened on 11 November 1918. Moreover, there was no political consensus regarding this holiday. For example, the socialists preferred to observe the anniversary of the establishment of Ignacy Daszyński’s leftist government, which had taken place in Lublin on 7 November.<sup>7</sup>

The cult of fallen soldiers during World War I was seen as an element in a long chain of struggles for national independence and sovereignty, beginning with the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794, through the Napoleonic Wars, the November Uprising in 1830, the January Uprising in 1863, and the revolution of 1905–7. It had no special features or liturgy. The war cemeteries played a role as “special commemoration places,” particularly those where fallen legionnaires were buried (about 3,000 legionnaires died on the battlefields, including 170 officers). According to international obligations and internal law, the Polish local administrations, after 1918, were responsible for all war cemeteries in the Polish territories. Many civil society organizations were involved in this, for example the “Polish Mourning Cross” (*Polski Krzyż Żałobny*) established in 1921 and renamed after 1925 as the Society for Care of the Heroes’ Graves (*Towarzystwo Opieki nad Grobami Bohaterów*), the Polish Red Cross, and, last but not least, different veterans’ associations.

For obvious political reasons, special attention was paid to the legionnaires’ graves. In 1929, the government decided that these should be separated from the general cemeteries. Additionally, the legions’ battle routes were commemorated by special memorial plaques, crosses, chapels, monuments, and schools, and the expressions used by legionnaires during the war were introduced into the official topography.

In Volhynia, for instance, where all three brigades fought in 1915–16, there were twenty legionnaires’ cemeteries with a special tourist route marked out and the terrain declared a historic park.<sup>8</sup> These memorials, located in the eastern provinces of the country, along with the Lviv’s “Young Eagles’ Cemetery” (*Cmentarz Orłąt Lwowskich*)<sup>9</sup> and the military quarter in the Vilnius Rossa Cemetery also played an important political role as “proof” of the allegedly Polish character of these nationally mixed and disputed terrains. In 1923 in the Rakowicki Cemetery in Cracow, the exhumed bodies of fifteen Polish cavalymen fallen in a charge on Rokitno in Bukovina in an attack on Russian trenches in June 1915 were solemnly buried. This battle emerged as one of the symbols of Polish self-sacrifice in the struggle for independence and became a part of Polish national mythology in the postwar period.

The memory of the struggle for independence during the nineteenth century, with its successful and dramatic climax in the Great War, was, according to the Warsaw government, crucial to the new national identity and would unite the multinational Polish postwar society, about 35 percent of which consisted of national minorities. Therefore, it became an important element of patriotic, pro-state education in all schools, including those for national minorities.<sup>10</sup> It was not especially successful, though. For example, in 1928 during the special session of the Polish parliament

devoted to the tenth anniversary of independence, deputies of national minorities left the chamber in protest against the policy toward national minorities.<sup>11</sup>

Nationally conscious and active Ukrainians had their own heroes to emulate. Generally speaking, the great numbers of ethnic Ukrainians who had become Polish citizens did not forget the attempts to build their own national state during and after World War I, thus regarding Polish rule as illegal occupation. In their eyes, Poland had no right to govern over East Galicia and Volhynia. They commemorated 1 November, when the Western Ukrainian People's Republic was declared and military struggles with Poles over Lviv began. A special place in the national memory of Ukrainians, who made up 16 percent of the citizens of the Polish Second Republic, was occupied by the Sich Riflemen. This unit, composed of volunteers, fought in the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian army against Russians and later became the nucleus of the Ukrainian Galician Army, the military arm of the West Ukrainian National Republic and the regular army of the Ukrainian National Republic. Parallel to the official Polish state's political commemoration policy, remembrance of these soldiers in Ukrainians' commemoration culture was cultivated in press, books, and various associations, by teachers and Greek-Catholic clergy, and during local celebrations, youth camps, lectures, concerts, etc.<sup>12</sup>

The Belarusian nationalist circles celebrated on 25 March. On that day in 1918 a Belarusian People's Republic had been declared by a small group of activists. However, this turned out to be rather a symbolic gesture. The new state did not control almost any territory and was not given international recognition. In the western part of the area, inhabited by the Belarusian population (in the vicinity of Białystok, Grodno, and Brest), there were vivid memories in the interwar period of the massive evacuation (biel. *Beżanstva*) of the whole region, forced upon the civilian population by the Russian military during the retreat before the German and Austro-Hungarian advance in summer 1915.<sup>13</sup> The tsarist troops were ordered to devastate all land that was inevitably to be seized by the Germans, thus causing huge material losses and psychological trauma. Another important event in the national consciousness of Belarusians was the anti-Bolshevik uprising in Sluck, which broke out in October 1920.<sup>14</sup>

The central memorial, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, as seen throughout Europe, was erected in Warsaw in 1925.<sup>15</sup> It represented typical commemoration practice, as in almost all belligerent countries. But from the beginning, this monument was to commemorate all freedom fighters, not only those who had fallen during the Great War. Rather tellingly, the Unknown Soldier buried there had not lost his life in World War I but during the battles with Ukrainians over control of East Galicia.

To the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were added a few plaques with the names of the battlefields on which Polish soldiers died in the years 1914–21. They reveal, convincingly, that from the Polish perspective, the Great War finished three years later than its conclusion in the West.

This highlights a specific problem of the whole East-Central European region, where the Armistice at the Western Front did not put a stop to the fighting. Quite the reverse: with the final defeat of the Central Powers, the fragile stability reigning after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk collapsed. Violent internal and external conflicts, paramilitary violence, plebiscites, bloody power struggles, territorial demands, signings and breakings of alliances or cease-fires, and intensive backstage diplomatic negotiations could be observed from Finland to the Caucasus. In the case of Poland, this transitional, unstable period lasted until the Treaty of Riga was signed in March 1921, which set a new postwar international order. At the same time, the promulgation of the March constitution in Poland stabilized its political system. So, in Polish public memory, at least in the interwar period, the date of 11 November was important, by no means the end of the process of regaining independence and drawing the state borders.

An important part in the commemoration of the war was played by veterans' associations, the most influential of which, already established in May 1918, was the "Union of Polish Legionnaires" (*Związek Legionistów Polskich*). In 1922, the "Museum of the Pro-independency Deed" (*Muzeum Czynu Niepodległościowego*) was created by the veterans' association in Piłsudski's home in Cracow.<sup>16</sup> A similar role was played by the "Museum of the Polish Army" (*Muzeum Wojska Polskiego*) in Warsaw. It was established in 1920.

Many veterans published their memoirs during the interwar period. On the one hand, this was a way of coping with traumatic "front experiences," and on the other, it allowed the writers to commemorate fallen brothers in arms. High-ranking politicians and military commanders utilized these memoirs as a tool to influence public opinion, by presenting their own interpretations of the Great War and stressing their role in regaining independence. Despite the formal apolitical, pro-state, and patriotic character of the veterans' organizations, this milieu was deeply divided along political lines, as opposing groups cultivated their own memory and interpretation of history and had their own heroes and traditions. Unification of the veterans' movement was also made impossible by the personal ambitions of leaders such as Józef Piłsudski, Józef Haller, and Józef Dowbór-Muśnicki. Apart from the memoirs, the veterans endeavored to influence wide public opinion through the press, ritualized conventions, and, of course, by taking part in official celebrations for World War I anniversaries.

After 1926, a process of politicizing the veterans' associations and subordinating them to existing political parties took place, thus relegating them to predominantly political and propaganda functions. The autocratic government, using flattery but also financial and administrative pressure, took control of the main veterans' associations step by step, while the rest were marginalized.<sup>17</sup>

Official propaganda tried to force millions of Polish soldiers who had served in foreign ranks out of the public discourse. This could be seen, for example, in the new plaque on the central monument in the Gorlice military cemetery, which in 1928 replaced the original Austro-Hungarian one. This new plaque commemorates "the Polish brothers who, though serving in three different armies, all fought for the Polish cause and died in that region in the years 1914–1918."<sup>18</sup> In fact, World War I had the character of a Polish civil war. Between 1914 and 1918, about 3.5 million Polish soldiers fought in the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German armies. On the battlefields, many of them met with their compatriots, fighting against them. After the war, many Polish officers who had served in the former Russian, Austro-Hungarian, or German armies and joined the Polish Military after 1918 felt aggrieved when former legionnaires were promoted.<sup>19</sup>

World War I was also present in the Polish cinematography of the interwar period. Many films were produced in Poland, glorifying Piłsudski's legionnaires (e.g. *Maraton Polski*, 1927, dir. Wiktor Biegański; *Dzikie Pola*, 1932, dir. Józef Lejtes; *Rok 1914*, 1932, dir. Henryk Szaro) or the Polish-Soviet War (e.g. *Dla Ciebie Polsko*, 1920, dir. Antoni Bednarczyk; *Cud nad Wisłą*, 1921, dir. Ryszard Bolesławski; *Tajemnice medalionu*, 1922, dir. Edward Puchalski; *Mogła Nieznanego Żołnierza*, 1927, dir. Ryszard Ordyński; *Z dnia na dzień*, 1929, dir. Józef Lejtes). Their screenplays predominantly presented typical, banal, pseudo-romantic, pathos-filled stories depicting a readiness for self-sacrifice for the sake of the fatherland, thereby promoting the legion's myth. On the whole, these productions, which were partly cofinanced by the state, did not reach a high artistic level. Probably the most successful of them, the 1936 comedy *Dodek na froncie* (Dodek at the Front) directed by Michał Waszyński, told the story of a Polish soldier serving in the Austro-Hungarian army who accidentally found himself in a Russian uniform.<sup>20</sup>

The unprecedented scale of the tragedies of World War II eclipsed commemoration of World War I. In its rivalry with World War I, World War II, with its tremendous human and material losses, occupation terror, Holocaust, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, mass migration, reshaping of borders, and subjection to the Soviet Union, held a much more important place in the Poles' historical consciousness. The memory of the

events between 1914 and 1921, compared to the incomparable cruelty of the next world war, therefore faded after 1939.

Furthermore, the new Communist rulers tried to impose their own vision of history on society and to establish new traditions to celebrate and heroes to emulate. In 1944, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier certainly did survive the destruction of the Saski Palace, where it was located. But this was not without being emptied of its symbolic content: after its reconstruction in the form of a symbolic ruin, new commemorative plaques relating to World War II were added, while the old ones, commemorating battles between 1918 and 1921 (that were essentially battles against Soviet Russia), were moved to the Museum of the Polish Military. When, after the fall of Communism in 1989, the new authorities decided to bring them back and hang plaques commemorating the battles from 962 up until 1863, the tomb finally lost its character as a memorial place dedicated mainly to World Wars I and II. Instead, it commemorates all who have fallen for the country's independence from the very beginning of Polish statehood in the tenth century, thus playing the role of a general pantheon of the country's defenders.

After 1945, many World War I cemeteries fell into ruin and oblivion. They could not "compete" with new memorial places, such as former Nazi concentration camps in Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Majdanek and Polish military cemeteries all over Poland (Military Cemetery Powązki in Warsaw), Europe (Monte Cassino in Italy, Narvik in Norway), and North Africa (Tobruk in Libya). After 1980, the attention of political elites and public opinion concentrated on the memorials to the victims of Communist repression in Gdańsk, Szczecin, Poznań, and Katowice.

Commemoration of World War I moved, predominantly, to the private sector and churches, and was cultivated by oppositional circles and emigrants. This changed, fractionally, with the establishment of the trade union "Solidarność" in 1980, which referred to the independence tradition. People tried to celebrate Independence Day publicly, but unofficially, by attending special masses or by putting flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Observance of Independence Day was seen as a demonstration of anti-Soviet attitude, an opportunity for resistance against state Communism, which, in the eyes of an increasing part of Polish society, was illegitimate. After 1980, every year on the anniversary of the advance from Cracow of the First Company of legions, a few dozen oppositionists tried to march along the August 1914 route of this troop between Cracow and Kielce. In many eyes, Lech Wałęsa played the role of the leader of the Nation, just as Piłsudski had.<sup>21</sup>

After 1989, more changes in commemoration of World War I in Poland can be seen. First of all, 11 November was reestablished as a state

holiday, the central celebration being the changing of the guard of honor by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw, as well as a military parade. Another symbolic return to the pre-1939 tradition and political culture, a vivid breach with the Communist practice, was reestablishing 15 August as “Armed Forces Day” (*Święto Wojska Polskiego*), in honor of the decisive, totally unexpected Polish victory on the Vistula River in August 1920. The battle that resulted in a strategic pushback of the Red Army was the turning point of the Polish-Soviet War of 1920–21. It was and still is commonly referred to as the “Miracle on the Vistula.”

In the years 1995–98, two statues of Piłsudski were erected in Warsaw, one of them facing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Despite criticism from the left side of Polish public opinion, a statue of Roman Dmowski was unveiled in Warsaw in 2006. Left-wing politicians are now demanding the erection of a statue of another father of Polish independence, the socialist Ignacy Daszyński. Since 1985, a statue in Warsaw of Wincenty Witos, also credited with the reestablishment of Poland, stands as a representation of the peasant movement.

More generally speaking, there is a noticeable increase in interest in World War I in recent years. Local communities have started to rediscover local war cemeteries, and local schools are taking care of their maintenance. After decades of oblivion, they have been accepted as part of the local heritage and as an important element of the cultural landscape. For many years in the region of Little Poland, a nonprofit organization, *Crux Galiciae*, has existed. Its members restore and maintain the war cemeteries in that region on their own initiative and lobby local authorities to restore the most neglected ones.<sup>22</sup> A vivid sign of the public’s increased interest in the events of 1914–18 is the publication of many detailed monographs on World War I cemeteries throughout Poland.<sup>23</sup> I would attribute this phenomenon, at least in part, to the decentralization of Poland after 1989 and to a process of building civil society. In this context, a new, popular, “entertainment” aspect was added to the memory of the Great War. Very popular in Poland are reconstruction groups that reenact historical battles<sup>24</sup> and take part in official ceremonies to commemorate victims of the war.<sup>25</sup>

The Polish memory of the Great War period has strong regional components. In the Great Poland region, local authorities and inhabitants are proud of the so-called Great Poland Uprising, which broke out against the Germans in December 1918. In Upper Silesia, memory of the Silesian Uprisings of 1919–21 remains dominant, and in southeastern Poland the memory of Piłsudski’s legions and fights with Ukrainians over Lviv (Lwów) and Eastern Galicia is especially cultivated. These local memories highlight the fact that the memory of the war is still overshadowed

by the struggle for independence, which lasted between 1918 and 1921, climaxing in the Polish-Soviet War. It is well reflected in popular culture. The newest Polish movie superproduction, *Bitwa Warszawska 1920* (directed by Jerzy Hoffman, 2011) is centered around the successful repulsion of the Red Army on the outskirts of the Polish capital, the so-called “Miracle on the Vistula.”

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the centenary of the Great War has been celebrated by the Polish authorities to a considerably lesser extent than it has been the case in France or Great Britain. From the Polish perspective, other historical events from the tragic twentieth century are simply of greater importance when it comes to memory and identity politics. Especially after the electoral victory of the right-wing party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość in 2015, a cult of anti-Communist military resistance after 1944 (the so-called *Żołnierze Niezłomni* [Enduring Soldiers]) has been strongly promoted in media, school, and official state celebrations. However, this does not mean that the World War I-centenary passed unnoticed. To be sure, the Polish central government did not stage any official commemorations to mark the outbreak of the war, but this should not come as a surprise given the fact that Poland did not even exist as a state when the July Crisis escalated into a fully blown-out European war. However, as the centenary of the German defeat drew closer, much more attention started being paid by the Polish authorities, media, and public opinion to the reestablishment of an independent Polish state in November 1918, as well as to the subsequent border struggles, climaxing in the Polish-Soviet War 1920–21. In this context, the Polish discourse remained necessarily idiosyncratic, at least by Western European standards: the celebratory note of the various Polish ceremonies dedicated to national independence could not fail to be at odds with the emphasis on the soldiers’ sufferings in the trenches and the idea of the war being a catastrophe that prevailed in the huge international commemorations in Western Europe. This fundamental asymmetry could maybe best be seen on 11 November 2018 when Poland was not represented among the more than seventy heads of state or government who gathered in Paris to commemorate the end of the war. The Polish president and prime-minister instead attended the Warsaw ceremony celebrating national independence. Polish public opinion would not have understood (or, for that matter, accepted) their absence on that particular day that marked the high point and culmination of many regional and nation-wide festivities celebrating the rebuilding of the Polish State in 1918.

Apart from honoring and commemorating the endeavors of various political parties (with the exception of the extreme left) and military units that strove for a united, sovereign state, the official narrative features “the

civil war character” of World War I for Poles, who were mobilized into Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian armies and thus had to fight against each other. The public is also reminded of the material losses suffered by Polish towns and rural areas.

The anniversaries of the dramatic events of 1914–18 are also used by central and local authorities to foster memory tourism in Poland. For example, the city of Łódź “reinvented” the Battle of Łódź of 1914 to promote tourism in the region.<sup>26</sup> In 2009, the authorities of eight Polish regions (voivodeships) signed an agreement to bring into being, until 2014, “the tourist route of the First World War Eastern Front.” It leads through the material remains of the battles, such as cemeteries, monuments, museums, fortifications, trenches, and field narrow-gauge railway lines, with a center in the vicinity of Łódź. The route includes the two Polish towns that suffered the greatest destruction in World War I, namely Kalisz and Sochaczew. It also highlights, among others things, the civil war character of World War I seen from the Polish perspective.<sup>27</sup> The municipal authorities of Przemyśl wanted to facilitate access (among other means, by building approach roads) to the remains of the Austro-Hungarian fortress, one of the biggest attractions in this border city.<sup>28</sup> In many cases, local commemorations on the former battlefields are being planned by local activists and authorities with financial support from local business. One particularly striking example of one of these commemorations was the centenary of the battle of Gorlice in May 2015. Lectures, exhibitions, an international scientific conference,<sup>29</sup> a concert, ecumenical prayers on the war cemetery, and, last but not least, a reenactment of the fighting<sup>30</sup> underscore the multifaceted appropriation of World War I from below.

## Polish Historiography on World War I

### The Interwar Years

First of all it must be emphasized that Polish historians have not and do not participate particularly actively in big international debates on the war. Rather, they concentrate on internal Polish issues and the relations with neighboring nations. What are the reasons for this state of affairs? Firstly, as in the case of all nations in Eastern Europe, Poles had a specific war experience and set of problems, which directly influences the historiography. Poland did not enter the war as an independent actor in international relations. There were no state organs, no control over territory, no regular army, and of course no possibility of conducting foreign policy. For that reason, at least in the first phase of the conflict, Poles should rather be treated as subjects and supplicants, involved in the in-

ternal affairs of their state, rather than independent political actors who could forge the surrounding environment. This influenced historiography as much as memory culture.

In the interwar period, many studies on World War I's battles, written by former officers, were used as manuals for students at military academies, and many books by foreign military men and politicians were translated and published in Poland at that time.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, the Polish book market was deluged with the memoirs of the Polish participants in the Great War.

From the very beginning of independence, Polish historians started to research the war and the military activity of the Polish national units during the war.<sup>32</sup> Of prime interest for historians and the general public, of course, was the process of reestablishing Polish statehood. This most important topic from the Polish perspective aroused the greatest dispute and controversy. The first books were published only a few years after the war.<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, during the war, many historians took part in political discussions, engaged in peace negotiations in Paris (e.g. Oskar Halecki, Wacław Sobieski), or joined the Polish national military units.<sup>34</sup>

It has to be emphasized that the war on Polish soil did not end in November 1918—during the next two and half years, violent border conflicts with all of Poland's neighbors apart from Romania and Latvia erupted. As a consequence, from the Polish perspective, it did not make sense to separate World War I (understood as the years 1914—18) from the ensuing military conflicts, which were not resolved until the signing of the Polish-Soviet Peace Treaty in Riga on 18 March 1921. Of course, 1918 was a turning point in Polish history, but not nearly the end of the process of reestablishing Poland.

The issue most discussed regarding World War I was not, as in Western historiography, the “war guilt” problem. Without going into details, Polish historiography took for granted the German and Austro-Hungarian responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War, on which the Versailles Peace Treaty was based. Interwar Poland had no interest in a revision of this treaty, which was profitable for Poland, as such a revision was potentially destructive to the existing international order. Poland benefited from the Versailles Treaty, had very strained relations with the Weimar Republic, and was keenly interested in keeping the territorial status quo in postwar Europe. For most Polish historians of that time, there was nothing to be gained from engaging critically with revisionist currents of international historiography that were gaining momentum in the second half of the 1920s.<sup>35</sup>

As the Polish historian and officer Stefan Rowecki wrote, “Pre-war Germany, with full impetus, took action to gain control over the economy

in all parts of the world, to convert itself into a single, huge fortress, bristling with bayonets, guns and battleships, and, with far-reaching plans, aspired to crush all neighbors and gain a hegemony in the world. These invasive plans, based on power, violence, and the rule 'strength before law' caused the world war."<sup>36</sup> Later on, in his monumental history of the Great War, Jan Dąbrowski adopted a more balanced narrative toward the "war guilt" question, stressing the inevitability of the war and readiness of the Russian political and military elite to solve international problems by force.<sup>37</sup> But on the whole, this did nothing to change the prevailing consensus regarding German responsibility.

On other World War I-related aspects, however, there was certainly no lack of controversy. From the very beginning, the question of who could claim the greatest credit for the reestablishment of Poland was a most controversial issue, with politicians and parties of all shades of opinion boasting about their achievements. In the interwar period, the biggest political parties, the National Democrats on the one hand and Piłsudski's followers on the other, claimed the credit for achieving independence. In Poland, as well as in many countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, World War I delivered legitimacy for those who wanted to seize or keep political power and influence. "Only those could be hosts here, who paid the right of being host, not by money, but by sacrifice of blood," stated the General Assembly of the pro-Piłsudski Union of Polish Legionnaires in November 1923.<sup>38</sup> The authoritarian regime, Piłsudski's followers after 1926, tried to convince Polish public opinion that Poland existed thanks to them and that due to their role in the war they should now have political power. This political dispute was reflected in historiography.

One of the most respected historians in governing circles, Waclaw Lipiński, thus stated that after the fall of the 1905 Revolution, "the independence movement had only one road—the building of force, a brutal physical force, which could break the power of the [Russian] government."<sup>39</sup> According to this interpretation, the greatest credit for Polish independence could be claimed by Piłsudski and his legions, who achieved the resurrection of Poland on the battlefields with arms in their hands. Of course, during the war the international outlook turned out to be pro-Polish. Nevertheless, the simultaneous fall of the three partitioning powers did not automatically mean the rebuilding of the state.

The other powerful political camp, the National Democrats, regarded their main ideologist, Roman Dmowski, as the person who resuscitated Poland. In the first phase of the conflict, Dmowski strove to unite all Polish territories under the Russian regime and, in the second, convinced the Western allies that an independent, republican Poland was in their interest. From the very beginning, his political camp on its own initiative

entered into alliance with the eventually victorious coalition, and had a decisive voice in the shaping of the postwar order.<sup>40</sup> As put bluntly by Dmowski, “In comparison to the armies counted in millions, the participation of Polish military forces was dim and had no bearing on the result of the war.”<sup>41</sup> After 1926, the authoritarian government repulsed such an interpretation of history. In 1935, when a historian from Jagiellonian University, Waław Sobieski, in his manual on Polish history challenged the role of Józef Piłsudki in planning and carrying out the successful campaign against the Red Army in the summer of 1920, the Ministry of Education fired him from the job.<sup>42</sup>

Michał Bobrzyński, historian and conservative politician in pre-1914 Galicia, attempted, among others, to reconcile these two contradicting standpoints. In his eyes, both camps indisputably deserved credit for the independence of Poland. The pro-Austrian option (upheld by Piłsudki) helped to keep the Poles from being subsumed into the huge Russian nation and pushed through the idea of an independent Poland until the 5 November Act of 1916, by which the Central Powers promised the creation of a Polish Kingdom on the territory of Congress Poland. This brought about the internationalization of the Polish cause, after decades in which this issue was regarded as an internal affair of Russia, Germany, and Austro-Hungary. On the other hand, Piłsudki’s opponents, pro-Russian politicians like Dmowski, promoted the unification of all Polish territory, not allowing Polish territory to be limited solely to areas under Russian control and, finally, uniting the Polish cause with the victorious Western coalition.<sup>43</sup>

Contrary to the discussion described above, economic and social topics lay on the margin of Polish historians’ interest in the interwar period. Worthy of mention is the three-volume edition edited by Marcełi Handelsman with financial support from the Carnegie Foundation of studies on the social and economic influence of the war, focusing primarily on financial aspects of the occupation regimes, the influence of the war upon different sectors of the Polish economy, labor issues, and charity.<sup>44</sup> Despite the fact that this edition was published over seventy years ago, it is still a fundamental source of knowledge for us today on the economic and financial aspects of the war on the Polish terrain.

## Marxist Historiography on World War I

World War II dramatically changed the perspective on World War I. The 1914–21 events rapidly came to exist in the shadow of the next world war. Nevertheless, the history of the last few decades did remain, as before 1939, a politically fragile topic. Due to the installation of a Commu-

nist regime in Poland and, consequently, subjection to the Soviet Union, freedom of research was severely limited and strictly subordinated to the party line. In the process, the administration put tremendous pressure upon historians to cling to the official line in their research orientation and publications.<sup>45</sup>

From the perspective of Marxism, Poland regained independence due to the success of the Great October Revolution, not to the efforts of the Polish nation.<sup>46</sup> As the Marxist historian Leon Grosfeld wrote, “The fundamental breakthrough in the development of the Polish cause during the First World War took place as a result of the Great Socialist October Revolution. It alone established real conditions allowing for the re-establishment of the Polish independence, as only due to the revolution: 1. Russia ceased to be an imperialistic state, 2. the fall of monarchies in the Central Powers happened in strict relation to the outbreak of revolutions in Germany and Austro-Hungary.”<sup>47</sup>

Piłsudski was labeled a dictator and fascist. According to official Communist interpretation, his legions served the imperialist interests of the Central Powers, just as National Democrats allegedly served the imperialist aims of the Entente powers. Roman Dmowski and his National Democrats were also criticized for their nationalism and anti-Semitism, and their activity was denied any patriotic inspiration.<sup>48</sup>

There was no atmosphere for genuine historical research. The greatest role in establishing Polish independence and the most important event in the modern history of mankind, the beginning of the new era, per official Communist interpretation, simply had to be the Great October Revolution. During the Eighth Convention of Polish Historians, held in September 1958, a high-level Communist activist and historian, Henryk Jabłoński, presented a paper on the establishment of the Second Polish Republic in 1918, in which he presented the official party line on this issue. According to it, the main causative force should be the Russian Revolution.<sup>49</sup> This interpretation was confirmed at the Tenth Convention of the Polish Historians, held in Lublin in 1969,<sup>50</sup> and was popularized, among other things, by a popular monograph on Polish history during the Great War.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, historians who stayed abroad after 1945, as political exiles, continued the course of prewar historiography.<sup>52</sup> However, the conflict between National Democrats and Piłsudski's followers over who could claim the greatest credit for regaining independence gradually abated as it lost its significance in current politics.<sup>53</sup> Generally, historians tended to recognize the role of politicians and soldiers from both political camps.

With the end of the Stalinist era, the atmosphere for research improved sensibly. This allowed Polish historians to engage more objectively and

impartially with World War I, provided one did not venture too far beyond the official line of thought. In that period, one can observe a slight liberalization of historical policy and weakening control over the historical milieu of the government institutions. In this context, the Communist Party tried to mobilize the inveterate memory of a long national history of struggles for independence, often straining facts and arguments by overstating the services of the left-wing and Communist politicians to the reestablishment of Polish statehood after 1918 in the process.<sup>54</sup> To be honest, the party certainly had a point there: up to then, historiography had not paid enough attention to the role of the radical left during the war, but, of course, this is not to say that the combination of pressure and encouragement it deployed was conducive to an objective assessment of the importance of Polish left-wing groups and Communists during World War I.

This change in the official course of the party illustrates one important factor, namely that the Communist regime, which was conscious of its deep unpopularity among the vast majority of Polish society, tried to use national rhetoric to improve its legitimacy.<sup>55</sup> In popular culture, this new tactic of official propaganda found its reflection, in 1981, in the broadcast of the TV series *Polonia Restituta*, directed by Bohdan Poręba, who was well connected with the government. He examined the role of Piłsudski and Dmowski in the regaining of independence, clearly reflecting the change in government policy regarding interpretation of the Great War.

After the fall of Communism, a new interest in World War I studies emerged, while at the same time the rest of the political and ideological restraints placed on historiography vanished. Polish historiography began to open itself, more widely, to the inspiration flowing from Western historiography and started to research topics that had been omitted or neglected in studies up to that time.

### **Military and Political History since 1990**

Polish historiography on World War I is still dominated by a political (including diplomatic) and military history approach. The most important classical studies on the war were written by Janusz Pajewski, Jan Molenda, Jerzy Holzer, and Marian Zgórniak. Janusz Pajewski is regarded as the doyen of Polish World War I historians. For a long time, he enjoyed the well-deserved status as the most prominent expert on this conflict in Poland. His books, including a general history of the war,<sup>56</sup> a history of the reestablishment of the Polish state,<sup>57</sup> and a study on German *Mitteleuropa* plans, are still in use.<sup>58</sup> In his opinion, the Great War was more of a European war than a world conflict, with some total war features. It

accelerated the process of deep change in the social and political map of Europe, also initiating the process of diminishing of the Old Continent's position in the world. The war, resulting in the disappearance of the conservative, monarchical, and imperial order of multiethnic empires in East-Central Europe, meant for the nations of the regions—using Pajewski's words—the “Great Unknown” and the need to work out a new international order, which, due to many conflicting, hardly reconcilable national aspirations, turned out to be an extremely difficult task.<sup>59</sup> Pajewski noticed continuity between the German war plans of World Wars I and II, though in the latter, the plan was realized with more brutality and ruthlessness.

Recently, the centenary of the war in 2014 has seen the publication of a new Polish-language general history of the Great War by Andrzej Chwalba, the first of its kind in almost a quarter century. Unlike Pajewski at his time, Chwalba looked thoroughly into cultural, social, economic and gender aspects of the conflict, thereby catching up with trends in Western historiography, particularly in regard to the war experiences of soldiers and civilians. Already the title emphasizes that the author has come to regard World War I as a European civil war, the suicide of the “old continent.”<sup>60</sup> Four years later, he also published a monography of the Polish Legions as well as a Polish history of the Great War.<sup>61</sup> Another recent publication project worth mentioning is Włodzimierz Borodziej and Maciej Górny's attempt to write a comprehensive history of Eastern and Southern Europe during World War I and its aftermath. As the authors put it in the introduction, one of the aims of their study is to emphasize the specificity, but also the importance, of the war experience in Eastern Europe, thereby developing a much less Western Europe-centered narrative of the war. In line with the Greater War thesis that has been developed in international historiography, they insist on, among other things, the fact that the Eastern European war experience allows in fact to question the idea of a four-year war lasting from 1914 to 1918 that is based on the Western European perspective. Therefore, the first volume starts with the outbreak of the First Balkan War in autumn 1912. The second volume covers the period 1917–23.<sup>62</sup> In another recent book, Jochen Böhrer develops a similar argument, insisting on the continuity of war in Central Europe as well as on its civil war character.<sup>63</sup>

As far as military history is concerned, Mieczysław Wrzosek's classical study on the participation of Polish national units in the war still stands out as a useful and comprehensive analysis of their creation, structures, numbers, training, armaments, and battle routes.<sup>64</sup> Since the early 1990s, our understanding of Polish units and their combatants has been further enriched by a number of publications.<sup>65</sup> These generally acknowl-

edge that, though small in size, the Polish units played an important role in mobilizing Polish society and in influencing the attitude of the Great Powers toward acknowledging the need to rebuild the Polish state. Their existence contributed to the recognition of Polish political aspirations by the belligerents and the internationalization of the Polish cause, as opposed to it being regarded as an internal issue of the powers who at the end of the eighteenth century divided Poland among themselves. After the war, veterans of these troops made up the core of a new Polish army, which along with diplomats defined boundaries and successfully defended independence against the Bolshevik threat.

Beyond that focus on the Polish national units, Polish soldiers fighting as part of the partitioning powers' regular armies have also received scholarly attention. In that regard, a collection of different studies was written by Marin Zgórnjak.<sup>66</sup> He was interested in the fate of the Polish soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian army.<sup>67</sup> Jan Rydel, Michał Baczkowski, Alex Watson, and, more recently, Ryszard Kaczmarek have continued in that vein.<sup>68</sup> According to them, Polish soldiers and officers served loyally in the ranks of the imperial armies of Russia, Austro-Hungary, and Germany and kept their military oath till the end of hostilities. However, their morale gradually declined for complex reasons during the lengthy war.

Studies on the Polish political scene and illegal activity are part of another important field of interest in Polish historiography. Andrzej Garrowicz reminded public opinion of Piłsudski's ideological about-turns before and during the Great War, of his socialist origin, and the development of his political camp, which after the coup of 1926 dominated the Second Polish Republic's political scene.<sup>69</sup> The same could be said about Tomasz Nałęcz's book in which he told the story of the Polish Military Organization, a secret political-military group founded in 1914 and controlled by Piłsudski. In the first three years, it functioned mainly in Russian Poland, after 1917 in Galicia too, having a maximum of twelve thousand members. Nałęcz reveals the growing importance of the organization as time went by.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, in the opinion of Janusz Karwat, in Prussian Poland an illegal, underground group consisting of a small faction of members and supporters had limited public support and did not engage in active anti-German actions, instead waiting for the end of the war, which should see the start of an anti-German uprising. They were more connected with the adversaries of Józef Piłsudski's policy, namely the National Democrats.<sup>71</sup>

Polish historians are still researching the internationalization of the Polish cause during the Great War and the belligerents' policy toward Poles, and in this area one can see a continuation of the trends that already existed in the interwar and Communist periods.<sup>72</sup> According to a historian

from Poznań, Damian Szymczak, the two Central Powers could not realize their plans regarding occupied Russian Poland due to the fundamental differences in their interests and political conception. Any attempt to implement their policies for Poland could endanger their alliance. That stalemate went on till the last weeks of the war.<sup>73</sup> Cracow historian Piotr Mikietyński shares this view. The Germans did not acknowledge their allies' claims to incorporate Polish territories into the Habsburg Monarchy, aimed at gaining dominant influence over the whole of Eastern Central Europe after victory in the war. It was only the strategic situation that induced them to take a more concrete decision in the Polish question, such as on 5 November 1916 with the creation of the Regency Kingdom of Poland.<sup>74</sup>

Generally speaking, neither of the war participants possessed any far-ranging, coherent plans concerning Poland at the outbreak of hostilities. Through the entire war, they could not agree on the future of the Polish terrains. The 5 November Act of 1916 is unanimously seen as an element in the changing strategy toward Russia and an insincere tactical maneuver by the Central Powers, who wanted the material resources in the Polish areas to be used in their war efforts.

Parallel to this, the Russian authorities, since the very beginning of the war, were also trying to win Polish hearts and minds. Because they turned out to be unwilling even to restore autonomy in Russian Poland, the effects of their attempts remained fairly insignificant.<sup>75</sup>

Among new trends in research on World War I, studies on the attitudes of Poles toward the states that partitioned Poland in eighteenth century should be mentioned. Whereas the deep-rooted myth that with the beginning of the war all nationally conscious Poles started to work for national independence had for long pervaded traditional historiography, nowadays scholars have come to question this consensus, offering new insights into the identity of the Polish population and patterns of behavior.

They show that at the beginning of the war, contrary to long-upheld beliefs, many Poles identified themselves with their states and generally accepted the existing territorial and political order, striving for unification of Polish territory under one ruler. However, it was only during the course of the war that their political attitudes gradually radicalized and Poles isolated themselves from Russia and Austria-Hungary as well as Germany, seeking to build an independent Polish state. Nevertheless, this turned out to be a complicated process, depending on many factors. During the war years, Polish society underwent a thorough transformation, including radicalization and democratization. Different conservative milieus had lost their position and influence to the advantage of the

mass parties, which enjoyed growing support among the lower and middle social strata.<sup>76</sup>

Polish historians' interest still focuses on the activities of Polish emigrants in the Western countries and the attitude of the Western powers and public opinion toward the Polish cause. Traditionally, the Polish milieu abroad actively participated in a political life and endeavored to exert influence on the situation in the Polish areas.<sup>77</sup> During the war, their efforts, besides political activities, concentrated on relief action and collections of money for Polish war victims. These initiatives were promoted and supported by the Catholic Church.<sup>78</sup>

### **Social, Cultural, and Economic History since 1990**

In the last few years, with the imminent centenary of the outbreak of the war, Polish as well as non-Polish scholars have become more interested in researching this conflict, filling in many historiographical gaps. Beyond recent publications already cited above, one can observe an increased interest in Jewish history and the history of the Polish-Jewish relations, particularly during World War I.<sup>79</sup> The authors of these studies show how the economic crisis, pauperization, and changing occupation regimes led to laicization and the political emancipation of Jews in Russian Poland. The growing political aspiration of Jews resulted in tensions with the Polish majority and the rise of anti-Semitism. In these new, dynamic circumstances, many Jews had to find a newly defined national identity. On the other hand, many assimilated Jews demonstrated their Polish patriotism by actively supporting Polish national aspirations. According to Marek Gałęzowski's recent research, for complex reasons a surprisingly large number of Jews joined Polish legions.<sup>80</sup>

The fate of the Polish prisoners of war also became a topic of studies. Contrary to the myth that the former legionaries were badly treated in the camps for internees after 1917, Jan Snopko shows that their plight was not as dramatic as suggested in their interwar collective memory. They had relatively good living conditions, as they were able to receive food supplies provided by the Polish society.<sup>81</sup> We also know a good deal more about the fate of the Polish refugees who in 1915 were evacuated to the internal provinces of the Russian empire.<sup>82</sup>

In research on the Polish peasantry, historians focus mainly on the evolution of their identity and emergence as a conscious and active constituent of the Polish nation. Apart from negative repercussions (devastation, military service, requisition), the prolonged war contributed to the acceleration of the modernization process in the countryside of central Poland. Changes occurred in family life (the strengthening of the posi-

tion of women), in the management of farms, and in attitudes toward other social groups (gentry, Jews). Finally, the education of children became widely regarded as something of value, which resulted in the fast development of the education system after 1915.<sup>83</sup> Concerning another social group, Maciej Górny has published extensively on the role of East European intellectuals during the war and during the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>84</sup> And in his monography on the Greek Catholic Church diocese of Przemyśl, Andrzej Szczupak investigates the complicated and dynamic relations between clergymen, church communities, and Austrian and Russian state authorities.<sup>85</sup>

On the other hand, we also know quite a good deal about the urban history of the war, with a number of studies on bigger cities having been published, focusing mainly on everyday life.<sup>86</sup> On a different register, with a study by Katarzyna Sierakowska, there is now a book featuring a history of emotions approach.<sup>87</sup> This is illustrative of the way young Polish historians who are engaging with World War I are now more and more embracing cultural history methodologies that have emerged in Western historiography in the last decades. Still, quite a few blind spots remain. Take, for instance, gender studies, which—with regard to World War I—still tend to concentrate on political aspects of the women’s movement.<sup>88</sup> However, on balance, one cannot fail to notice that quite a few interesting studies on social issues have been published in the last few years.<sup>89</sup>

Almost *terra incognita* is the economic history of the Polish terrains, 1914–18, not counting chapters in general monographs on the economic history of Poland. In recent years, Tomasz Kargol has tried to fill this gap, concentrating on Galicia’s economic recovery after the liberation from Russian occupation in 1915.<sup>90</sup> The central authorities in Vienna, interested in the fast increase in agricultural production in this province, stimulated this process by preferential credits, subsidies, and material support (machinery, fertilizers, labor force of POWs).<sup>91</sup>

### Occupation Policy Studies

One of the most vibrant areas of recent studies explores the different dimensions of the occupation experience and policy. In that field, Polish historiography has the strongest relation to international historiography, especially the German one. It is in this field of research where the process of internationalization of studies on Poland during World War I is probably the most developed.

The two occupiers faced contradictory challenges in administrative practice in their spheres of Russian Poland, having to win the support of the Polish population while at the same time exploiting the economic

resources of the occupied territories. Even by giving more cultural freedom, judicial powers, an education system, and self-government at a local level, Poles could not be satisfied in the long run. Austro-Hungarians and Germans disagreed on the future of the Polish territories. If the authorities in Vienna were willing to at least discuss the idea of integrating the Russian-Polish territories into Austro-Hungary-Poland, the Germans were not prepared to give up their influence over the conquered territories. The Central Powers were unable to come to an agreement on that issue until the end of the war.

Studies on the policy conducted by the Habsburg Monarchy in occupied Russian Poland were started in Poland by Jan Lewandowski, who analyzed the occupation policy of the Danube Monarchy in Russian Poland after 1915.<sup>92</sup> Recently, economic aspects of occupation policy have been studied by Stephan Lehnstaedt. None of the Central Powers after seizing Russian Poland had a far-reaching plan for economic exploitation. On the one hand, they tried to exploit Polish economic resources (mainly agricultural products) for the support of their war effort, while on the other hand, due to complicated political calculations, they wanted to avoid estranging the Polish population and sought their support.<sup>93</sup> These activities, however, did not alleviate the economic consequences of the war, and the profitability of large landed estates declined. In his latest monography, Lehnstaedt also compares occupation regimes and aims of the Central Powers during World War I with those of the Nazis conducted a generation later, highlighting similarities and dissimilarities of those imperial policies. He heavily insists on the deep discrepancy between short- and long-distance aims of the occupants.<sup>94</sup>

Christian Westerhoff analyzed the workforce policy of the German occupying authorities on the Polish and Lithuanian terrains. In the first phase of the occupation, recruitment of the local labor force was conducted by the German authorities on the basis of free choice, according to the free-market tradition. Later on, they used more compulsory methods to reach their goals.<sup>95</sup>

Everyday life experience in the General Government of Warsaw is presented in the book by Jacek Szczepański. He portrays the interaction between occupied and occupiers, especially beyond the large towns, and presents the detailed process of the collapse of the occupation structure in German-occupied Poland, which disproved the well-rooted myth of a successful, spontaneous disarming of German troops by the Polish populace.<sup>96</sup>

Different aspects of occupation policy of the Russian part of Poland by the Central Powers are analyzed recently by Arkadiusz Stempin,<sup>97</sup> Jesse Kauffman,<sup>98</sup> and Grzegorz Kucharczyk (and his coworkers).<sup>99</sup> Włodzimierz

Mędrzecki's work is also part of this field of research in Polish historiography. The decision by the German authorities for military intervention in the Ukraine in 1918 was made for complex reasons, such as the wish to control the vast, fertile land that could be used to feed the German population at home. In the short term, this intervention turned out to be unfavorable from the point of view of building a really independent Ukrainian state, but in the long term it contributed to the internationalization of the Ukrainian cause.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion

Regarding its commemoration of World War I, Poland focused and still focuses mainly on the regaining of independence, which happened as a result of national determination and the favorable international circumstances. The commemorative discourse and actors obviously changed over the decades. The first turning point was World War II, which overshadowed public memory of the former global conflict and resulted in Poland's subjugation to the Soviet Union. During the Communist domination, commemoration of the war was intentionally marginalized and blurred in favor of the commemoration of the workers' movement. After the fall of Communism and the start of the democratization process in 1989, World War I and more precisely its aftermath regained its place in public memory and official historical policy. It still plays an important part in the Polish national identity.

Until recent years, Polish historiography in the field of World War I studies has concentrated on the war's political and military aspects, delineating the "road map" that led to the reestablishment of Poland, or to put it another way, the state-building process. In the last two or three decades, there has been a rise in interest in World War I studies among Polish historians as well as foreign historians. Parallel to this, a process of departure from the traditional research perspective can be observed, with Polish historians attempting to describe so-far-neglected fields such as the social, cultural, economic, and gender-related aspects of events between 1914 and 1918. However, we still know relatively little about these issues, and much work still needs to be done.

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Chapter 10

## A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TURN

### Evolving Interpretations of Japan during World War I, 1914–2019

*Jan Schmidt and Naoko Shimazu*



Notwithstanding the fact that World War I was a global war, Japan's involvement as one of the Allied powers still manages to surprise quite a few.<sup>1</sup> Popular imageries of the war in the West had left little room for the non-Western theaters of war, as there continued to exist an overwhelming perception that World War I was predominantly a “European War.” Until the surge of scholarly investigations marking the centenary, this was also the dominant interpretation held in Japanese historiography, save for a minority of scholars who thought otherwise. In studies of war, there is a general tendency to privilege the military impact of war on society, especially in terms of economic and human costs. To that end, it is not surprising that World War I for Japan tended to be considered a minor war because of the negligible number of war dead it produced. Hence, the study of World War I and Japan had been largely neglected throughout the twentieth century because of imperatives felt by scholars of having to focus on the larger, and more important, agenda of understanding Japan's role in World War II. Was this scholarly bias justified?

Notably, the 1910s was a tumultuous decade for East Asia, as major societal transformations took place that fundamentally changed the way

East Asian societies came to develop thereafter. Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910, expanding the Japanese colonial empire substantially. This was followed by the Chinese Revolution of 1911 leading to the final collapse of the Qing dynasty, which had been in power since 1644. When such tidal changes occur in societies, they are inevitably followed by a period of intense political fragility and military opportunism. Hence, East Asia lay in a state of flux, with a noticeable power vacuum created by the fall of the Qing. Japan as an aspiring imperial power vied for regional dominance, especially when the war unfolded in Europe in 1914, as the now oft-repeated phrase of Elder Statesman Inoue Kaoru went: the war was in fact a “grace from heaven” (*ten’yū*) for Japan because it represented a great opportunity for expansion. East Asia, therefore, was not at all the backwater to the developments in Europe. Indeed, East Asia was dynamically in motion, the only region in the world where the Western imperial powers could not take for granted their economic and military superiority. Their presence was continually challenged and checked by Japan, which had established itself as a foremost military power after the defeat of Russia in the 1904–5 war. In the region, Japan acted as a principal agency for change whether for good or bad. We need to question more critically the evident lack of connection between what was happening in East Asia (partly caused as a result of belligerent states’ activities) and the global nature of the war taking place. In other words, should we not consider major social transformations occurring in East Asia either as a byproduct of, or stimulated by, the globalized nature of total wars in the twentieth century? Of course, World War I manifested itself differently in East Asia than it did in the Western Front. Still, it would be well worthwhile to consider the impact of the war in a more holistic manner rather than in a compartmentalized fashion, in order to make connections between themes hitherto seen as discrete and unrelated.

Within Japan, too, the 1910s was a decade of social and political innovations, as well as of massive economic growth. The richness of Japanese historiography attests to the undying interests held by the historians of modern Japan to offer multilayered, highly nuanced interpretations of various aspects of contemporary Japanese society. One of the most popular areas of historical enquiry of modern Japan has been the rise of liberal democracy, known as the “Taishō democracy,” as a significant, and countervailing, political movement to challenge the bedrock of political conservatism as represented by the Japanese state.<sup>2</sup> Coupled with this, there is a vibrant literature on the rise of feminist political consciousness through the formation of the “New Woman.” The World War I period also marked a significant shift in demography, as at least half of the Japanese population had migrated into urban centers from rural areas due to

the wartime boom necessitating a substantial increase in labor force in urban areas.

The different geopolitical context in which the events of 1914–18 took place in East Asia necessitates a different approach to the history of World War I in the region. The relative neglect of the 1914–18 period in the earlier historiography of modern Japan was partly caused by the way scholars defined the study of modern warfare. Thomas Burkman’s historiographical essay contains an outline history of Japan’s diplomatic and military participation in the war, with a helpful bibliographic discussion of the literature available primarily in the English language.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, the study of Japan’s involvement in the war has undergone new developments, which can be collectively called a “historiographical turn.” Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce new thinking into both Western (including non-English) and Japanese-language historiographies. To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive assessment of Japanese historiography on the 1910s available, redressing the paucity of the historiographical understanding of Japanese sources and Japanese-language historiography in the English language. The new historiographical turn in World War I studies in Japan promises new challenges and new directions for future research.

### **Mentality toward World War I in Japan**

First and foremost, what is often ignored is the crucial fact that the Japanese had experienced their major modern warfare a decade earlier in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. Granted, the Russo-Japanese War paled in comparison to the ultimate destruction, costs, and impact of World War I on European societies. Nonetheless, if one were to consider the fundamentals of how modern societies fight and respond to total wars, then the Russo-Japanese War stood as the largest war fought to date between two imperial powers. Moreover, it was not a colonial war. Hence, the Japanese had already lost their “innocence” so to speak before the advent of “August 1914” in Europe. Seeing from this light, it is not surprising that Japanese experiences during World War I turned out to be qualitatively different in many respects from other belligerent states.

For Japan, wars were fought on regular intervals since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Before the Russo-Japanese War, Japan fought the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 (which begets Taiwan for Japan) and the Boxer Uprising of 1900, when Japan famously or infamously sided with the Western powers against the Boxer rebels. In any case, the frequency of

warfare and accompanying social, economic, and human demands made on the Japanese people by the Meiji state meant that by the time of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–5, a sense of war-weariness pervaded in society at large, and this contrasted sharply with the upbeat patriotism of officialdom and the profiteering commercial sector.

Let us go back to the point about the significant departure of experiences of the Japanese from the Western belligerent powers during World War I. In the 1904–5 war, Japanese society underwent the gamut of military, economic, social, and cultural experiences that became the hallmark of shared experiences of modern societies at war, albeit at a quantitatively smaller level. Hence, the Russo-Japanese War became the principal reference point for the Japanese in dealing with major issues pertaining to state-society relations in wartime societies, including the commemoration of the war dead, the linking of the military to grassroots organizations, and the emerging role of the media as the key intermediary between state and society, for instance.<sup>4</sup> Also a notable feature of the Russo-Japanese War was the fact that it was a highly visualized war, through war photography, triptych brocade prints (known as the Japanese prints), picture postcards, war films, and graphic magazines, to name a few.<sup>5</sup> Many iconographies of modern wars were created in 1904–5, such as the early form of trench warfare, which later became the iconic visual representation of World War I.<sup>6</sup> Hence, Japanese society already possessed a rich repertoire of visual, emotive, cultural, and martial vocabulary to express a wide range of war experiences. As a seasoned belligerent, therefore, Japan approached World War I with an air of knowingness as well as some detachment. And, the people on their part were certainly not overjoyed with the prospect of yet another war.

Having said that, the Japanese military watched the war unfold in distant Europe with great interest. As this represents one of the major areas of research propelling the new historiographical turn, it suffices to note here that the Japanese were extremely keen to observe, analyze, and draw lessons from the European theaters of war. World War I stood as a laboratory of new military technology and martial ideas, in the same way that the Russo-Japanese War had been analyzed by Western military observers a decade before.<sup>7</sup> Arguably, the Japanese military knew what to look for, seeing that they had been reflecting on their lessons from the Russo-Japanese War. And, with the combined experiences of having fought short military campaigns against the Germans in the East, and of having thoroughly studied the war as a belligerent-observer in Europe, the Japanese gained new insights into how to fight total war from the European experiences, putting them to “good use” and learning from their effects in the interwar period.

## Studies of World War I in the Interwar Era

Before we start our historiographical journey in the interwar era, it would be helpful for us to gain an even cursory understanding of the attitudes of Japanese contemporaries toward the war. Japanese intellectuals felt that the war, even though remote and marginal to Japanese society, needed to be explained to the general public as a significant global event. Yoshino Sakuzō, one of the leaders of the “Taishō democracy,”<sup>8</sup> attempted to explain the war as the outcome of a complex web of intra-European politics in his 1915 publication, *Ōshū dōran shiron* (Historical deliberations on the European upheaval).<sup>9</sup> Yoshino’s perspective underlined Japanese society’s general tendency to regard the war as a “European War.” Moreover, the Taishō liberals remained largely uncritical of Japan’s aggressive expansionistic maneuverings abroad, as exemplified by their support of the Twenty-One Demands of 1915. What characterized their attitude was the dictum, “constitutionalism inside, imperialism outside.”<sup>10</sup> Notably, Ishibashi Tanzan, a progressive liberal, remained a rare exception to this norm, as he pointed out the hypocrisy of mainstream liberals such as Yoshino.<sup>11</sup>

A striking feature about the first phase of writings on World War I in the immediate post-1918 period is that many appeared as “histories” rather than as political or social writings about the war. This implies that there was an awareness in Japan of the historicity of the war. There was awareness among some in Japan that its entry into war as a major Asian power had transformed the war into a truly “world war”—*sekai taisen*. Not surprisingly, many publishers sought to capitalize on popular interest, by hastily publishing survey “war histories” in early 1919. Those who benefitted from this publishing wave included some professional historians, such as the medievalist Hara Katsurō with his *Sekai taisen-shi* (A history of the World War) in 1921.<sup>12</sup> Mitsukuri Genpachi’s 1918 *Shigan ni eizuru sekai taisen* (The World War seen from a historical viewpoint), followed one year later by his two-volume *1914nen—1918nen sekai taisen-shi* (History of the world war, 1914–1918), gave a substantial analysis of the origins of the war.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, many such war histories provided a descriptive outline of events (mostly military), an analysis of the origins of the war—in a sense not too dissimilar to popular writings of the war in the West. Relatively few academic histories of the war appeared in this period, mainly because of the absence of contemporary history as an established academic discipline in Japan. One common thread emerging from diverse writings of the war in this period was the heightened sense of awareness that World War I had, indeed, heralded a new epoch in the history of mankind.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, apart from the few exceptions mentioned above, the general trend in the 1920s was that the war became consigned largely to professional military and administrative studies. For instance, social scientists researched topics on the home front such as new welfare measures introduced in European belligerent countries and in the US during and immediately after the war. The most comprehensive study of the war was undertaken by Ishida Yasumasa, resulting in his multivolume *Ōshū taisen-shi no kenkyū* (Studies on the history of the European great war) (1937–40), which he wrote for the army, and which was subsequently used regularly as educational material for the military elite.<sup>15</sup>

It was the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident in September 1931 that brings about a sea change in the depictions of war in popular culture in the interwar era. However, it was the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 rather than World War I that featured prominently in these popular cultural depictions, such as popular publications, films, and exhibitions, especially around anniversaries of the Navy Day and the Army Day, both commemorating the landmark victories of the 1904–5 campaign. What is striking about this period is that while Japanese experiences of the Russo-Japanese War became increasingly popularized and integrated into popular cultural memory, World War I became a focus of academic and professional interest by Japanese specialists in the military and related fields.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the two modern wars fought by Japan in the first two decades of the twentieth-century began to take on markedly different roles in post-World War I Japanese society: one used as an adhesive, and emotive, agent to integrate war and society into a coherent national narrative (1904–5 war), while the other used primarily as a repository of specialized knowledge to prepare Japan for a future total war (1914–18 war).

## Post-1945 Trends

Post-1945 Japanese society produced a wealth of Japanese historiography, including those that dealt with Japan's wartime years of 1914–18. In the main, there were three discernible, and salient, historiographical themes that emerge on the World War I period: the Marxist historiography and their treatment of World War I; the "Taishō democracy" as a historical theme; and the history of foreign policy and its treatment of World War I.

To many, the first three decades of the post-1945 era was the golden age of Marxist historiography in Japanese academia. It reclaimed World War I as a significant factor in its interpretation of prewar Japan. In their groundbreaking work of 1955, Tōyama Shigeki, Imai Seiichi, and

Fujiwara Akira placed the 1914–18 war as the starting point for their *Shōwa-shi* (A history of the Shōwa period). As an indication of how novel it was for historians to consider World War I as a topic worthy of serious historical investigation, their inclusion of a chapter on “Japan after the First World War” in the 1959 edition became a topic of controversy in itself.<sup>17</sup> They argued that though the war acted as an economic catalyst, “monopoly capitalism” triggered a highly aggressive imperialistic maneuvering against China. Moreover, the development of capitalism in Japan faced an impasse during the war, as demonstrated by the Rice Riots of 1918. These were central to the argument expounded by Japanese Marxist historians—either that the war acted as an economic midwife for monopoly capitalism, in helping to push industrialization to its last decisive phase through an intensive development of heavy industries during the war, or that the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Rice Riots of 1918 indicated the beginning of the decline of monopoly capitalism. Not only that, anti-imperialist forces emerged in 1919 as represented by the March 1st Movement in Korea, and the May 4th Movement in China. Possibly the only linguistic legacy of the war still in use in public discourse to this day is the term *narikin*, the nouveau-riche, who made their fortunes from the wartime boom (1915–19). Survey histories of modern Japan written in the 1960s and 1970s often referred to the war years as the “era of the *narikin*.” Needless to say, this line of research laid an important foundation for subsequent research on the economic and social history of the 1910s and early 1920s.<sup>18</sup> In any case, World War I, especially its last phase, came to be regarded as a turning point in the history of modern Japan, at least in Marxist historiography. The pervasive strength of the Marxist paradigm in the first three decades of the post-1945 era cannot be overemphasized, nor can their long-lasting legacy on generations of historians in postwar Japan.

Another major theme in postwar Japanese historiography concerning the treatment of World War I is the “Taishō democracy.” Strictly speaking, Taishō refers to the reign of Emperor Yoshihito, whose reign started in 1912 and ended with his death in 1926. From the 1950s, historians such as Shinobu Seizaburō started to use the term “the Taishō democracy” to refer to a larger chronological period consisting of the first three decades of the twentieth century. In the immediate aftermath of the Japanese defeat in 1945, it became important for historians and political scientists to seek a historical precedent that would legitimize the reintroduction of democracy in postwar Japan. They were particularly wary of the possible conservative backlash after the end of the Allied occupation in 1952. In some sense, this was akin to what had happened in postwar West Ger-

many, where there emerged a renewed interest in the Weimar Republic. In both societies, there was a strong urge to explain “why it all went terribly wrong” in the prewar period, ending with the catastrophic World War II. While at the same time, they sought new role models for future development of their societies. Thus, the Taishō period was emphasized for its democratic reforms and social and intellectual movements.

Nevertheless, the relationship between World War I and the Taishō democracy was tenuous to say the least, as many scholars preferred to remark somewhat tangentially that the war had brought about a change in international sentiment that fostered democratic tendencies. More than most, Mitani Taichirō situated the Taishō democracy in the global context of Wilsonian liberalism.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, historians claimed that the war had forced even the most conservative Japanese leaders to “keep up with the trends of the time” and allow limited steps toward increased popular political participation, as in the treatment of the rise of party politics with the election of Prime Minister Hara Kei in 1918. For scholars whose research focused on the “ordinary people” (*minshū*) at the grassroots level, their findings demonstrated how ambivalent the subcurrents of the “Taishō democracy” were and how much the lower strata of Japanese society not only accepted but at times preferred autocratic rule and aggressive imperialism abroad. More recently, Andrew Gordon’s notion of “imperial democracy” posited a new argument altogether, challenging the elite-led focus of the Taishō democracy.<sup>20</sup> Others vouched for a particular “Taishō culture” when social movements and cultural dynamics challenged the state-centered approach of the late Meiji period. Even in discussions of the wartime economic boom being an important catalyst in promoting cultural development in Japanese society, the agency remained resolutely the middle classes and the elite. Ultimately, the “Taishō democracy” historiography was not without its critics. Ideals for “reform” (*kaizō*) from that era were fundamentally not too different from those voiced by radical “reform” bureaucrats who used “reform” to imply changes that should be made to the state, by increasing the power of the emperor and supporting aggressively expansionistic policies.<sup>21</sup> In sum, however, most scholars interested in the Taishō democracy did not consider World War I as a significant factor in their analyses, almost mirroring the popularly held contemporary perception that World War I had been “a fire on the other side of the river.”

The third thematic strand is diplomatic history. Here we also see signs of conflict between two factions. Some historians wanted to prove that Japan’s aggression toward China started very early as a ruthless opportunism while European powers were preoccupied with fighting each other.

Then there were others who wanted to show that Japan was simply acting in line with the prevailing great power mentality and that the United States was similarly opportunistic in Asia-Pacific affairs. Until the 1980s, there was a contest between, on the one hand, Marxist-oriented historians and those largely interested in explaining indigenous roots of Japanese aggression from 1931 onward and, on the other hand, those who supported a supposedly more “balanced” and “non-masochistic” view of the processes that led to the end of the Japanese Empire, sometimes on a thinly disguised apologetic mission. Main topics involving World War I centered on Japan’s participation, namely Japan’s entry into the war, the Twenty-One Demands of 1915, the Ishii-Lansing Agreement of 1917, the Siberian Intervention, and the Paris Peace Conference. Another subfield of research was the “Versailles-Washington System” of the interwar period.<sup>22</sup> Basically, Japan was thought to be “sandwiched” between the “Versailles System,” premised on the collective new international order of the League of Nations, and the “Washington System,” which was the *de facto* international order in East Asia and the Pacific based on the Washington Conferences of 1921–22. These “systems” locked Japan separately into the two new postwar international orders.

In general, most studies of the history of Japanese foreign policy of the period focused on the end of the war, with three key issues in mind: the impact of the Russian Revolution (including Japan’s involvement in the Siberian Intervention), the Paris Peace Conference, and the Washington Conferences.<sup>23</sup> Marxist-oriented historians argued that the Japanese bourgeoisie and elites used the outbreak of the war in 1914 as a “grace from heaven” on the pretext of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, with a view intentionally of enlarging Japan’s sphere of influence in East Asia as seen in the Twenty-One Demands and the Siberian Intervention.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, Hosoya Chihiro’s oeuvres stand out for offering a more positivist interpretation on topics ranging from the Siberian Intervention, to the Russian Revolution, and to the “Washington System.”<sup>25</sup> Another notable work is Kitaoka Shin’ichi’s 1978 work on the Japanese army as a diplomatic actor particularly with regards to China.<sup>26</sup> Japanese historians did not get to acquaint themselves with Thomas Burkman’s 1975 doctoral dissertation on the Paris Peace Conference and Japan, until his *Japan and the League of Nations* appeared in 2008.<sup>27</sup> Frederick Dickinson’s 1999 monograph, the first book-length treatment of Japan in World War I after 1945 in English, is a well-considered political history, showing the reciprocity of foreign and domestic politics.<sup>28</sup> His work is built on the rich groundwork of high politics in Japanese scholarship, focusing on the conflict between the Meiji oligarchs and a younger generation of politicians such as Katō Takaaki and Hara Takashi.

## Post-1989 Developments

With the notable exception of Marxist historiography and the history of foreign relations, we have thus far argued that World War I generally did not play a major role in the periodization of Japan's modern history. Since the 1990s, however, there emerged a new trend that recognized World War I as a backdrop that triggered a number of significant changes in Japanese society. An early glimpse of this new trend can be seen in the aforementioned Mitani's *Taishō democracy* work, which he revised in 1995 in order to redress the perceived imbalance of his 1975 edition, in which he had underestimated the influence of the war of 1914–18 on Yoshino Sakuzō and other liberal intellectuals.<sup>29</sup>

Not surprisingly, military history was the field most profoundly affected by implications of World War I. Military historians felt the need to explain why the military came to dominate society and politics in the 1930s, and in so doing, the concept of “general mobilization of the nation” became a central issue.<sup>30</sup> In the late 1970s and early 1980s, research focused on the reception of World War I by the Japanese military, as seen in Yoshida Yutaka's work on the Imperial Army and, likewise, Saitō Seiji's work on the navy.<sup>31</sup> Their findings show that many of the chief architects of Japanese military strategies of World War II, such as Nagata Tetsuzan and Ishiwara Kanji, recognized the importance of integrating economics and society to fight a new type of total war. These officers participated in the public sphere and opined that the military ought to be given increased prerogative to control the economy in wartime.

In the 1990s and 2000s, further studies probed the exact nature of World War I studies made by the army and navy, suggesting that these studies affected the institutional confidence of the army in its drive to assert political power.<sup>32</sup> Kurosawa Fumitaka's seminal work illuminated the significance of wartime research reports (some 130 of them produced) made by Imperial Army officers and distributed widely to nonmilitary policymaking circles.<sup>33</sup> These reports concluded the following: first, preparation for total war needed to begin during peacetime; and second, the Japanese empire had to secure sources of strategic war materiel (hence the Imperial Army's bid for hegemony over northeast China, leading to the Manchurian Incident in September 1931). Kurono Taeru argued that the United States and China replaced Russia as the top two possible future enemies after 1918.<sup>34</sup> Although Michael Barnhart introduced some of the aforementioned research of the 1970s and 1980s, these recent research findings remain generally unknown to the Western readership.<sup>35</sup>

Considerable interest shown by the Japanese military and civilian bureaucracy (including academics) in the organizational learning for the

preparation of total war led to the elaboration of the notional paradigm of a “second modernity” by Japanese sociologists, political scientists, and historians. “Second modernity” originated from the two terms used in Japanese for “modern” or “modernity,” namely *kindai* and *gendai*. Yasuda Hiroshi among others argued that the dramatically accelerated urban growth of the 1910s–20s resulted in a significant rise in mass production and, correspondingly, mass consumption in the United States and Japan.<sup>36</sup> Building on this work, other scholars such as Yamanouchi Yasushi argued that results of the lessons from wartime societies of World War I can be witnessed in wartime Japanese society during World War II. For Yamanouchi, World War II was pivotal in changing a class-based society into a “system society” in the United States, Japan, and Germany.<sup>37</sup> Hence a new term, *gendai*, the contemporary period as “second modernity”, was coined to connect wartime societies of World War II to their post-1945 societies, as distinct from the classical “modernity” (*kindai*) that saw its origins in the second half of the nineteenth century. References to the consequences of the war on social politics were made by Sheldon Garon in his seminal study of the Japanese state. Garon also argued that Japanese observations of European women’s wartime mobilization on the home front had the effect of influencing the Japanese state’s attitude toward women’s political involvement in the interwar period.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the idea that World War I had contributed to fostering “modern culture” in Japan became commonplace.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, World War I is claiming an increasingly central role as an important period in its own right.<sup>40</sup> In the history of ideas, Sawada Jirō’s research on Tokutomi Sohō, a highly influential publisher and public intellectual, reveals Tokutomi’s views of the United States during the war years.<sup>41</sup> In English-language writing, Dick Stegewerns is noteworthy for his claim that World War I signified a major turning point in Japanese political history.<sup>42</sup> Connected with the recent rise in multidisciplinary approaches to the study of empire, economic, political, and cultural influences of the war on East Asia are becoming more evident in many recent publications.<sup>43</sup> It has now become commonplace to situate traditional national and regional history within the broader framework of the war’s global consequences.<sup>44</sup>

## Centenary Years

In the lead-up to the centenary of World War I, we witness a major historiographical leap in Japanese scholarship. In 2011, Yamamuro Shin’ichi challenged the historical profession with his *Fukugō sensō to sōryokusen no*

*dansō: Nihon ni totte no dai-ichiji sekai taisen* (The gap between the “composite war” and total war: The First World War for Japan), postulating the thesis that World War I represented a complex “composite war” (*fukugō sensō*) for Japan, combining elements of two military conflicts (as per the “German-Japanese War” and the “Siberian War”) as well as two diplomatic conflicts, one against China and another against the United States. He argues that it was this combination of the complex “composite war,” paralleled by the total war fought in Europe, that gave a particular meaning to Japan’s World War I experiences.<sup>45</sup>

Yamamuro, together with the historian of modern music Okada Akeo and the historian of modern Britain and Ireland Koseki Takashi, led a major research project, “The First World War: A Trans-Disciplinary Study,” at the Institute for Research in Humanities at Kyoto University from 2007 to 2015, holding more than one hundred seminars. Its aim was to provide a comprehensive reevaluation of the field in Japanese historiography. Of note, the project published eleven monographs in a new series, “Lectures: Thinking about the First World War,” targeting the general readership. In 2014, Iwanami Shoten published a series of four edited volumes on World War I that changed the historiographical landscape of Japanese scholarship. *Dai-ichiji sekai taisen: Gendai no kiten* (World War I: the origin of the contemporary period) contains: volume 1 *Sekai Sensō* (World War), volume 2 *Sōryokusen* (Total War), volume 3 *Seishin no hen’yō* (Mental Changes), and volume 4 *Isan* (Legacies). This comprehensive, and multifaceted, approach to World War I studies, so well established in Western language scholarship, is new to Japanese historiography. For historians outside of Japan, what may be of particular interest is the underlying thesis on the “second modernity,” a “late[r] modernity and its global birth process” that was galvanized by the war. In all this, Japan and its empire are linked into a complex web of interconnections and flows, of ruptures and continuities, of relativization and generalization—staking out emphatically that World War I did constitute an indivisible part of Japan’s twentieth-century history. Some of the new themes covered are Korean wartime colonial experiences (Yi); post-1918 visions in wartime society and their impact on politics (Schmidt); Japanese Red Cross nurses in Britain, France, and Russia (Araki); and experiences of Japanese military observers in Europe (Katayama).<sup>46</sup> Yamamuro’s widely cited essay on “The First World War in East Asian History—A view from Japan” for the journal *Shisō* (Thought) exemplifies the fruitful approach of the research project.<sup>47</sup> It argues that regional developments, such as the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese Wars and the Xinhai Revolution of 1911–12 in China, as well as the underlying socioeconomic developments, all converged with global “shockwaves” produced by the world war and had

the effect of transforming foundationally the regional order. In turn, this transformation gave birth to a new conception of the world, as intellectuals began to debate on “reconstruction” and “reform,” which allowed for some internationalist leanings, yet at the same time projected the sense of widespread disillusionment with the Western model of modernity.

Otherwise, scholars in Japan and abroad have contributed to the historiography with some original research on Japan’s war experiences. Of particular note, Kobayashi Hiroharu’s monograph *Sōryokusen to demokurashī: Dai-ichiji sekai taisen—Shiberia kanshō sensō* (Total war and democracy: The First World War—The Siberian intervention war) demonstrates through a close examination of an illustrated war magazine, *Ōshū sensō jikki*<sup>48</sup> (1914–17) that the war had been clearly categorized as a “total war” with global dimensions. He questions why the war did not lead to increased pacifism in Japan, as we see no Japanese version of Romain Rolland. His book is significant, in spite of its somewhat simplistic argument, because Kobayashi was the first to consider possible cultural influences of World War I on Japanese society.<sup>49</sup>

Japanese historians continued to produce new research in the lead-up to the centenary, with further new perspectives on the theme of Japanese experiences of the war. Nakayama Hiroaki’s interest lies with the notion of a “shadow” of the war,” as reflected in Japanese literature.<sup>50</sup> Previous to his work, Katayama Morihide was possibly the only one who had made a serious effort to examine the effects of war on Japanese literature.<sup>51</sup> Nakayama introduces a complex idea of “influence” and literature through his examination of a wide range of genres, including writings by pundits, war correspondents, poets, and “culturologists” with their new ideas about “Japanese culture,” not to mention other modes of cultural production, such as popular oral performances like *kōdan* (a genre of oral storytelling), revealing popular Japanese fascination with Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*. In Nakayama’s second monograph, *Senkanki no “Yoake mae”*: *Genshō toshite no sekai taisen* (“Before the dawn” in the interwar period: World war as a phenomenon), he examined the history of Shimazaki Tōson’s key work *Yoake mae* (Before the Dawn), serialized between 1929 and 1935, to illustrate how modern Japanese literature had been changed by the experiences of World War I. In all, Nakayama suggests introducing the “interwar” period between the two world wars also for the study of Japanese literature.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, an entirely different approach was taken by a team of researchers led by Tamai Kiyoshi at Keio University. Since 2006, his team has been systematically compiling a media source collection on various “media events” in the modern history of Japan, including World War I. Although their findings show that there was a healthy public

sphere in wartime Japan,<sup>53</sup> these only helped to confirm an earlier monograph study of the Japanese participation at the Paris Peace Conference by Shimazu published in 1998. Her work still stands as the only comprehensive scholarly treatment of the subject to date, as it is innovative in illuminating the intimate connections between diplomacy and national politics (including public opinion)—the two fields of historical enquiry that had hitherto been treated more often separately—in examining the racial equality proposal raised by the Japanese delegation at Paris in 1919. Moreover, the study highlights Japan’s role in highlighting “racial equality” as a universal principle of justice in twentieth-century international relations.<sup>54</sup>

The centenary also brought major revisions for rather classical topics associated with Japan during World War I. Naraoka Sōchi, a leading scholar in the field, published a major monograph on the Twenty-One Demands, which had been presented by the Japanese government to China in the spring of 1915.<sup>55</sup> His work enhances our understanding of the political history of the Twenty-One Demands, especially in probing further the infamous “Fifth Group” of the Demands. By drawing on an immense body of hitherto untapped Japanese and British sources, Naraoka offers a more nuanced understanding of the Japanese goals and tactics during the negotiations: he situates the run-up to the Twenty-One Demands in the larger diplomatic and national political context. In so doing, he reconsiders the dynamics of public opinion as well as the mentalities and practices of those involved.<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, Kubota Yūji, in his monograph on *Taichū shakkan no seiji keizaiishi: “Kaihatsu” kara 21kajō yōkyū e* (A political-economic history of the loans to China: From “development” to the 21 Demands) situates the Nishihara Loans of 1917 in the larger context of the history of Japan’s loans to China in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>57</sup> The Nishihara Loans had long been described by Marxist scholars as *locus classicus* for the aggressively expansionist consequences of monopolistic capitalism of the war years. Kubota provides a balanced analysis of two major forces: on the one hand, how political actors differed in their approach on the economic policy toward China; on the other hand, how they added complexity by demonstrating how indivisible the business world had been to the political decision to extend the loans, through a detailed study of the powerful business networks represented by the Tokyo and Osaka Chambers of Commerce. Of note, Naraoka and Kubota both emphasize the long-term consequences of a widespread consensus among Japanese political, military, and economic elites in prioritizing the protection of the interests of the Japanese Empire especially in Northeast China.

In his *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919–1930*, Frederick Dickinson criticizes the tendency to explain the influence of the World War I years as leaving a problematic heritage that haunted the interwar period, for instance, via the rather aggressive policy toward China and the origins of the “total war” planning.<sup>58</sup> Dickinson is more interested in situating Japan in the larger picture of global modernity of the 1920s. As he stated elsewhere, he emphasized the “potential of non-Western perspectives for a new appreciation of the importance” of World War I and its global consequences in order to comprehend transnational phenomena in general.<sup>59</sup> Hence, he depicts the impact of transnational developments of the 1920s, such as internationalism, new democratic tendencies, a disarmament movement, and a “culture of peace.”

In 2013, Jan Schmidt’s research demonstrated that perceptions of the war in Japanese media were much wider in scope and more profound in their implications than previously thought.<sup>60</sup> The war remained a constant topic in the public sphere, albeit with its focus shifting from initial excitement over military campaigns to dealing with broader discussions on effects of mobilization on wartime societies. Thus, the war was not only “consumed” as a remote media event, but its long duration also led to the opening up of a discursive space where ideas about visions of Japan’s future were debated. What emerged was a complex discourse on “postwar” (*sengo*) possibilities for Japanese society. Schmidt also emphasized the long-lasting influences of the wide-ranging studies on the war elaborated by the Japanese military, the bureaucracy, academics, and the business world on Japanese society and politics in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>61</sup>

The centenary has led to the publication of a number of edited volumes, such as Tosh Minohara, Tze-ki Hon, and Evan Dawley’s *The Decade of the Great War: Japan in the Wider World in the 1910s* (2014), Oliviero Frattolillo and Antony Best’s *Japan and the Great War* (2015), Matthias Zachmann’s *Asia after Versailles: Asian Perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and the Interwar Order, 1919–33* (2017), and Jan Schmidt and Katja Schmidtpott’s *The East Asian Dimension of the First World War: Global Entanglements and Japan, China and Korea, 1914–1919* (2020). All these volumes showcase a wide array of articles on the impact of the war on Japan and East Asia, and the role of the Japanese Empire in it.<sup>62</sup> A major achievement is to introduce works of many East Asian scholars that have heretofore rarely been available in English. With all the new research findings, therefore, it would no longer be viable to argue that Japan was a mere bystander, whose wartime motives were predominantly ruled by economic and territorial ambitions, without understanding the significance of the war as a total war. The strengths of this new generation of scholarship lie with the ability to demonstrate the underlying plurality

of Japanese society through an examination of a wide range of attitudes toward the war, held by the Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans as political, military, bureaucratic, economic, and cultural elites, whose views were distributed via the mass media to a wider audience, including the use of visual media. It also became clear that Japanese society of the 1920s was highly pluralistic, and that many different lessons from the war were being learned and integrated into postwar society, ranging from city planning, public hygiene, military mobilization planning, and taxation. On a more macro level, societal expectations for the future and visions for a regional order had also been altered considerably through the new literature in the field.

Until the 2000s, there was very little scholarly interest outside of Germany on the experiences of the German captives in Japan during the 1914–18 years. The exception was Tomita Hiroshi's pioneering work published in 1991 on the prisoner-of-war camp in Bandō.<sup>63</sup> Tomita's work attracted attention because it had cast the Japanese wardenship of the German POWs in 1914–18 in a positive light, contrasting sharply with the strongly negative images of the experiences from World War II. In October 2003, a new research group called the Chintaosen Doitsuhei Furyo Kenkyūkai (The battle of Qingdao German prisoners of war research association), which consisted of historians mostly based in the Inland Sea area of Tokushima, Ehime, Hiroshima Prefectures, started publishing a periodical titled *Chintaosen doitsuhei furyo shūyōjo kenkyū* (The battle of Qingdao German prisoner of war camps research) on the experiences of the German captives in the regionally based POW camps. The Naruto German House (*Naruto Doitsu-kan*) has been taking a leading role in the creation of the periodical, and its director, Tamura Ichirō, was an active member of this association. The German House contains an archive of German-Japanese relations, mostly centering on the World War I days and the Bandō POW camp situated in the present-day city of Naruto.<sup>64</sup> Their research profile grew in parallel to the increasing local interest on the centenary of the Russo-Japanese War in 2005–6, when many local historians took to the task of compiling local historical records, including those of the Russian prisoners of war in the POW camps that were dotted around Japan. This periodical fast became a forum for providing a more complex understanding of the Japanese experiences of the German captives, mostly by painstakingly unearthing locally available empirical sources. Because of the importance of the German House as a focal point for German-Japan relations, the association has had an internationalist outlook from the onset, acting as a conduit for German descendants of the POWs to exchange information with the Japanese researchers.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, works of German local historians have been translated into

Japanese, as well as those of international academic historians, such as Mahon Murphy's article on the subject.<sup>66</sup> The German House has also collaborated with the German Institute of Japanese Studies (DIJ) in Tokyo. The DIJ's online resources, which is available at <http://bando.dijtokyo.org/>, features as its central source *Die Barracke* (The barrack), an in-camp publication by the captives in the most famous POW camp in the city of Naruto, Tokushima.<sup>67</sup> This is a significant source that enables a comparative study of German World War I captives.

What is noteworthy about the Bandō POW camp is its surprisingly successful afterlife in popular imagination, when it was reincarnated as a commercial film, *Baruto no gakuen* (Ode an die Freude/The ode to joy), in 2006.<sup>68</sup> In fact, most of the published works on the German captives' experiences in Japan center on the Bandō camp.<sup>69</sup> Ōtsuru Atsushi's detailed study of the Aonohara Camp (Aichi Prefecture), offers a much-needed insight into the camp that held the largest number of Austro-Hungarians, mostly from the sunken cruiser *Kaiserin Elisabeth*.<sup>70</sup> Takahashi Terukazu, a member of the abovementioned research association, published a full-length study of the POW camp in Marugame in 2014.<sup>71</sup> Most German captives in Japan came from the German concession in Qingdao and, hence, had some prior experience of living in East Asia as colonial expatriates. No doubt, this had an impact on the mentality of the captives as their familiarity with East Asia might have made them more adaptable to being held in Japan. In her study, Shimazu notes that the experiences of German captives in Japanese POW camps offer a helpful comparative perspective on the global network of German captives during World War I. The Japanese experiences could be usefully compared with the European experiences of German captives. Moreover, the Japanese experiences of dealing with the Russian POWs in the Russo-Japanese War provides an important precursor to the captivity experiences of World War I, in so many different ways.<sup>72</sup>

The field is still underdeveloped when it comes to the experiences of Japanese captivity in Germany or in other territories of the Central Powers. An exception is the recent publication by Naraoka Sōchi who offers a rare, and valuable, insight into the Japanese civilians detained in Germany in the first few months of the war until they were released to be repatriated back to Japan. Japan did not intern German and Austrian-Hungarian civilians throughout the war. His work includes the diary of a medical doctor, Uemura Hisakiyo, who had been studying in Prague but had the misfortune to make a trip to Freiburg on the eve of the war.<sup>73</sup>

Having experienced the centenary of the Paris Peace Conference in 2019, our endeavor to introduce to a Western readership the key trends in the Japanese-language World War I historiography has not yet come to its

completion. Most recently, a new transnational perspective revealed the role of a Catholic network of diplomacy at the peace conference, in which a Japanese delegate played a pivotal role, underlining a scholarly trend toward integrating Japan more centrally into global history narratives of the war and peace.<sup>74</sup> No doubt, new research will continue to emerge on the peace conference in the near future triggered by the centenary.

## Conclusions

Historiography is a product of its time. As we have seen from the Japanese case, the dominance of the Marxist tradition in the first three decades of the postwar Japanese intellectual establishment has influenced the postwar historiographical trajectory to a substantial degree. Having said this, we have also seen the strength of the “independents” who have relentlessly pursued empirically based research on the 1914–18 period, mostly in diplomatic history until the end of the 1980s. From the 1990s, we began to detect a general shift in the intellectual climate, including the treatment of Japan’s role in World War I. These changes are no doubt reflections of complex changes affecting not only Japan (such as Emperor Showa’s death in 1989) but also international society at large (such as the demise of the Cold War).

Another point worthy of note is that the occasion of the centenary has acted as a significant “bridging” opportunity between Japanese history and Western history in Japanese academia. Symbolic of this major new trend has been the major research project of the Kyoto University under Yamamuro Shin’ichi. This is a directional change that promises to influence future thinking on global history in Japan. Moreover, this internal “globalization” of the historical profession would hopefully result in increased “internationalization” of Japanese-language historians by incorporating research findings of non-Japanese historians of Japan into their thinking, for instance.

What is striking is the new sense of urgency felt generally by scholars that World War I needs to be considered seriously as a global war. As we have seen, this is true both for Japanese historiography as well as for Western historiography. The new historiographical turn in Japan reflects the current trend in the globalization of histories. Indeed, this historiographical volume is a case in point for this new underlying trend, to be better connected with global World War I historiography. While we write new histories of the war, we must continue to push intellectual boundaries in order to come up with new methodological insights on how to write new global histories of the first truly global war.

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## Notes

1. Japanese names will appear with the family name followed by the given name, unless otherwise stated in non-Japanese-language publications.
2. On “Taishō democracy” (according to this interpretation, Taishō meaning roughly 1905 to 1931), the classic work is by Mitani Taichirō, *Taishō demokurashī-ron: Yoshino Sakuzō no jidai to sono go* [On Taishō democracy. The era of Yoshino Sakuzō and its aftermath] (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1974). In English, Andrew Gordon offers a compelling analysis albeit with a different emphasis, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).
3. Thomas W. Burkman, “Japan,” in *Researching World War I: A Handbook*, ed. Dennis E. Showater and D. S. Higham (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 293–313.
4. See Naoko Shimazu, *Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
5. There is a rich literature on this: for instance, Frederic Sharf, Anne Nishimura Morse, and Sebastian Dobson, *A Much Recorded War: The Russo-Japanese War in History and Imagery* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2005).
6. The Photographic Department of the Imperial Army Headquarters, ed., *The Russo-Japanese War* (Tokyo: K. Ogawa, 1906).
7. For example, Olivier Cosson, *Préparer la Grande Guerre: L’Armée Française and la Guerre Russo-Japonaise (1899–1914)* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2013).
8. The term “Taishō” is a reign name given to Emperor Taishō’s reign (1912–26). Although the Taishō democracy can be interpreted very widely, in the context of intro-

- ducing Yoshino's political thoughts, it can be defined as a liberal democratic movement calling for suffrage reform.
9. Yoshino Sakuzō, *Ōshū dōran shiron* [Historical deliberations on the European upheaval] (Tōkyō: Keisei-sha shoten, 1915). In 1916, targeting a broader readership, he published an updated and abbreviated version under the title *Ōshū taisen* (The European great war) (Tōkyō: Min'yūsha) that appeared in the very successful series *Gendai sōsho* (Contemporary library). See also Yoshino Sakuzō, *Senzen no Ōshū* [Prewar Europe] (Tōkyō: Banda shobō, 1917); Matsuuchi Reiyō, *Sekai taisen-shi* [History of the Great World War] (Tōkyō: Shiseidō shoten, 1914), the latter book acknowledging that the war was indeed a “world war” and therefore of great historical importance. But these monographs were written in haste and belonged more to popular writing outside of academia.
  10. Kisaka Jun'ichirō, “Taishō-ki minponshugisha no kokusai ninshiki” [The international consciousness of Taishō period proponents of “people-based politics”], *Kokusai seiji* 51 (1974): 59–86.
  11. Ibid.; Okamoto Shumpei, “Ishibashi Tanzan and the Twenty-One Demands,” in *Meiji Japan: Political, Economic and Social History, 1868–1912*, ed. Peter Kornicki (London: Routledge, 1998), 243–54.
  12. Hara Katsurō, *Sekai taisen-shi* (Tōkyō: Dōbunkan, 1925).
  13. Mitsukuri Genpachi, *Shigan ni eizuru sekai taisen* (Tōkyō: Hakubunkan, 1918), and Mitsukuri Genpachi, *1914nen–1918nen sekai taisen-shi* (Tōkyō: Fusanbō, 1919).
  14. With the changing international climate in the early 1930s, Kajima Morinosuke emerged as an influential freelance diplomatic historian and editor of historical sources, including a volume on World War I, Kajima Morinosuke, “Sekai taisen gen'in no kenkyū” [Studies of the causes for the world war] (PhD diss., Tōkyō teikoku daigaku, 1934).
  15. Ishida Yasumasa, *Ōshū taisen-shi no kenkyū*. 8 vols. (Tōkyō: Rikugun daigakkō shōkō shūkaijo, 1937–40).
  16. See, for instance, Janis Mimura, *Planning for Empire. Reform Bureaucrats and the Japanese Wartime State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).
  17. Tōyama Shigeki, Imai Seiichi, and Fujiwara Akira, *Shōwa-shi* (1st ed., Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 1955; 2nd ed., Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 1959).
  18. Nakamura Takafusa and Odaka Kōnosuke, eds., *Nijū kōzō* [Dual structure], 3rd ed. (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 1994); English translation: *The Economic History of Japan: 1600–1990*, vol. 3: *Economic History of Japan 1914–1955: A Dual Structure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
  19. Mitani Taichirō, *Taishō demokurashī-ron: Yoshino Sakuzō no jidai to sono go* [On Taishō-democracy: The era of Yoshino Sakuzō and its aftermath] (Tokyo: Chūō kōron sha, 1974). For the perception of Woodrow Wilson and his political philosophy, see also Miwa Kimitada, “Japanese Opinion on Woodrow Wilson in War and Peace,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 22 (1967): 368–89.
  20. Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy*.
  21. Itō Takashi, *Taishō-ki “kakushin”-ha no seiritsu* [The formation of the Taishō-Period “Reform”-Faction] (Tōkyō: Hanawa shobō, 1978).
  22. See as an example Usui Katsumi, “Berusaiyu-Washington taisei to Nihon no shihaisō” [The Versailles-Washington system and Japan's ruling strata], in *Kindai Nihon seiji shisō-shi II*, ed. Hashikawa Bunzō and Matsumoto Sannosuke (Tōkyō: Yūhikaku, 1970), 109–31.
  23. See, for instance, Oka Yoshitake, *Nihon kindai-shi taikei 5: Tenkan-ki no Taishō, 1914–1924*. [A systematic survey of modern history of Japan 5: Taishō as turning point, 1914–1924] (Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1969).

24. Eguchi Bokurō, “Dai-ichiji sekai taisen Roshia kakumei to Nihon” [The First World War, the Russian Revolution, and Japan], in *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi: Dai-19 (gendai dai-2)*, ed. Ienaga Saburō et al. (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 1963), 1–48; Eguchi Keiichi, *Futatsu no taisen* [The two world wars], 2nd ed. (Tōkyō: Shōgakkan, 1995).
25. Hosoya Chihiro, *Shiberia shuppei no rekishi-teki kenkyū* [Historical studies of the Siberian Intervention] (Tōkyō: Yūhikaku, 1955); Idem, *Roshia kakumei to Nihon* [The Russian Revolution and Japan] (Tōkyō: Hara shobō, 1972); Hosoya Chihiro, ed., *Washinton taisei to Nichi-Bei kankei* [The Washington system and the Japanese-U.S. relations] (Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1978).
26. Kitaoka Shin’ichi, *Nihon rikugun to tairiku seisaku: 1906–1918* [The Japanese army and its politics for the continent, 1906–1918] (Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1978).
27. Thomas Burkman, “Japan, the League of Nations, and the new World Order, 1918–1920” (PhD diss., University of Michigan 1975); Thomas Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations: Empire and World Order, 1914–1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).
28. Frederick Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention. Japan and the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
29. Mitani Taichirō, *Shinpan: Taishō demokurashī-ron; Yoshino Sakuzō no jidai* [New edition: On Taishō-Democracy; The era of Yoshino Sakuzō] (Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai, 1995).
30. Bōei-chō kenshūjo senshishitsu, ed., *Rikugun gunju dōin 1. Keikaku-hen* [Mobilization of the armament industry by the army. Part 1: edited plans] (Tōkyō: Asagumo shinbunsha, 1967).
31. Yoshida Yutaka, “Dai-ichiji sekai taisen to gunbu: Sōryokusen dankai e no gunbu no taiō” [The military and the First World War: The reaction of the military to the stage of total war], in *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 460, no. 9 (1978): 36–41; Tobe Ryōichi, “Dai-ichiji taisen to Nihon ni okeru sōryokusen-ron no juyō” [The First World War and the reception of total war theory in Japan], in *Shin-bōei ronshū* 7, no. 4 (1980): 1–16; Saitō Seiji, “Kaigun ni okeru dai-ichiji taisen kenkyū to sono hadō” [The studies of the navy on the First World War and their consequences], *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 530 (1984): 16–32; Yamaguchi Toshiaki, “Kokka sōdōin kenkyū josetsu: Dai-ichiji sekai taisen kara Shigenkyoku no setsuritsu made” [Introduction to the study of the “general mobilization of the nation”: From the First World War to the establishment of the Bureau for Resources], *Kokka gakkai zasshi* 92, nos. 3–4 (1979): 104–23; Kōke-tsu Atsushi, *Sōryokusen taisei kenkyū: Nihon rikugun no kokka sōdōin kōsō* [Studies on the total war system: The Japanese army’s concepts of a general mobilization of the nation] (Tōkyō: San’ichi shobō, 1981).
32. Hirama Yōichi, *Dai-ichiji sekai taisen to Nihon kaigun: Gaikō to gunji to sono rensetsu* [The First World War and the Japanese navy: Diplomacy, military affairs and their relation] (Tōkyō: Keiō gijuku daigaku shuppankai, 1998). See also, for an overview, Charles J. Schencking, *Making Waves: Politics, Propaganda, and the Emergence of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1868–1922* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
33. Kurosawa Fumitaka, *Taisen kanki no Nihon rikugun* [The Japanese army in the inter-war period] (Tōkyō: Misuzu shobō, 2000); see also Kurosawa Fumitaka, “A Prelude to Disaster: The Japanese Imperial Army’s Total War Plan before World War II,” *Beginnings of the Soviet-German and the U.S.-Japanese Wars and 50 Years After (Sophia Symposium, 1991)*, ed. Sophia University Institute of American and Canadian Studies (Tōkyō: Sophia University Institute for the Culture of German-Speaking Areas, 1993), 19–36; Kurosawa Fumitaka, “Dai-ichiji sekai taisen no shōgeki to Nihon rikugun: Gun kindaika oboegaki” [The impact of the First World War on

- the Japanese army: Memoranda on the modernization of the army], in *Tenkanki no Yōroppa to Nihon*, ed. Takita Takeshi [Europe and Japan at a turning point] (Tōkyō: Nansōsha, 1997), 178–97.
34. Kurono Taeru, *Teikoku kokubō hōshin no kenkyū: Rikukaigun kokubō shisō no tenkai to tokuchō* [Studies on the imperial defense plan: Characteristics and development of the army's and navy's ideas on national defense] (Tōkyō: Sōwasha, 2000).
  35. Michael Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).
  36. Yasuda Hiroshi, "Sōron" [General introduction], in *Shirīzu Nihon kingendai-shi: kōzō to hendō 3. Gendai shakai e no tenkei*, ed. Banno Junji et al. (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 1993), 3–24; Ōuchi Hirokazu, "'Kokumin' kyōiku no jidai" [The era of education of the "nation"], in *Kanjō, kioku, sensō*, ed. Komori Yōichi et al. (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 95–124; Ōshima Mitsuko, "Dai-ichiji taisen-ki no chihō tōgō seisaku: Zasshi *Shimin* no shuchō o chūshin ni" [Measures to integrate the countryside during the First World War: Focusing on the claims of the journal *The People*], *Senshū shigaku* 29 (1998): 1–49. Other examples in this direction: Izaō Tomio, "Dai-ichiji sekai taisen to minshū ishiki: Futatsu no kan-min gassaku bokin undō o megutte" [The First World War and the consciousness of the masses: On two collaborative civil-bureaucratic fundraising campaigns], *Nihonshi kenkyū* 535 (2007): 103–28; Kumada Tadatsugu, "Dai-ichiji sekai taisen-ki ni okeru Naimu-shō no toshi seisaku" [Urban policies of the home ministry during the First World War], *Senshū shigaku* 32 (2001): 25–66.
  37. Yamanouchi Yasushi, Victor Koschmann, and Narita Ryūichi, eds., *Total War and "Modernization"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1998). See especially Yamanouchi's introduction, "Total War and Social Integration: A Methodological Introduction," 1–39.
  38. Sheldon Garon, *The State and Labor in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Sheldon Garon, "Women's Groups and the Japanese State: Contending Approaches to Political Integration, 1890–1945," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 5–41.
  39. See for instance Kimura Seiji, Shiba Nobuhiro, and Naganuma Hideyo, *Sekai taisen to gendai bunka no kaimaku* [The First World War and the beginning of contemporary culture] (Tōkyō Chūō kōronsha, 1997).
  40. Inoue Mitsusada et al., eds., *Dai-ichiji sekai taisen to seitō naikaku* [The First World War and party cabinets] (Tōkyō: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1997).
  41. Sawada Jirō, "Dai-ichiji sekai taisen-ki no Tokutomi Sōhō to Amerika: 1914–1918" [Tokutomi Sōhō during the First World War and the United States: 1914–1918], *Hōgaku kenkyū* 82, no. 4 (2009): 29–101.
  42. Dick Stegewerns, "The Break with Europe: Japanese Views of the Old World after the First World War," in *The Japanese and Europe: Images and Perceptions*, ed. Bert Edström (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2000), 39–57; Dick Stegewerns, "The End of World War One as a Turning Point in Modern Japanese History," in *Turning Points in Japanese History*, ed. Bert Edström (Richmond: Japan Library, 2002), 138–62.
  43. Wada Haruki, ed., *Higashi-Ajia kin-gendai tsūshi. 3: Sekai sensō to kaizō, 1910nendai* [A survey history of modern and contemporary East Asia, 3: World war and "reforms," the 1920s] (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 2010), especially Cho Kyondaru [Cho Kyeongdal], "Sekai sensō to kaizō, 1910nendai" [The world war and "reforms," the 1910s], 1–40. For the influence on the economic relations of the Japanese Empire with Southeast Asia, see Kagotani Naoto, "Dai-ichiji sekai taisen-ka no Tōnan-Ajia keizai to Nihon" [The Southeast Asian economy and Japan during the First World

- War], 231–54; and for trade in and toward colonial Korea: Sō Keishin [Song Kue Jin], “Dai-ichiji sekai taisen to Chōsen bōeki” [The First World War and Korean trade], in *Higashi-Ajia keizai-shi kenkyū dai-issū: Chūgoku—Kankoku—Nihon—Ryūkyū no kōryū*, ed. Ōsaka keizai daigaku Nihon keizai-shi kenkyūjo (Kyōto: Shibunkaku, 2010), 251–76.
44. Yamamoto Kōtoku, “Dai-ichiji taisen-ki ni okeru kokka shisō keisei shisutemu no saihen to Hara Kei naikaku” [The Hara cabinet and the reorganization of the system of the formation of state policy ideas during the First World War], in *Nihonshi kenkyū* 554 (2008): 26–51.
  45. Yamamuro Shin’ichi, *Fukugō sensō to sōryokusen no dansō: Nihon ni totte no dai-ichiji sekai taisen* (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 2011).
  46. Yamamuro Shin’ichi, Okada Akeo, Koseki Takashi and Fujihara Tatsushi, eds., *Gendai no kiten—Dai-ichiji sekai taisen*, 4 vols. (Tokyo : Iwanami shoten, 2014).
  47. Yamamuro Shin’ichi, “Higashi-Ajia-shi ni okeru dai-ichiji sekai taisen—Nihon kara no manazashi” [The First World War in East Asian history—A view from Japan], in *Shisō* 1086 110, no. 10 (2014): 7–32; Yamamuro Shin’ichi, “The First World War in East Asian Thought—As Seen from Japan,” in *The East Asian Dimension of the First World War: Global Entanglements and Japan, China and Korea, 1914–1919*, ed. Jan Schmidt and Katja Schmidtpott (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2020), 39–79.
  48. The title could be translated as “True accounts of the European great war.” The magazine, first published biweekly, later three times per month, was a major effort by one of the major contemporary publishers, Hakubunkan, which already had made a fortune out of its analogous magazines “True accounts of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95),” “True accounts of the East Asian War (1900),” and “True accounts of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5).”
  49. Kobayashi Hiroharu, *Sōryokusen to demokurashī: Dai-ichiji sekai taisen—Shiberia kanshō sensō* (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2008).
  50. Nakayama Hiroaki, *Dai-ichiji taisen no “kage”—Sekai sensō to Nihon bungaku* [The “shadow” of the First World War: Japanese literature and world war] (Tōkyō: Shin’yōsha, 2012).
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  52. Nakayama Hiroaki, *Senkanki no “Yoake mae” : Genshō toshite no sekai taisen* (Tōkyō: Sōbunsha, 2012).
  53. Tamai Kiyoshi kenkyū kai, ed., *Dai-ichiji sekai taisen sansen to Nihon no masumedia* [Japan’s entrance into the First World War and the Japanese mass media] (Tōkyō: Keiō gijuku daigaku hōgakubu seiji gakka, 2006).
  54. Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (London: Routledge, 1998).
  55. Naraoka Sōchi, *Taika nijūikkajō yōkyū to wa nan datta no ka. Dai-ichiji sekai taisen to nitchū tairitsu no genten* [What were the 21 Demands? The First World War and the

- origin of the Japanese-Chinese antagonism] (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2015).
56. Naraoka's reading of the Chinese sources on that matter is informed by new research by eminent historian of modern China Kawashima Shin's writings: i.e. Kawashima Shin "Taika nijūikkajō yōkyū to Pekin seifu no taiō: Kōshō kaishi-zen no dōkō" [The Twenty-One Demands and the reaction of the Beijing government: Its attitudes before the opening of the negotiations], *Higashi-Ajia kindaiishi* 18 (2015): 24–40.
  57. Kubota Yūji, *Taichū shakkan no seiji keizaishi: "Kaihatsum" kara 21kajō yōkyū e* (Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppankai, 2016).
  58. For instance, Frederick Dickinson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
  59. Frederick Dickinson, "Toward a Global Perspective of the Great War: Japan and the Foundations of a Twentieth-Century World," *AHR* 119, no. 4 (2014): 1156–57.
  60. PhD dissertation: "Nach dem Krieg ist vor dem Krieg—Der Erste Weltkrieg in Japan: Medialisierte Kriegserfahrung, Nachkriegsinterdiskurs und Politik, 1914–1918/19" (Postwar is prewar—The First World War in Japan: Medialized war experience, post-war interdiscourse and politics, 1914–1918/1919), Ruhr University Bochum. To be published in German as *Nach dem Krieg ist vor dem Krieg: Medialisierte Erfahrungen des Ersten Weltkriegs und Nachkriegsdiskurse in Japan (1914–1919)* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2020).
  61. Jan Schmidt, "Der Erste Weltkrieg als vermittelte Kriegserfahrung in Japan: Mediale Aneignungen und Studien durch Militär und Ministerialbürokratie" [The First World War as mediated war experience in Japan: Mediaal appropriations and studies by the military and the ministerial bureaucracy], *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40 (2014): 239–65.
  62. Jan Schmidt and Katja Schmidtpott, eds., *The East Asian Dimension of the First World War. Global Entanglements and Japan, China and Korea, 1914–1919* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2020); Minohara Tosh, Tze-ke Hon, Evan Dawley, eds., *The Decade of the Great War: Japan and the Wider World in the 1910s* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Oliviero Frattolillo and Antony Best, eds., *Japan and the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2015); Matthias Zachmann, ed., *Asia after Versailles: Asian Perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and the Interwar Order, 1919–33* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).
  63. Tomita Hiroshi, *Bandō furyo shūyōjo: Nichidoku sensō to zainichi Doitsu furyo* [The Bandō Prisoner of War Camp: Japanese-German War and the German prisoners of war in Japan] (Tokyo: Hōsei daigaku shuppankai, 1991; reprint 2006).
  64. <http://bando-doitsu.com/ja/archive/>; Narutoshi Doitsukan, *Narutoshi Doitsukan shōzōhin mokuroku: Bandō shūyōjo narabi ni dai-ichi sekai taisenji no zenkoku shūyōjo kanren shiryō* (Nartutoshi: Narutoshi Doitsukan, n.d.).
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  66. For instance, Dierk Guenther, "Tokushima shinpō, Lagerfeuer, Barracke—Shikoku no Doitsuhei furyo shūyōjo shinbun no hikaku kentō," *Chintaosen doitsuhei furyo shūyōjo kenkyū* 2 (October 2004): 3–22; Mahon Māfi [Mahon Murphy], "Dai-ichiji sekai taisenchū no Nihon ni okeru doitsujin furyo: Doitsu biru o nozokeba karera ni fujū wa nakatta," *Chintaosen doitsuhei furyo shūyōjo kenkyū* 7 (2009): 13–18.
  67. There is a local archive-cum-museum called Doitsukan (Naruto German House) in

- the city of Naruto, established in 1993 (the original building was opened in 1972) by Naruto City Municipal Office, Tokushima Prefecture.
68. *Baruto no gakuen*, (Ode an die Freude, or The Ode to Joy), dir. Deme Masanobu, Tōei Film Productions, 2006.
  69. Tamura Ichirō, *Bandō fūryō shūyōjo no zenbō: Shochō Matsue Toyoyoshi no mezashita mono* [Bandō Prisoner of War Camp: Aims of Chief Warden Matsue Toyoyoshi] (Tokyo: Sakuhokusha, 2010).
  70. Ōtsuru Atsushi, *Aonohara fūryō shūyōjo no sekai: Dai-ichiji sekai taissen to Ōsutoria horyōhei* [The world of the Aonohara Prisoner of War Camp: The First World War and Austrian prisoners of war] (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 2007).
  71. Takahashi Terukazu, *Marugame doitsuhei horyō shūyōjo monogatari* (Tokyo: Enishi shobō, 2014).
  72. Naoko Shimazu, “Globalising Captivity: ‘Little Germany in China’ in Japan during the First World War,” in *Military and Civilian Internment in World War I: Local, National, and Global Perspectives*, ed. Iris Rachamimov and Rotem Kowner (forthcoming).
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  74. Patrick Houlihan’s unpublished paper on “The Other Admiral Yamamoto: Catholic Globalism at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919,” presented at an international conference on the Paris Peace Conference and the Challenge of a New World Order, German Historical Institute, Paris, June 2019.

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*Chapter 11*

COMING TO TERMS WITH  
THE IMPERIAL LEGACY AND  
THE VIOLENCE OF WAR

**Turkish Historiography of World War I between  
Autarchy and a Plurality of Voices, 1914–2019**

*Alexandre Toumarkine*



In Turkey, interest in the Great War was quite limited for a long time.<sup>1</sup> An important reason has been the clear break with the Ottoman past intended by the Kemalist Republic, including especially the tragic developments during the years 1912–22, a decade that the first republican generations experienced as well. Nonetheless, the wars of this period (the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the War of Independence) became aspects of national history as catalysts for the foundation of the republic. A retrospective reading of these events opened a space for narratives concerning the territories of the new republic, thereby omitting the Balkan and Arab provinces. Contrariwise, the Battle of Gallipoli—which was, together with the Battle of Kut-Al-Amara in Ottoman Iraq from December 1915 to April 1916, one of the two main victories of the Ottomans during the Great War period—gained importance by being inscribed into the hagiographical narrative of the national hero, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

Turkish historiography,<sup>2</sup> and specifically the writing of the history of the Ottoman front, has often been neglected by compendia on World

War I.<sup>3</sup> A lack of knowledge concerning Turkish language cannot solely account for this shortcoming since several major works have been made available in English. It is rather the perception of the Ottoman fronts as being only of secondary importance for the armies of the Triple Entente and of Germany that can be considered as the reason for the scarcity of interest. The shortage of French historiography on the Eastern fronts (the Dardanelles and the Balkans) sets a good example.

Turkish historians working on the Ottoman front and World War I in general tended to read very few publications penned by their foreign colleagues. Furthermore, Turkish translations of books on the war have become available only since the 1990s and only to a limited extent. In order to be able to explain this lack of interest, one might refer to two major characteristics of Turkish war historiography throughout much of the twentieth century, this chapter dwelling upon them as well: its national character and its focus on classical military and diplomatic history.

The end of the 1970s marks a first turn in the national historiographical tradition. This break was caused by the reaction of the Turkish state when confronted with the murders committed by the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the sudden emergence of the Armenian genocide as an issue of Turkish foreign affairs. The state chose to respond by means of public commemorations and the production of historiography, among others.

It was only several years later, in September 1980, that the *coup d'état* brought the second turn, a change that the two preceding military coups (namely those of May 1960 and March 1971) had not been able to foster: the army, encouraged by the goal of social engineering, intended to redesign civil society by imposing the values of what was no longer called Kemalism but Atatürkism.<sup>4</sup>

The third turn can be dated roughly back to the end of the 1990s and the 2000s. The increase in publication of Turkish sources and works on World War I during this period of about fifteen years is remarkable. This newfound interest might be due to the processes of political and economic liberalization, resulting in the ability for alternative—and even controversial—narratives to emerge and to be discussed without Kemalism to be perceived as under threat. Secondly, this increase in research and publications can also be considered as an effect of the Islamist “Justice and Development Party” (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—AKP)—in power since 2002—prevailing in the conflict with Kemalist civil elites and the military. This development dispossessed the military institutions of their near monopoly on the production of historical discourse, thus opening up new fields of research. The recent and unexpected alignment of former political enemies, the military and the AKP, however, resulted

in a new nationalist synthesis of historical imagination and a renewed instrumentalization of the Battle of Gallipoli.<sup>5</sup>

The 2010s do not really stand for a historiographical turn but were a time when repeated commemorations of the Great War and some its great battles on the Ottoman front (Gallipoli, the defeat of Sarıkamış and, more recently, Kut-Al-Amara) boosted academic meetings and publications in quantitative terms.

While the writing of the history of the Great War was near exclusively in the hands of the military and affiliated historians until the first turn, two different camps have emerged since then, one nationalist and one critical. Both are writing “their” history of the war from their own perspective. Even though the main actors of these camps have been changing over the years, one can observe a relative stability and continuity in both the contents of and the intentions behind the two narratives.

Beginning with the question of whether there is a Turkish memory of World War I, we will then discuss the roles of the military and of Kemalism in framing the historiography of the Great War. After debating the presumably specific geographical and chronological characteristics of the Ottoman fronts, we will map the changes in sources and actors involved in the writing of the Turkish history of the 1914–18 years. We will then come to one of the most crucial issues, state violence against civilians, including the Armenian genocide. And, finally, we will analyze current trends and developments in Turkish historiography and answer the question whether there is a new Turkish historiography breaking with the culture of denial.

## Is There a Turkish Memory of World War I?

One can rightly speak of a “Turkish” memory of World War I since the Armenian and Greek remembrances are either overshadowed by or reduced to a genocide scheme and the Greek-Turkish exchange of populations in 1923 and 1924. However, speaking of a Turkish memory, one must keep in mind that the common recollection of World War I by Turkish civilians is largely overdetermined by the official narrative. It is only here and there that traces of old song texts composed at the time and transmitted from one generation to another can be found. Particularly the mobilization (*seferberlik*) in 1914, the defeat of Sarıkamış in mid-January 1915, and the victory of Gallipoli in January 1915 are objects of—mainly elegiac—local folkloric and national songs (*türkü*). Concerning the Battle of Gallipoli, the *türkü* of Çanakkale, whose origins are still uncertain, is probably the most famous one. Completely different from the usual chau-

vinist tirades, it tells stories of the pain of separation of young drafted men from their loved ones, of the youth lost and of the cruelty of the war, the abominable scenes of mass murder, and finally the inconsolable grief afflicting the ones left behind. The memory of particularly hard or victorious campaigns lasted for generations in family memory, creating a deep, personal attachment to the memory of the battles. The veterans of the Battle of Gallipoli thus appear to have written its history, evoking a feeling of pride transmitted to their descendants. The memory of the war is hence also that of the soldiers shoved around from one front line to another, one landscape to another, enduring a tragic odyssey. The return of the surviving soldiers in 1918 and 1919 extended over a period of several months. Mostly carried out on foot, their return home turned the roads of Anatolia into a sea of people, resembling what the Russians experienced after 1917.

National commemorations began during the interwar period, that is, during the founding years of the republic (1923–38), but they unsurprisingly mainly concentrated on the Battle of Gallipoli, linking it with the great battles of the Independence War (1919–22) and thereby overshadowing and even eliding the Balkan Wars and the other battles of World War I. After the transition from a one- to a multiparty system at the middle of the 1940s, new monuments commemorating the defeat of Sarikamış were erected, often on local military initiative. These clearly served the maintenance of regimental memories. Accordingly, and this is true up until the 1980s, the ceremonies that took place at these memory sites had a predominantly military character, even if representatives of state and municipal authorities were present as well.

There are several reasons for the belated emergence of commemoration by civilians in the form of “memory tourism.” First, the relatively late appearance of the concept of national and cultural heritage may serve as an explanation. Second, the geography of the Ottoman fronts is to be blamed. Far beyond the territories of the Republic of Turkey—Thrace and Anatolia—one can find Ottoman military cemeteries in the area stretching across Galicia, Macedonia, Romania, the Caucasus, Persia, Egypt, and the Arabian provinces of the empire such as Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Yemen, and even as far away as India (Karnataka and Rajasthan), Myanmar, and Siberia, where Turkish POWs were sent. Nonetheless, these cemeteries maintained by the army are hardly ever visited by civilians, serving their purpose only on the occasion of official visits. Commemorative tourism only began when the southern part of the peninsula of Gallipoli was made into a park for national history in 1973. The boom of national tourism during the 1990s marked the beginning of a new upswing of commemoration in the park. From 1993 to 1998, the number of visitors to the

two museums based on the peninsula increased from 90,000 to 145,000 per year. A renewed increase in numbers can be detected during the period from 2003 to 2005/2006, bringing the numbers to 300,000. Hence, it has been estimated that a total of seven million visitors—speaking of 10 percent of the population—has visited the peninsula from 2007 to 2013, a number to which one may add an additional three million visitors for the period prior to 2007.<sup>6</sup> Besides, between 60,000 and 80,000 foreigners—mainly New Zealanders and Australians attending Anzac Day (25 April)—are visiting the park each year since 1990, when their national commemorations were extended to the peninsula.

## The Foundational Historiographical Narrative Established by the Military and Kemalism

### A Military History of World War I Written by and for the Military

Turkish historiography followed the approaches of diplomatic and military history, showing little interest in neighboring subdisciplines such as the social history of war. Here, the term “military history” must be understood as a history of military operations written by and for the military. In the beginning of the republic, during the 1920s and 1930s, officers—very often recently retired—set out to write and sometimes translate books mainly for the purpose of serving as manuals for cadets at the military schools and the war college. Since such published monographs and conference presentations were often authored by officers of the General Staff who had actively participated in the events, it is difficult to categorize them as either primary or secondary sources.

Since the 1920s, most of the research on military history was published by the Military Academy, for example the *Askeri Mecmua* (Military journal). This periodical, first issued in 1882, published sixty-two articles (of which ten were translations) on the Great War during the period from March 1919 until March 1948. From 1952 onward these articles were printed in the series *Harp Tarihi Vesikaları* (Documents of the history of the war), which became *Harp Tarihi Belgeleri* (idem) in 1973 and finally *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri* (Documents of military history) from 1978 to 2004.

In 1916, the Ministry of War (Harbiye Nezareti) opened a new branch working on the history of war (Tarih-i Harp Şubesi), mainly concentrating on the collection and classification of documents on the wars of the empire (the Great War included). In order to store and categorize them properly, the Military Archives (Harb Hazine-i Evraki) were established; they show a clear preference for documents produced at the front, such as war diaries (in Ottoman: *harp cerideleri*), when it comes to choosing

sources for writing the history of the recent wars (the Italo-Turkish War, Balkan Wars, and the Great War). This newly created section was directly attached to the General Staff and has been providing members for the constitution of a Commission on Military History (Tarih-i Askeri Encümeni). Two other projects envisaged but never realized were the compilation of a history of the world war (*Harb-i Umumi Tarihi*) in fifty volumes and publications on the history of all Ottoman fronts. After several name changes, the branch was renamed again in 1978 and is since known as the Directorate for Military History and Strategic Studies (Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı—ATASE).

Nevertheless, it took some sixty years before the Turkish General Staff finally published a history of the Great War at the Ottoman fronts in four volumes. The given title *Birinci Cihan Harbi'nde Türk Harbi* (The Turkish war during the First World War)<sup>7</sup> is misleading, since it places the Ottoman front only to a certain and very limited extent in the larger context of the Great War. From 1967 on, publications on World War I approach the topic either with a focus on regions or, less often, with a focus on the type of warfare (aerial, naval, etc.). Only from 1983 on is the “Armenian question” addressed regularly in generalized publications not directly in line with the Great War.<sup>8</sup> The Battle of Gallipoli, object of two publications in the 1950s, gained editorial attention again in the 1990s on the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary.<sup>9</sup> In the 2000s and 2010s, interest in this battle has undergone another remarkable upswing in terms of publications.<sup>10</sup>

This “Turkish” military history is also represented in the work of Edward J. Erickson, a retired American naval officer who had served in Turkey during a NATO mission in the 1990s. His first book, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, was published in 2001.<sup>11</sup> Though he explains his motivation for writing this monograph to have been the lack of English books on the Turks in the Great War, he confesses in his acknowledgments that he was also strongly encouraged by his Turkish colleagues. The book’s preface was written by the Turkish head of staff at the time, General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, who had been Erickson’s superior during the mission and a close friend ever since. According to Erickson, Kıvrıkoğlu’s position granted him privileged access to military sources (at ATASE). Erickson’s book focuses on the martial qualities of the Ottoman army and implicitly adopts a denialist stance on the question of the Armenian genocide. In 2003, Vahakn Dadrian, a historian, legal expert, and director of research on the genocide at the Zoryan Institute (in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in Toronto, Canada), published a devastating critique of Erickson’s work, accusing him of being a spokesperson for the Turkish General Staff. Mehmet Beşikçi, a Turkish

historian who wrote his dissertation on the mobilization during the war, repeated Dadrian's criticism without denouncing Erickson's stance on the genocide.<sup>12</sup> Erickson's book was translated into Turkish and published as early as 2003.<sup>13</sup> His second work, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I* was published in 2007 and translated into Turkish in 2009.<sup>14</sup> It was followed by his third monograph *Gallipoli: The Ottoman Campaign*, published in English in August 2010 and in Turkish in 2012.<sup>15</sup>

Most of Turkish archival sources on World War I are located at ATASE and in the Ottoman archives of the Prime Ministry (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri—BOA). The diplomatic archives—mostly written in French—had been inaccessible for a long time,<sup>16</sup> but they were recently joined to the latter archive. The archives of the Ministry of the Interior (Dahiliye Nezareti)—also part of the BOA collections—are of particular importance for the study of the Great War. They allow an analysis of the activities of (Mehmed) Talaat Pasha during the time in which he was the head of the Ministry of Interior, between July 1913 and October 1918.

Besides archival sources, memoirs, testimonies, and other first-person documents are important resources for military historians. In trying to explain their relatively small number in the Ottoman case, one usually references a high level of illiteracy—a presumption hard to verify since it had not been an aspect of the general census.

Fevzi Çakmak, head of the General Staff from July 1921 to April 1950, played a crucial role in promoting the publication of war memoirs and set an example himself. Writing on the Balkan Wars and the Great War and not on the War of Independence provided the opportunity to avoid topics that could have caused irritation. This course of action was used by a very limited but nevertheless influential group of generals such as Kâzım Karabekir, Rauf Orbay, and Ali Fuat Cebesoy, who supported Mustafa Kemal during the War of Independence but politically confronted him once peace was reestablished. Clearly, the military memoirs were intended for the Turkish army, its officers, and particularly the General Staff. As the military historian Mesut Uyar mentioned in 2005,<sup>17</sup> many of these memoirs are still lying untouched in the archives of ATASE.

### **The Diplomatic and Political History of the Entry into the War and of Warfare with a Focus on the Issue of Unionist Responsibility**

Apart from the military history of the Great War, there is also a diplomatic and political approach to history. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur,<sup>18</sup> an eminent historian central in the construction of the “official civil history” of the war, was probably the first civilian to elaborate on the entry into the war and on warfare. He dedicated four of ten volumes<sup>19</sup> of his political

history of the “Turkish Revolution” to these issues, a *summa* published in the years of 1939 to 1963<sup>20</sup> and covering the period from 1878 to 1923. Bayur depicts the entry into the war as an adventurous and thoughtless decision taken by the “triumvirate” of the pashas Talaat, Enver, and Djemal. He accused Enver Pasha of having pursued the political pipe dreams of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism and of having “sold” the empire to Germany. Concerning the sources of his work, Bayur mostly relies on the rich documentation published by European governments after 1919, and on Ottoman periodicals, the Ottoman diplomatic archives—which had not yet been catalogued—as well as local political memoirs difficult to access. Bayur’s harsh critique of the Unionists—whom he depicts as incompetent—and his view of the global conflict as the result of Western imperialism rapidly created a new paradigm in Turkey. In spite of the critical view of the Unionists’ role in the war, the continuity between Unionists and Kemalists both in terms of personnel and ideas<sup>21</sup> motivated Kemalist Turkey to protect the memory of Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) protagonists regarding important issues such as the genocide, a strong republican reflex that was undermined only partly by the rise to power of the Islamist AKP in the early 2000s.

The history of the Great War was also the object of research of two Turkologists—Feroz Ahmad and Stanford J. Shaw—who made their careers mostly in the United States but later on taught in Turkey.<sup>22</sup> The political history of World War I owes a lot to Ahmad,<sup>23</sup> who—focusing on the Unionist government—privileged a chronological approach to the period from 1908 to 1918. As stressed by Mehmet Beşikçi, Feroz Ahmad’s contribution is not limited to a classical political history of the Great War but also encompasses economic and social dimensions. Stanford Shaw, who passed away in December 2006, wrote a history of the Ottoman Empire during the war period (two volumes of almost twenty-six hundred pages!), published by the public Society of Turkish History (Türk Tarih Kurumu). His work wavers between descriptive erudition—useful but lacking true problematization—and a thematic approach (dealing with war mobilization, the Special Organization, population movement, and Pan-Islamism). Even though his work—considering its volume and density—appears authoritative, it falls victim to his alignment with the Turkish state as far as the Armenian genocide and the violence against civilians during the war in general are concerned.<sup>24</sup>

### The National and Nationalist History Centered on Mustafa Kemal

Turkish historiography, with rare but notable exceptions, was and remains national. It seldom uses Western primary and secondary sources, neither

sources in other languages of the Ottoman Empire than Turkish. Furthermore, Turkish historiography narrates an imperial history as if it was a national one, rarely and poorly considering non-Muslims and minorities of the late empire (for instance, in topics like conscription, desertion, and forced labor, see *infra*). Moreover, these narratives tend to “Turkify” Ottoman patriotic sentiments present among the Muslims and sometimes the non-Muslims of the Empire. The focus on military operations in Anatolia (the Battle of Gallipoli, the war theater of Eastern Anatolia) at the expense of other Ottoman territories in the Arab provinces constitutes another characteristic. Finally, the narrative created by Turkish historiography is an often nationalist and Manichean history frequently used as a tool for ideological mobilization. The Battle of Gallipoli serves as the best example: it is—as seen earlier—part of a teleological history of modernization read back to the first years of the Tanzimat Reforms in the nineteenth century and possibly even to the reign of Selim III at the end of the eighteenth. This teleological approach emerged during the Young Turk period, but it especially flourished in the Early Kemalist Republic, when the War of Independence and the Unionist period were included in the narrative. In this regard, the battle of Gallipoli does not belong to the Great War but is a kind of prelude to the War of Independence, also referred to as the “Liberation War” (*Kurtuluş Savaşı*) or the “National Struggle” (*Milli Mücadele*).

The historiography of the Battle of Gallipoli focuses on the commanding officers of the regiments for two reasons. First of all, there is the aim to play down the importance of the role German officers had in the victory. The second concern focuses on Mustafa Kemal. He himself being the commander of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment, the importance of the other parties involved in the victory (his peers, his Ottoman superiors, and especially Esad Pasha)<sup>25</sup> had to be diminished in order to make him emerge as the main agent of victory. Kemal—as lieutenant colonel (*kaymakam*)—managed to stop the ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) on their advance from Ariburnu, from where they advanced to Conkbayır in May 1915. Kemal is also perceived as the colonel (*miralay*), promoted by Liman von Sanders on 1 June 1915, who fought back the British troops in the first Battle of Anafartalar (on 9–10 August), in Kireçtepe (on 17 August), and in the second Battle of Anafartalar (on 21 August 1915).

Mustafa Kemal’s role has repeatedly been subject to reevaluation. Already during the war, in an extensive interview conducted in Mustafa Kemal’s domicile in Istanbul from 24 to 28 March 1918 and published in the periodical *Yeni Mecmua*, the journalist Rüşen Eşref [Ünaydın] presented him as the “hero of Anafartalar.” This reputation did help Mustafa Kemal

consolidate his authority over his peers, his equals, and even over his superiors (in age and rank) during the War of Independence. Additionally, it can partially explain both his popularity among the Muslim population and the charisma he would show before, during, and even after the War of Independence. Beside Rüşen Eşref's article, which has been republished many times during the following decades, the General Staff also kept the cult of Mustafa Kemal alive by publishing a book penned by his comrade of war, Cemil [Conk], in 1959.<sup>26</sup> Apart from these publications, the Society of Turkish History (Türk Tarih Kurumu—TTK) decided in 1962 to reissue Mustafa Kemal's notes on the Battle of Anafartalar that had already been printed in 1955 by Sel, a private publishing house.<sup>27</sup> Truly remarkable is the fact that new editions appeared in large numbers after the coup of 1980. This might be due to the military willing to reinforce the cult around the charismatic leader who founded the Republic. Historiography today still seems to partly follow this trend, as a recently (2003) published book by ambassador Sermet Atıncalı, *Atatürk ve Çanakkale'nin Komutanları* (Atatürk and the commanding officers of the battle of Gallipoli),<sup>28</sup> indicates.

## A Chronological and Geographical Framework Proper to the Ottoman Fronts?

### An Ottoman “Ten-Year War”

After the Great War, Turkish historians first talked of a “world war” or a “universal war” (*cihan harbi* or *harbi umumi*), and then of the “First World War” (*Birinci Dünya Savaşı*). In the Ottoman case, one could rather call it a “ten-year war” since the time from the first Balkan War to the end of the War of Independence (1912–22) is a decade marked by only short periods of fragile peace.<sup>29</sup> It must be emphasized that, for the Ottomans, the Great War was initially only the third round of the Balkan Wars. And it was only the War of Independence (1919–22) and the treaties that followed<sup>30</sup>—and not the armistice of Mudros in 1918—that put an end to the war period. This very belated end of the war is shared *mutatis mutandis* by another Eastern front: the Russian one. At the time, the impression of having lived through a decennial conflict was surely adopted by the elites of the respective countries, but probably also by the people.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the Ottoman front shares a major characteristic with the other Eastern fronts in Europe (the Balkans and Russia): the desertion rate was not about 1 or 2 percent as it was for the Western fronts, but ten times higher, from 10 to 20 percent.<sup>32</sup> The weariness of the conscripts became palpable in Eastern Anatolia as early as 1915 and appears to have

been stronger in rural environments, where enrollment started in 1912. In fact, the extension of the period under observation helps comprehend the effect on the war generation: the young commanders leading the War of Independence from 1919–22 were born in the 1880s just like Mustafa Kemal and shared the same multiple war experiences, including 1914–18.

Recent official historiography does not ignore this prolonged perspective, as evidenced by works such as that of İsmet Görgülü titled *On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu: 1912–1922* (The Military Staff of the Ten Year War: 1912–1922)<sup>33</sup> or again the three volumes published by ATASE in 2009 covering the biographies of Ottoman commanders fighting in World War I.<sup>34</sup> But unfortunately these biographies are too concise and exiguous to provide a real prosopography.

### One or Several Ottoman Fronts?

The war waged by the Ottoman Empire against the Entente was conducted on a vast territory stretching from the Balkans—and even from Galicia where Enver Pasha sent his best regiments in order to please his allies—to as far as Iraq and Yemen. These distances were a crucial parameter for an empire whose transport infrastructure and facilities were notoriously deficient. Considering the geographical dilation, another variable enters the war: the dispersion of battlefields over a very heterogeneous territory in terms of landscapes and peoples (more or less loyal populations and more or less well organized). The war experience in these various areas had in common only the movement of Ottoman soldiers, who were sent from one place to another, which motivated mostly Turkish officers and sometimes even Germans to write about their experiences, systematically juxtaposing landscapes ranging from the snowy mountains of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus to the deserts of the Middle East. These memoirs became testimonies of the destabilizing and murderous effects such changes in landscape and setting had on the soldiers and also of how these men succeeded in adapting and inventing micro-solutions.<sup>35</sup> This necessity and ability to adapt to the difficulties of the war and the environment could be seen as a recurring theme, a leitmotif, going beyond the extensive litanies on the bravery and heroism of soldiers and beyond works on mortality (actually on the “Armenian question”), epidemics, and health services.<sup>36</sup>

The Ottoman fronts as covered by historiography can be grouped *grosso modo* as follows: Eastern and Southeastern Europe (especially Galicia, but also some parts of the Balkans, namely Macedonia and Romania); the peninsula of Gallipoli and a small part the Aegean shores (in the year 1915); the “Caucasian” front (this front includes Eastern Anatolia and

the Northern and Southern Caucasus),<sup>37</sup> to which a closely linked Persian subfront might be added; and finally the front of the Arab provinces, which could be divided into four subfronts: (1) Tripoli; (2) the front of the Suez Canal, Egypt, and Syria-Palestine, (3) the Gulf front; and (4) “Mesopotamia” (now Iraq). These fronts—due to their varying importance—do not all enjoy the same attention. For several reasons, three of them deserve a more careful examination: Gallipoli, Syria-Palestine, and the Caucasian front.

### **An Analysis of the Syrian-Palestinian Front through the Overlapping Prisms of Ideologies (Pan-Islamism, Nationalism, and Ottomanism)**

From 1916 onward, the Ottomans had to face the “Arab Revolt” in Syria-Palestine,<sup>38</sup> an ideal starting point when it comes to measuring the importance of religious motifs within ideological and military mobilization. The bearings of *jihad* proclaimed by the Ottomans in 1914 on the one hand and of Pan-Islamism molded by the CUP on the other hand set good examples for objects of research.<sup>39</sup>

For a long time, this front had been neglected by Turkish historiography.<sup>40</sup> This neglect can be understood as an expression of negative views of the Arab world as a consequence of their “betrayal” during the Arab Revolt. A reappraisal happened only in the 1990s when the Centre for Research on Islam (ISAM—İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi), linked to the Presidency for Religious Affairs (Diyanet), promoted an interest in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Also, the Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), part of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and founded in Istanbul in 1980, became more important at this time. These centers did not publish on the Great War directly but encouraged research in this direction, underlining the importance of the role played by a common religious identity, creating a kind of network of fraternity and corporate feeling. This reorientation toward the Arab world has been continued and even emphasized by the Islamist AKP coming into power in 2002. It is promoting a new diplomatic program based on the idea of reevaluating the Ottoman period in the light of the colonial mandates, the troubled Arab independences, and the quest for Ottoman heritage. This approach disdains—in accordance with the approach by IRCICA—the historiographical debate on Ottoman colonialism, which finds its most fervent defenders among Arab historians and its best regional example in the Yemenite case. While the military contribution of the Arab provinces to the imperial war effort had been underrated, it is nowadays reevaluated, and even runs risk of going so far as to reverse perspectives, overshadowing the role of Arab and Turkish

nationalisms, the latter of which is still visible in some Turkish generals' memoirs. The rise of nationalisms during the Great War is a factor that explains the widening gap between the military administration and local elites in Syria, even if some Turkish historians still have difficulties in recognizing this process.

### **The “Caucasian” Front: A Field for Observing Enver Pasha’s Ideology in Action**

The “Caucasian” front was taken into account by Turkish military historiography from very early on, but it has not been an object of major interest in any other field apart from military history until the 1990s. The field of activity of Enver Pasha in 1914, this front is the setting for a traumatizing defeat in Sarikamış (in February 1915), highlighted even more by the victory at Gallipoli. In 1918, Enver reappears indirectly by establishing the “Army of Islam,” which was led by his uncle Halil and his brother, cadet Nuri. Thus, Enver launched the last Caucasian campaign. This army—already extensively studied—can be considered as Enver’s swan song in the region,<sup>41</sup> part of his vision and his complex political activism that should be qualified as “Enverism” rather than as “Pan-Turkism” or “Pan-Islamism.”<sup>42</sup> To date, this vision has been less researched than the military operations it provoked. A noteworthy exception represents the work of Michael Reynolds: not denying the existence of Pan-Turkish or Pan-Islamic motives in Enver’s politics, Reynolds defends the idea of a Unionist policy seeking stability and preservation of the Ottoman state and facing supposed threats.

By jointly reading recent Turkish research<sup>43</sup> and that of Wolfdieter Bihl, one can get a larger picture of the articulation of German and Ottoman<sup>44</sup> Caucasian policies,<sup>45</sup> as well as the policies directed toward the minorities of imperial Russia. Adding the work and publications of Stéphane Yerasimos and Mete Tunçay helps us gain a clearer, multilayered understanding of the links between the Caucasian front and the events of the Russian Revolution, an important question for the 1918–22 period as well.<sup>46</sup>

Another characteristic of the Caucasian front is its centrality when it comes to understanding the Armenian genocide, since the majority of Ottoman Armenians in 1914 lived in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Anatolia. The historiography of the Armenian genocide has been partly marked by decontextualization in the sense that the genocide was often represented as an isolated event not located in the context of the war on the Caucasian front, which embeds the genocide into a larger temporal frame.

Recent publications pointed out the effects of the massive desertions subsequent to the defeat of Sarıkamış in February 1915.<sup>47</sup> Even though these desertions concerned Muslims and Armenians in an equal manner, the Ottoman government, gripped by a fit of paranoia, punished primarily the latter group. This moment also invites us to think about the interaction between the Third Ottoman Army stationed in the Northeastern Anatolia and the loosely organized groups and brigades of the Special Organization (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa), to the latter of whom the initiative and responsibility on the war field, and especially in the Armenian genocide, has often been attributed, although the army and to some extent the CUP were in charge. Finally, the study of the Ottoman front reveals the overshadowing nature of Armenian genocide: what started as an Ottoman-Russian conflict became, especially due to the process of disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the resulting fear of a complete collapse, a conflict in which—after the Russian Revolution, the collapse of the Russian Empire and the subsequent withdrawal of the Russian army—Armenian militias and Ottoman forces were opposing one another. The sheer fear of total extermination on the Armenian side and the threat of revenge on the Ottoman side changed the face and nature of the conflict profoundly. This front is an object of research par excellence when it comes to studying the phenomenon of militias and irregular paramilitary groups.

### **New Actors, New Sources and New Fields: A Change in the Writing of History?**

#### **The End of the Military Monopoly**

The exclusive—or rather excessive—role of military historians within the historiography of the Ottoman imperial wars has been pointed out by Mehmet Beşikçi and Gültekin Yıldız, the latter being a historian not of the 1914–18 years but of conscription and the maintenance of order in the Ottoman nineteenth century. Whereas the first, Mehmet Beşikçi, offers a simple explanation for the overwhelming role of military historians by underlining the traditional disinterest of Turkish universities in topics such as wars and the army and the absence of research programs in the relevant departments,<sup>48</sup> the second, Gültekin Yıldız, sees the military as the agent of its (own) involvement in the Turkish World War I historiography.<sup>49</sup> Yıldız promotes the concept of a “demilitarization” of military history, paralleling the political agenda of the Islamist AKP, which is attempting or attempted to expulse the military from the public sphere

in order to “civilize” it. Yıldız points out that militarism is presently denounced more openly and easily, especially by intellectuals and universities affiliated to the liberal left.

Hence, according to Yıldız, the main historiographical divide is not the one separating military history from other approaches to the history of World War I but rather that between historiography of historians with connections to the military and history written by those without such connections. By drawing a clear line between civil and military historians, Yıldız emphasizes the role of military historians and military institutions such as ATASE, but he tends to underestimate the porosity between these two groups—Turkish military and civil historians—a porosity that implicitly nourishes militarism. Some scholars choose to work and publish on topics such as the Battle of Gallipoli, Atatürk, or the War of Independence in order to rise faster within their profession.

The complex role played by the 1980 coup in restructuring historiographical production should not be forgotten: a great number of scholars from various disciplines (primarily economy and political sciences, but also history) were excluded from higher education. Besides, the systematic “cleansing” of universities and the introduction of a control mechanism in the form of the High Council of Universities (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu—YÖK) made the academic field more obedient and facilitated the careers of mediocre figures. Most professors and graduates excluded from academia entered the private sector (media, enterprise, etc.), and a few of them moved abroad. Careers in the private sector allowed some of them to acquire alternative resources they were subsequently able to invest when the regime of the military junta progressively liberalized, thereby creating new spaces in scientific publishing (for example the publishers Belge and İletişim), the field of associations (e.g. the Tarih Vakfı, the Foundation for History), and the academic milieu, most notably through the foundation of private universities from the mid-1990s on. Economic liberalization introduced a market logic that allowed both alternative history and official history to find an audience.

The role of Turkish media in militarization is often underrated, although the contribution of journalists to the writing of the history of the Great War is quite important. One should also not forget the major role of local contributors to historiography who are a blend between investigative journalist and amateur historian, termed “researching writers” (*araştırmacı yazar*), a genuinely Turkish category. There is not one single socio-professional group involved in writing on war: authors are rooted in different milieus and come from different social and cultural backgrounds. Their largely nationalist stance guarantees them a certain degree of unassailability when writing about the Great War; and they share a chau-

vinist, heroic vision of history that creates an emotional bond. Equally important as the authors and publishers are the purchasers: municipalities, large as well as mid-sized public or private enterprises, banks, and insurance companies, all competing to publish “their” history of Gallipoli. Publications on the “Armenian question” on the other hand rather draw on the support of the state or other “official” actors (such as the *Türk Tarih Kurumu*). Furthermore, universities and foreign research institutes, particularly those in the United States of America, deserve a closer look. As early as 1991, in his polemical essay *The Turkish State and History: Clio Meets the Grey Wolf*, Speros Vryonis denounced the Turkish governmental policy aimed at directing, controlling, and instrumentalizing foreign research on the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. To be balanced, one also needs to point out the very positive role Turkish doctoral students in American as well as European universities played in elaborating a truthful historiography of the Great War. These academics assumed crucial roles in establishing new approaches to the study of the war.<sup>50</sup>

Another set of actors played a role in the multiplication of publications of historical sources: publishing houses, whether large, such as the *İş Bankası* or *Timaş*, or more modest ones, that publish series of memoirs or other documents of the war. The most common constellation of persons involved in the publication of such books is composed of a descendant of a person who produced or owned a manuscript, an amateur historian, often assisted either by an older person or a student (who does not assist officially or even in the name of his/her university) with a reading knowledge of Ottoman Turkish, the latter of whose task is to transcribe the manuscript into Latin characters and “simplify” it (in Turkish: *sadeleştirme*) by replacing Ottoman vocabulary considered obsolete with modern Turkish equivalents. Consequently, neither scholars officially affiliated with a university nor military historians are usually involved in the process of editing and adapting the document. Publishing houses tend to prefer the texts to be accessible rather than authentic. The editorial work, the critical adaptation, and the number of footnotes are often limited.

### Easier Access to Archives and an Expansion of Sources?

Access to the Ottoman archives (BOA) has become progressively easier since the 1990s. One of the first persons to use these archives for research (in the 1990s) was Fuat Dündar, who was then preparing his master’s thesis on the Unionists’ demographic engineering of Muslim populations in the years from 1913 to 1918. He consulted documents of the Ministry of Interior that had probably never been shared before. In order to explain this unprecedented accessibility, he underlines the role played by the

changing profile of the directorate, but also of the personnel, insisting on the importance their initiative played for his access.<sup>51</sup> According to Dündar, they were no longer nationalist in the sense of protecting Unionist ideas but rather were influenced by the new Islamist trend, which allowed them to hand over these documents without batting an eye. But this can only partially serve as an explanation since the new accessibility did not only concern documents from the Young Turk period (1908–18) but included the history of the Ottoman Empire as a whole. This policy was part of a new level of transparency the Republic offered to improve its position in the debate about the Armenian genocide. Additionally, this shift in attitude can be considered as part of a newly emerging state discourse suggesting that “one should leave the Armenian question to the historians.”<sup>52</sup>

Access to the military archives had been severely restricted for a long time and had only been granted to either army historians or historians “accredited” by the General Staff if convinced of their ideological docility. This was the case at ATASE, where documents about the Great War were assembled under an eponymous subdivision: the *Birinci Dünya Harbi (BDH) Koleksiyonu*,<sup>53</sup> which theoretically should have made access technically easier and quicker than for the Ottoman Archives (BOA). The ATASE archives houses two kinds of sources. The first kind documents correspondences between military authorities of the same rank and vertical correspondence across ranks, giving information about their interaction. The second consists of daily reports that grant insight into the development of battles, the military and security-related situation of an area at any given time, etc.

Authors writing about the Armenian genocide denounce the inaccessibility, the “cleansing” of civil and military archives, and the destruction of documents, claiming that these archives hold fundamental evidence for the activities of the Special Organization that gained notoriety as a main actor in the genocide.

The situation has changed gradually since the 1990s. Today, the website of the Turkish Armed Forces states that the archives are open to four categories of researchers: “1. Turkish citizens; 2. Foreign scholars; 3. Researchers from official institutions [a category of its own!] 4. Authors and researchers coming from ATASE.”<sup>54</sup> The division into distinct categories suggests, however, that differences between researchers are still made according to nationality and affiliation. Besides, the reproduction of documents was forbidden until recently: researchers had to tediously copy them by hand. Mehmet Beşikçi summed up the state of this issue in the introduction to his thesis in 2012: the ATASE “liberally” authorizes the general release of documents for a proposed research topic. However, the decision on whether a specific document falls within the limits of said

topic remains with ATASE. The catalogue represents another burden in listing files and not documents, since the researcher cannot know the number of documents contained in one file.<sup>55</sup>

### Toward a Social and Economic History of the War?

In 1930, the book *Turkey in the World War* was published in the United States by the Turkish journalist Ahmet Emin Yalman, who was in voluntary exile at the time for having engaged in the party opposing Mustafa Kemal until 1925.<sup>56</sup> The geographical distance allowed Yalman not only to develop a more independent perspective but also to expand his approach well beyond that of a military or diplomatic account. His book evokes the politics of the Unionist government (not only focusing on the so-called triumvirate of Enver/Djema/Talaat<sup>57</sup>) but goes far beyond into the past and develops the background to topics usually neglected, namely the war economy and desertions. This is the first Turkish work devoted to the social and economic history of the Great War.

It is only in the 1980s that an economic historian of Boğaziçi University, Zafer Toprak, revisited the subject in his work on the “national economy” of the Unionist period from 1908 to 1918. A second edition appeared in 2003 titled *İttihat-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye’de Devletçilik, 1914–1918* (Union and Progress and the World War: The War Economy and Statism in Turkey, 1914–1918). This edition was more elaborate in problematizing the topic but narrower in focusing on a shorter period (the Great War).<sup>58</sup> Toprak analyzes the Unionist war economy, the effects of the abolition of capitulations, the goal of creating a Muslim merchant class, and the disappropriation of the non-Muslim bourgeoisie that went hand in hand with it. Moreover, he underlines the crucial role played by the decision to make use of the right to print money, a decision that impacted Ottoman financial credibility. According to Toprak, this choice sealed the empire’s decline even more than its military defeats. He also added an analysis of the social effects of the terrible inflation on the empire, which resulted in the emergence of a newly rich class profiting from war and mass pauperization.<sup>59</sup> These social effects as outlined by Toprak are the topic of a recent dissertation by Yiğit Akın on the home front, inspired by the German *Alltagsgeschichte*.<sup>60</sup> Just as Toprak who was a trained economist but then turned to the Great War and its economic dimensions, Erol Köroğlu—trained at Boğaziçi University—did not study history but turned his attention from the field of comparative literature to the Great War, writing a dissertation on the instrumentalization of literature for propagandistic ends, which was defended and published in 2003.<sup>61</sup>

Some fields of research and a few topics such as local history, prisoners of war, and the Special Organization remain largely untouched by the historiographical renewal outlined above. Local actors (public universities, chambers of industry and commerce, municipalities, etc.) incentivize the production of works characterized by a strong local patriotism, comforting official history and avoiding topics such as violence against local non-Muslim populations (Armenians, Greeks, but also Syrians and Chaldeans). This concerns particularly the regions in the east and southeast of Turkey (for the Armenians, the Syrians, and the Chaldeans) and the Aegean coast (for the Greeks). The history of the prisoners of war is a rich subject that has been dealt with in several works, which are unfortunately rather limited and deceiving.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Bone of Contention: The Armenian Genocide and State Violence against Civilians**

The Caucasian front is essential for understanding the Armenian genocide, since the great majority of Ottoman Armenians were situated in the eastern provinces of Anatolia in 1914.

When it comes to the Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) and its wide range of activities—among them espionage, counterintelligence, psychological warfare, guerrilla war, deportation, and mass murder—one must admit that the difficulty in drawing a greater, more detailed picture still prevails until today. Examining its crucial role in the Armenian genocide is an important but not the only challenge. Unfortunately, even though the ATASE archives contain numerous documents concerning the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, only few of them are published. The popular fascination for the arcane nature and the mysteries surrounding the Special Organization has also gripped Turkish researchers. But little is known about this polymorphic organization, whether regarding its origins, its contours, its hierarchy, or even its interactions with other institutions such as the Unionist Party (CUP), the government, and the army.<sup>63</sup>

The genealogy of the centrality of this form of violence has not yet been traced. In order to do so, one probably needs to go back to the debates of the Peace Conference of 1919 and even beyond, if one considers that the figures and motives of this discourse had already been elaborated—with political, ethical, and legal registers—in Europe during the nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup> The centrality of the Armenian genocide, a topic prohibited to research and denied by Turkish historiography, can therefore also serve as an explanation for the lack of discussions on the war in general. Nowadays, this position is not unanimous among Turkish historians anymore

and the discourse is expanding. It may even be argued that today a part of the new generation of historians—by explicitly or implicitly opting for the concept of “demographic” or “ethnic engineering” (*nüfus mühendisliği* or *etnik mühendisliği* in Turkish) as frame of analysis—poses the question of the centrality of extreme violence against civil populations not exclusively for the Armenian genocide or for the World War I period, but extends their interest toward matters of the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and the founding years of the republic (1923–38).<sup>65</sup>

### **Militarism and Mobilization of Resources: New Conceptual Instruments for Breaking the Impasse?**

Turkish militarism has been an object of interest of several books examining both its manifestations and its possible German roots. In this respect, the role of paramilitary youth associations has been analyzed by Zafer Toprak in 1979, followed by Mehmet Beşikçi and more recently Mehmet Ö. Alkan’s work, which focuses on schooling and civic education in the years from 1908 to 1918. The role Germany played within the empire is largely military, with the point of contention being the role of German officers in the Battle of Gallipoli and the German “mission” within the empire. The most important memoirs of German military actors are available in Turkish. Furthermore, there are well-elaborated works on the Prussian/German military influence and its bearings from the Tanzimat period to the 1940s,<sup>66</sup> thus going far beyond the classical studies of Wallach and Trumpener.<sup>67</sup> These analyses also include a reevaluation of the German influence on Ottoman officers who are nowadays no longer considered as unconditional partisans of the Second Reich but rather as militarists socialized in the Prussian/German tradition.

Since 1980, a number of historians have been emphasizing that the conception of a “nation in arms” developed by Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, the leader of the German military mission in Turkey from 1882 to 1895, assumed a central role for the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal. Hande Nezir and Fuat Dündar revisited this Goltzian idea in their dissertations.<sup>68</sup> Dündar explains that von der Goltz’s first contribution was to define a defendable military space and territory corresponding in this case to Anatolia and partially also to Syria. Besides this territorial strategy, he is also known for his book on the nation in arms, *Das Volk in Waffen*, subject to numerous translations and editions. Its Ottoman translation—a bestseller in the empire—is supposed to have inspired the founders of Young Turk militarism and their writings. Finally, another point of contention in Turkey is the effect of importing a German social Darwinist

model, a question that concerns also the German role in the extermination of the Armenians. This issue caused lively debates among historians transcending the rift between deniers and their opponents.

The conscription of all Ottoman citizens regardless of religion adopted after the revolution of the Young Turks (1908) represented one of the most important and most debated measures.<sup>69</sup> It is the logical but “revolutionary” continuation of a constitutional process started in 1856. Even today, there is uncertainty to which extent this reform was applied during the war as it provoked reluctance among non-Muslims as well as Muslims. Doubt is also entertained when it comes to the question of how non-Muslim soldiers (becoming an officer was very rare for non-Muslims and mostly confined to technical domains) interacted with Muslim soldiers, especially within the Muslim military hierarchy. Hence, the challenge for historiography is to abandon its reductive and anachronistic Turkish Muslim-centered perspective and write a truly “Ottoman” history of the army. The topic of non-Muslims in the army touches upon another dimension that shows the definite failure of the 1908 project: from 1915 onward, non-Muslim soldiers were massively and obligatorily transferred to the battalions of forced labor (*amele taburları*) created in 1914. These battalions formed an unarmed and therefore vulnerable labor force. They are a well-studied topic that has raised lively debates among historians that still deserves further and in-depth researches.<sup>70</sup>

Mehmet Beşikçi devoted one part of his thesis to the question of conscription, the “mobilization of manpower,” but also—and more importantly—to the “total war.” He calls the initial mobilization of autumn of 1914 an “organized spontaneity.” His work examines the relations between state and society from the point of view of interaction and thus perceives it as a relationship of permanent negotiation. Furthermore, he emphasizes the evolution of state practices, which seemed to become, according to him, more and more centralized, authoritarian, and nationalist. Yet he arrives at a complex picture oscillating between the great dependence of society on the state and an increase in the repertoire of reactions available to social actors, ranging from voluntary support to mostly passive rather than active resistance. In order to contain these developments and to maintain authority over the situation, the state intervened with new mechanisms of control on a local level.

## Current Tendencies

The new research fields and topics of the historiography of the Ottoman fronts that emerged over the past years are becoming more and more vis-

ible in the numerous academic meetings and publications since 2014. One can be certain that these publications will initiate a new wave of reflection and discussion, bearing fruits in the near future. Some of the conferences organized for the centennial of World War I are platforms for meetings and discussions that have begun to initiate a process of connecting the historiography of the Ottoman fronts with others and bring together Turkish and non-Turkish scholars from abroad with researchers based in Turkey.<sup>71</sup> Another attempt at connecting Western and Turkish discourses about the war is the Thyssen Lecture Series (2014–16), which presents eminent European scholars of World War I to Turkish academic audiences.<sup>72</sup> These events provide occasions for collaborative endeavors and possibly even the emergence of new research topics. However, inasmuch as there may be new opportunities, commemorative conferences in Turkey have historically mostly been occasions for the repetition of entrenched discourses without much critical reflection.

Another form of commemoration has itself become an object of study: the emergent commemoration culture of the Battle of Gallipoli. While it is very visible in Turkish media, its study is rendered difficult by its superficial and nationalist mediatization. An aspect of this field of study includes also the new museums and museology devoted to the Great War. Furthermore, progress has been made regarding the study of the memory of the war in local and regional history. Unfortunately, since memory is mostly a matter of oral transmission, this development set in too late to preserve the voices of the last living witnesses. As for the sociocultural history of the Great War, it is without any doubt a newcomer. Here, we firstly need to mention advancements in visual history that not only reads historical visual material as propaganda material but also sheds light on its creators: painters, moviemakers, and photographers.

Finally, a space has been opened up for the study of actors such as women and children beyond their traditional places in nationalist discourse. Concerning children, particularly the works on orphanages are multiplying—often in the context of the Armenian genocide.<sup>73</sup> As for women, they are no longer solely seen as passive subjects—for example as victims (of masculine violence) or in their role as brave mothers and attentive nurses—but also as protagonists in their own right, having agency in their interaction with authorities, for example when promoting petitions.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, manliness, triumphant or injured, became an interest of research.<sup>75</sup> Finally, yet importantly, the topic of sexuality—except for prostitution<sup>76</sup>—remains mostly unexplored.

Concluding this all-too-short overview, two essential domains remain that deserve brief examination: the first, socioeconomic history, is being addressed anew after a long intermission, while the second, the Armenian

deportation camps in Ottoman Syria, is being engaged for the first time. Socioeconomic history emerged in the 1970s and nowadays concentrates on two major sets of questions, both addressing the economy of war in a critical way: firstly, the issue of food supply and nutrition, a crucial subject in times marked by shortages and famines; and secondly, the disposal of economic goods and properties belonging to minorities<sup>77</sup> and the human exploitation implicit in the term “wartime efforts.” Finally, one might paint the development of narratives of the war with an individual perspective: in a country like Turkey, where national heroes as well as collective confessional and ethnic identities have been construed as of utmost importance for history, narrating individual stories is essential for a renewal of historiography. Some works are now giving insights into the conditions of those who survived the war, permanently renegotiating identities and loyalties.

Moving on to the contemporary historiography of the Armenian genocide, one can distinguish two major topics of interest: the deportation camps in Ottoman Syria on the one hand and the conversion of Armenians to Islam during the wartime period on the other, although these topics themselves do not align with the stance of the researcher regarding the matter of recognition or denial of the genocide.

The issue of the size of the population of the Syrian camps has major implications in terms of demography, while the living conditions concern their nature as instruments of the Armenian genocide. The higher the number of people deported to Syria, the more one can adjust downward the number of victims of the genocide (as an event happening outside of the camps)—an argument used by the deniers. Yet, contrariwise, works on mortality statistics render some of these camps part of the genocide. Some Turkish historians consider that there is another question to be addressed when speaking about deportation: the treatment of Ottoman soldiers in enemy war camps and the violation of the law of war.<sup>78</sup> This matter allows them to shift the issue from the treatment of civilians to that of soldiers, resulting in the claim that it was not the Ottomans who committed war crimes but the Allied forces. Moreover, the present debate around camps and orphanages also concerns the policies of Djemal Pasha, the “leader” of Ottoman Syria, usually much less targeted than Enver or Talat Pashas for his role and or attitude during the genocide process.<sup>79</sup> They are the object of historiographical works that are not limited to his presumed role in and responsibility for the genocide.

Coming to the second major field of interest in present historiography, conversions of Armenians to Islam,<sup>80</sup> one inevitably touches upon the issue of memory. This is the case particularly for the descendants of Islamized Armenians who discovered the identity of their ancestors

only recently. Fethiye Çetin, since 2005 the lawyer of the late Armenian journalist Hrant Dink and—after his assassination in January 2007—the lawyer of his family, published a book about the story of her Armenian grandmother in December 2004 that served as a catalyst for further works.<sup>81</sup> Since then, several testimonies in the form of monographs and articles have been printed, journalists have embarked on investigations, and documentarists accompanied Islamized Armenians rediscovering their ancestral roots. The Armenian community in and outside of Turkey reacted to these developments with both interest and perplexity. First of all, this kind of memory diverges from the memory of the genocide even if it is a direct consequence of it. Also, Islamized Armenians rediscovering their roots do not necessarily intend to change their religion but often opt to embrace a multiple identity. And finally, the publications are the grievances of Armenians claiming to have been forgotten and ignored for decades. This *travail de mémoire* has been followed by historical research in three distinct directions: first, the rediscovery of Armenian roots; second, conversions on local and regional levels in 1915; and third, a comparison with earlier waves of conversion in the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. A conference organized by Boğaziçi University and the Hrant Dink Foundation in November 2013 revealed once again the importance of this matter.<sup>82</sup> In Turkey, these debates became possible due to a major change in how the genocide is dealt with, opening up avenues formerly closed by the shared consensus of denial. The last part of this chapter will report on this change.

### A Break with the Culture of Denial in Turkey

The coup on 12 September 1980 put Turkish universities more closely under state control and thus turned them into ideologically rather docile institutions. Hundreds of leftist academics were dismissed or forced to resign. As a consequence, social science research developed outside of the university, sometimes in cooperation with universities abroad, but mostly with Turkish civil society associations, niche media, and publishers. The publishing houses Belge and İletişim as well as the Foundation of History (Tarih Vakfı), a research foundation, an NGO, and a publishing house at the same time, played a crucial role in these developments. Ultimately, these dynamics fostered the emergence of a critical history eager to face the black pages (and particularly the genocide) of Turkey's past. Even more than political liberalization, the foundation of dozens of new universities allowed these actors to reenter educational and research environments from the 1990s onward. The development of a critical

history was further reinforced by the increase of Ottoman and Turkish history scholars who studied or worked in universities and research centers abroad.

Beginning in the 1980s, a slight change in official stance became visible when the state that had previously strongly denied the genocide announced that from now on the “Armenian question” should be left to historians and not to politicians. This tactical change came in parallel to the emergence of research centers on the “Armenian question” in Turkish universities and the funding of foreign scholars supporting the Turkish thesis. The certainty that the Ottoman archives were framed by the view of the imperial bureaucracy in 1915—and had probably been “cleaned” several times—allowed the state to open the archives to two foreign historians recognizing the genocide and working in the archives until 1995.<sup>83</sup> The official stance has not changed since then and has been reflected even by the protocols signed between Turkey and Armenia on 10 October 2009.<sup>84</sup>

The dynamics of the 1990s gave rise to the occasion of translating into Turkish multiple books on the genocide, such as the ones by Taner Akçam. He had been a far-left activist and thus became a political refugee in Germany in the years 1977–78. Initially trained in the social sciences, he focused on torture and political violence in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey before specializing on the Armenian genocide. In the beginning, he privileged a judicial approach working mainly on the trials opened in the years 1918 to 1920<sup>85</sup> against the head of the Committee of Union and Progress and the bureaucracy for their implication in the extermination of Armenians, but he later extended his field of research.<sup>86</sup> Continuing his academic career in the United States earned him the recognition of the Armenian diaspora and its researchers. He was the first Turkish scholar to be supported by the Armenian diaspora, which provided him with international prominence.

Akçam’s work, conceived in the United States, was published on the brink of a conference devoted to the fate of the Armenians held in Istanbul at the end of September 2005. His presence at this conference, which was intended only for a Turkish audience, represented the first encounter between Akçam’s novel work and a slowly transforming Turkish academia.

The conference titled “The Armenians during the Last Imperial Period: Scientific Responsibility and Questions Concerning Democracy”<sup>87</sup> was co-organized by three of the most prestigious Turkish universities. This conference endeavored to embed 1915 within the context of war. Indeed, this exercise in remembering history had a cathartic dimension, since a great number of Turkish intellectuals and scholars participating in the conference were not convinced by the existence of the genocide

at the time. Hrant Dink, a Turkish Armenian, also a committed leftist journalist and activist for human rights, participated in this conference, defending the idea that the Armenian drama had to be approached in a “compassionate” way by integrating the trauma of the victims and the local as well as familial dimensions.<sup>88</sup>

Dink’s assassination on 19 January 2007 provoked a chorus of outrage and mass demonstrations in Istanbul, where people were chanting “We are all Armenian.” What had been intended as an act of silencing the voices demanding recognition of the genocide, the assassination provoked the exact opposite response: a long-term mobilization of numerous different actors even more determined than before.<sup>89</sup> One of the results was a petition collecting apologies to the Armenians signed by more than thirty thousand people in mid-December 2008.<sup>90</sup> This wide success was partly based on the support of many Kurdish activists in Turkey, testifying that the Kurdish movement had lived through an *aggiornamento* regarding the genocide and accepted the idea of a shared responsibility of the Kurds. From 2010 on, intellectuals and activists commemorate the genocide each 24 April, assembling and organizing sit-ins in Istanbul and a few other Turkish cities.<sup>91</sup>

No matter to what extent the AKP-led government and the Turkish state disapproved of the transformation since 2005, they did not prevent it. Hence, the culture of denial that used to be a national consensus is nowadays contested. Time will tell if this contestation will succeed in paving a way to widened recognition. Undeniably, these movements have already forced the government to change its stance, as evidenced by the “condolences” for the events of 1915 presented by the Turkish prime minister on 23 April 2014.

Since 2015, the aforementioned new trends have been strongly impacted by the worsening of the political climate in Turkey. A Kurdish-Turkish peace process was ongoing in the country since the end of 2012. But negotiations were suddenly stopped after the June 2015 general elections, whose results provided substantial gains for the Kurdish party HDP and, for the ruling Islamist party AKP, were bad enough to make it lose its majority at the Great National Assembly. The armed conflict restarted with heavy civil casualties in the southeast. In January 2016, a petition initiated in Turkish academia was signed by hundreds of people. Titled “We Will Not Be Part to This Crime,” this document protested the way the Turkish army was striking towns in the southeast, and it urged the restart of broken negotiations. Prosecutions were launched against hundreds of these academics.

The political climate deteriorated once more after the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016, and even if there were absolutely no connections

between the actors of the failed coup and the “Academics for Peace,” the Turkish courts opened trials against circa five hundred academics on the ground of terrorist propaganda. None of these scholars was actually working on World War I. But the very rude way the state and the government used the pretext of these trials to systematically take a firm control on universities and research institutions, whatever their statute was, brought academic autonomy near to zero and froze many of the depicted inner dynamics that had paved the way to a renewed historiography of World War I in Turkey. The very nationalistic turn of the Turkish government after 2015 may have also frightened many scholars of challenging the official discourse and narratives on national history, especially regarding sensitive matters such as the one of Armenian genocide.

To this heavy atmosphere, one has to add the consequences of the financial and economic crisis that started in 2018 in order to understand how the means shrunk for those who want to promote a less chauvinistic understanding of World War I. As to now, this kind of effort is mainly supported by Turkish scholars and or by research centers based abroad, a feature that was present before but whose importance was probably underestimated.

## Conclusion

The commemorations ended in 2018, and public attention is now oriented toward the aftermath of World War I—that means the War of Independence (1919–22) and the Lausanne Treaty (1923), which both compose the real core of the national epos. This chapter has shed light on the widespread idea that the late empire was involved in a disastrous Ten-Year War (1912–22) that encompassed the Great War. Nowadays, this chronological frame is also applied by Western historians specialized on other fronts of World War I who share the idea that the war didn’t really end in 1918, but between 1923 and 1924. And some of these historians are now including the Ottoman fronts within this widened chronology.

Robert Gerwarth, the author of the *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923* is one of them.<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, his book, published in 2016, was also printed in Turkish in December 2018 by a publishing house with a great exposure. Gerwarth, in an earlier book, together with John Horne, explored the paramilitary dynamics that made this belated ending of the war possible, and therefore questioned the blurred boundaries between civilians and the military.<sup>93</sup> This chapter has stressed how accurate this perspective was for the Ottoman fronts. Horne and Gerwarth’s book included a contribution titled “Paramilitary Vio-

lence in the Collapsing Ottoman Empire,” penned by Ugur Ümit Ungör, a Dutch scholar born in Turkey but trained in the Netherlands and whose first works were devoted to the Armenian genocide.

What has changed from 2012 onward? Turkish historiography and historians are much more accessible, at least for those whose works are partly written in English, translations from Turkish being very rare beside autotranslations. Gerwarth’s monography showed a repeated use, even if limited, of the historiography on the Ottoman fronts and on the aftermath of the Great War in the Middle East, a historiography based, among others, on sources in Ottoman and sometimes in other languages spoken in the empire, and on a bibliography in modern Turkish. Many of the references used by Gerwarth belong to Turkish scholars based abroad. As for most of the Turkish historians based in Turkey, books like *The Vanquished* challenge the prevailing national understanding of World War I that is reluctant to put the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey in a broader perspective that would, for example, help them understand how common Turkish revisionism was after 1918, in comparison with others in Europe.

The Ottoman fronts of the Great War are not as unique as they appear to be. For example, in the British and French cases, the battles of the Somme and of Verdun tend to overshadow other developments of the war as well. Another reality shared to different degrees by multiple protagonists of the war is the plurality of the fronts. Finally, violence against civilians, although more clearly pronounced on the Ottoman fronts, is by no means absent in Europe.

The originality of Turkish historiography, hence, arises rather from the pivotal role of two elements: the Armenian genocide as the climactic expression of this violence and the entanglement of civil and military spheres, with the latter characterizing both the history and the historiography of the war in Turkey. Both elements, genocide and entanglement, influenced the conditions of the production of historiography and its contents. The “Armenian question” reinforced the autarkic and nationalist character of the Turkish war narrative. Furthermore, by emphasizing the role played by both Armenian militias and the Special Organization, it has also introduced a civilian element into a history hitherto exclusively military: both actors are caught in an inextricable knot of civil and military identities. The 1980 coup certainly introduced a new dimension of militarization that shortly afterward—paradoxically—turned into a demilitarization promoted by those it excluded. The investment in other, new fields of research beyond diplomatic and military history is one manifestation of this trend that was already foreshadowed in the 1970s. Moreover, a process of searching for points of articulation—and friction—between state and society going beyond the usual examination

of the state-society relation had its beginnings at this time. Even though this set of questions has been alluded to, it only progresses slowly, still being hindered by the new process of fragmentation that splits the former official narrative of war up into a plurality of new histories. The question, of course, is to what extent this new plurality of voices can influence the national(istic) consensus on the war beyond purely academic discourse. The fragility of the emergent alternative narratives and their links with political agendas and developments in Turkey make their future unclear.

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## Notes

1. I'm deeply indebted to my colleague Till Luge, who helped me in editing this chapter in English. Thanks as well to Timour Muhidine (INALCO) and Nikos Sigalas (CETOBaC) for their careful reading and check.
2. By Turkish historiography, one means here not only the Turkish historians, wherever they are based, but also the non-Turkish historians working on the history of the World War I and using bibliography and sources in Ottoman and modern Turkish.
3. The academic conferences and other venues organized between 2014 and 2018, during the commemorative period of the Great War, didn't pave the way to many studies on Turkish historiography. Yet, in 2019, the Turkologist Fabio Grassi (Sapienza University-Rome) delivered a short but inspiring paper. See Fabio Grassi, "Turkish Historiography on the WWI," in *The Great War. A European commitment of Research and Reflection*, edited by Andrea Ciampani and Romano Ugolini (Roma: Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano – Rubbettino, 2019), 151–67. See also Ömer Turan, "Turkish Historiography of the First World War," *Middle East Critique* 23, no. 2 (May 2014): 241–57. Both historians agree on the fact that this historiography is overshadowed by the one on the Turkish War of Independence (1919–22) and the interest for the World War I period often reduced to the Battle of Gallipoli. Furthermore, Ömer Turan underscores the existence of many memoirs. However, these memoirs are often republished (for the memoirs, see *infra* in my text). Mesut Uyar, a Turkish military historian, claims rightly that several unpublished memoirs of Ottoman officers are kept in the military archives.

4. Both terms were used after the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1938). In comparison with the former term “Kemalism,” Atatürkism refers much more to the sole thought pattern and views of Atatürk than to the Early Republican Era (1923–38), a period of key structural reforms conducted under the leadership and initiative of Mustafa Kemal, as president of Turkey. From the May 1960 coup on, and in a systematic manner after the September 1980 coup, Atatürkism has been conceived by the state military and civilian bureaucracy as a tool for legitimizing policies that sometimes had very little in common with the policies followed by the founder of the Turkish republic.
5. Alexandre Toumarkine, “La Turquie d’aujourd’hui et la Grande Guerre,” *Matériaux d’histoire du temps présent* 113–14 (2014): 32–41.
6. Serdar Değirmencioglu, “Şehit Turizmi: Kitlelerin Çanakkale Seferberliği” [Martyr tourism: The mass mobilization in Gallipoli], in *Öl Dediler Öldüm. Türkiye’de Şehitlik Mitleri*, edited by Serdar Değirmencioglu (Istanbul: İletişim, 2014), 373.
7. General Fahri Belen, ed., *Birinci Cihan Harbi’nde Türk Harbi*, 4 vols. (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1963–67). A fifth volume was posthumously published in 1979, four years after Belen’s death.
8. Four books appeared in the 1980s, two in the 1990s, and sixteen between 2000 and 2008. These books deal with the activities of Armenian groups and focus on the abuses and massacres committed by Armenians.
9. Five works in total, among them two booklets.
10. Ten titles in the 2000s. For a very descriptive presentation of these publications until 2002, see Edward J. Erickson, “The Turkish Official Military Histories of the First World War: A Bibliographic Essay,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 3 (2003), 190–98.
11. Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000).
12. The criticism was published in *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2003): 297.
13. Edward J. Erickson, *Size Ölmeyi Emrediyorum: Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Osmanlı Ordusu* (Istanbul: Kitap, 2003).
14. Edward J. Erickson, *Dünya Savaşı’nda Osmanlı Ordusu (Çanakkale, Kutü’l-Amare ve Filistin Cephesi* [The Ottoman army in the world war: Gallipoli, Kut-Al-Amara, and the Palestinian front] (Istanbul: İş Bankası, 2009).
15. Edward J. Erickson, *Gelibolu, Osmanlı Harekatı* (Istanbul: İş Bankası, 2012).
16. Since access to the Ottoman diplomatic archives is possible, the Isis publishing house based in Istanbul but publishing mainly in French and English on Turkey and the Ottoman Empire has started to systematically issue documents of the Archives of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs through a series of eight volumes on “The origins of World War One.”
17. Mesut Uyar, personal interview with author, Çanakkale, October 2005.
18. On Bayur, see Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 11–12.
19. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılap Tarihi* [History of the Turkish revolution] (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1939–63).
20. These volumes were published between 1940 and 1943.
21. This continuity has been evidenced by Erik-Jan Zürcher in *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).
22. Stanford Shaw taught at Bilkent University, Ankara, while Feroz Ahmad is teaching at Yeditepe University, Istanbul.

23. See Feroz Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks 1908–1918," *Review* (Spring 1988): 265–86. Translated into Turkish as "Jön Türkler Döneminde Savaş ve Toplum," *Tarih ve Toplum* 64 (1989): 239–48. The article was reprinted under the same title in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury, and Mary Christina Wilson (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1993), 125–43. See also Feroz Ahmad, "Ideology and War Aims of the Unionist Government, 1914–1918," *Annales de la Faculté de droit d'Istanbul* 33, no. 50 (2001): 1–13; Feroz Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality and Intervention: August–November 1914," in *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History*, edited by Sinan Kulneralp (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1990), 441–61.
24. Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006, 2008). A third volume, edited by Shaw's widow, Ayşe Ezel Kural Shaw, is in preparation.
25. Esad Pasha was Mustafa Kemal's teacher at the Military Academy (Harbiye).
26. Cemil Conk, *Çanakkale Conkbayırı Savaşları, Atatürk'ün Yaptığı Görülmemiş Yiğitçe Sıngü Hücumü* [The unique and brave bayonet attack led by Atatürk at the Battle of Chunuk Bair in the Gallipoli Campaign] (Ankara: Erkânıharbiye Umumiye Basımevi, 1959). Cemil Conk (1873–1963) took part in the battle of Anafartalar as lieutenant colonel. Besides, he was one of the commanding officers of the Turkish army during the War of Independence.
27. Mustafa Kemal, *Anafartalar Muharebatı'na Ait Tarihçe* [History of the Battle of Anafartalar] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1962).
28. Sermet Atacanlı, *Atatürk ve Çanakkale'nin Komutanları* (Istanbul: MB, 2006).
29. Fabio Grassi, "Turkish Historiography," pointed also this long framework.
30. The Conference and Treaty of Lausanne (1922–23) and the Frontier Treaty signed in 1926.
31. The posthumous memoirs of Halil Paşa who successfully besieged Kut-Al-Amara are titled *Bitmeyen Savaş* (An unending war).
32. On desertion, which had for a long time been an issue rather unnoticed in historiography, see Erik-Jan Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion: The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in World War I," *Turcica* 28 (1996): 235–58; and Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilisation of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). The book has been published in Turkish by İş Bankası in 2015.
33. İsmet Görgülü, *On Yıllık Harbin Kadrosu: 1912–1922* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993).
34. *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Üst Kademedeki Komutanların Biyografileri* [The biographies of the highest-ranking officers of the First World War], 3 vols. (Ankara: ATASE, 2009).
35. Erik-Jan Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert: The War Experience of the Ottoman Soldier," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. Peter Liddle and Hugh Cecil (London: Lee Cooper, 1996), 230–41.
36. On Turkish psychiatry during the Great War, see the works of Yücel Yanıkdağ, especially *Healing the Nation: Prisoners of War, Medicine and Nationalism in Turkey, 1914–1939* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). For issues related to health, see the works of Hikmet Özdemir and Oya Dağlar: *Oya Dağlar, War, Epidemics and Medicine in the Late Ottoman Empire (1912–1918)* (Haarlem: Sota, 2008); Hikmet Özdemir, *The Ottoman Army, 1914–1918: Diseases and Death on the Battlefield* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008).
37. Ozan Arslan earned his PhD in 2011 from the University Paul Valéry—Montpellier III writing about this front. He is the author of a work on the Ottoman military

- operations in the Caucasus: *Osmanlı'nın Son Zaferleri: 1918 Kafkas Harekatı* [The last Ottoman victories: Operations in the Caucasus in 1918] (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010). For a broader chronological perspective, see also Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empire; 1908–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
38. Syria was also the place where Djemal Pasha ruled from 1915 to 1917. Despite the publication of a biography penned by Nevzat Artuç (*Cemal Paşa: Askeri ve siyasi hayatı* [Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008]), Djemal Pasha's local activities and his power in the new Unionist leadership were little covered until recently. See Talha Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha's Governorate during World War I, 1914–1917* (London: Routledge, 2014); and Talha Çiçek, ed., *Syria in World War I: Politics, Economy and Society* (London: Routledge, 2015).
  39. For the jihad, see Erik Jan Zürcher, ed., *Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's "Holy War Made in Germany"* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), and Donald M. McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998); for the Ottoman Pan-Islamism, see Namık Sinan Turan, "Gerçek ve İllüzyon Arasında: Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na Giden Süreçte Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Panislamizm" [Between reality and illusion: The Ottoman Empire and Pan-Islamism during the process leading to World War I], in: *Nuray Yıldırım Armağan Kitabı* (Istanbul: BETİM, 2016), 515–45.
  40. As a first exception: Hasan Kayalı's classical work: *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Second Constitutional Period of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Recently, Eugen Rogan published a comprehensive and original study: *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East, 1914–1920* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).
  41. Beşikçi, *Ottoman Mobilisation of Manpower*, 14–15.
  42. Michael A. Reynolds, "Buffers, Not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism," *Past and Present* 203 (2009): 137–79; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*.
  43. See Mustafa Çolak, *Alman İmparatorluğu'nun Doğu Siyaseti Çerçevesinde Kafkasya Politikası (1914–1918)*. [The Caucasus policy of the German Empire in the framework of Eastern politics, 1914–1918] (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 2006); see also Selami Kılıç, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkilerinin Doğuşu* [The birth of Turkish-Soviet relations] (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1998).
  44. Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Kaukasuspolitik der Mittelmächte*, vol. 1: *Ihre Basis in der Orient-Politik und ihre Aktionen 1914–1917* (Wien: Böhlau, 1975); vol. 2: *Die Zeit der versuchten kaukasischen Staatlichkeit (1917–1918)* (Wien: Böhlau, 1992).
  45. And even more so of the politics directed toward the minorities of Imperial Russia.
  46. See Stefanos Yerasimos, *Türk-Sovyet İlişkileri: Ekim Devriminden 'Milli Mücadele'ye* [Turkish-Soviet relations: From the October Revolution to the "national struggle"] (Istanbul: Gözlem, 1979); Stefanos Yerasimos, "Sur les origines du mouvement de l'Armée verte en Anatolie," *Etudes Balkaniques* (1977): 98–108; and Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar (1908–1925)* [Leftist currents in Turkey, 1908–1925] (Ankara: Bilgi, 1967).
  47. See, for instance, Ali Rıza Eti, *Bir Onbaşımın Doğu Cephesi Günlüğü 1914–1915* [The diary of a corporal on the Eastern Front, 1914–1915] (Ankara: İş Bankası, 2009).
  48. Beşikçi, *Ottoman Mobilisation of Manpower*, 23–24.
  49. Gültekin Yıldız, "Bir De-militarizasyon Projesi: Geç Osmanlı 'Askeri Tarih' Araştırmaları Sivilleştirilmek" [A de-militarization project: Civilizing research on the mili-

- tary history of the late Ottoman period], *Toplumsal Tarih* 198 (June 2010): 44–53; see also Gültekin Yıldız and Cevat Şayin, *Osmanlı Askeri Tarihini Araştırmak: Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar* [Researching Ottoman military history: New sources, new approaches] (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010).
50. For example, and among others: Yiğit Akın, Fuat Dündar, Elif Mahir Metinsoy, and Yücel Yanıkdağ.
  51. Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskan Politikası (1913–1918)* [The settlement policy of muslims of the Committee of Union and Progress, 1913–1918] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001). Dündar, interview with author, February 2007.
  52. The president of the Republic of Turkey (1993–2000), Süleyman Demirel, was the first one to use this dictum at the beginning of his term.
  53. The other sections are “The Wars before the Balkan Wars,” “The Balkan Wars,” “The Health Issues,” “Veterinarian Military History,” and “The Archives.”
  54. Website of the Turkish army forces, retrieved 11 August 2019 from <https://www.tsk.tr/Sayfalar/viewName=TarihtenKesitler>.
  55. Mehmet Beşikçi estimates not having been able to consult more than about a third of the documents he needed.
  56. Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1930).
  57. For a reappraisal of Talaat's role during the Great War, and more specifically his responsibility in the Armenian Genocide, see the recent biography of the Unionist leader by Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Talaat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018). In his *War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha's Governorate during World War I, 1914–1917* (New York: Routledge, 2014), Talha Çiçek takes issues with the idea of a monolithic triumvirate, without, however abandoning the concept. Yet one may underline for the wartime the emergence and or empowerment of important political figures of the Comity Union and Progress, such as Kara Kemal in charge of supplying food to the Ottoman capital, or Bahaddin Şakir, whose role in the genocide is crucial. Further, the degree of autonomy of the main generals and the commandants of the Ottoman army on the field is still an important and omitted dimension that needs to be evaluated.
  58. Zafer Toprak, *İttihat-Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye'de Devletçilik, 1914–1918* (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2003).
  59. See Şevket Pamuk: “The Ottoman Economy in World War I,” in *The Economics of World War I*, ed. Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 112–35.
  60. Yiğit Akın, “The Ottoman Home Front during World War I: Everyday Politics, Society, and Culture” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2011). The dissertation turned into a book: Yiğit Akın, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).
  61. Erol Köroğlu, *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı (1914–1918): Propagandadan Millî Kimlik İnşasına* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2004). The book was published in English in 2007 by I. B. Tauris under the title *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey during World War I*.
  62. Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Ana Ben Ölmedim* [Mum, I am not dead!] (Istanbul: İş Bankası, 2008); Doğan Şahin, *Türklere Esir Olmak- Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Savaş Yıllarında Yabancı Esirler* [To be prisoner of the Turks: Foreign POWs in the war period from the Ottoman Empire to the republic] (Istanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2015); Ahmet Tetik et Mehmet Şükrü Güzel, *Osmanlılara Karşı İşlenen Savaş Suçları (1911–1921)* [War

- crimes committed against Ottomans (1911–1991)] (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2013). More interesting is Yücel Yanıkdağ's, "Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia, 1914–22," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 1 (January 1999): 69–85. For an overview by the same author, see "Prisoners of War (Ottoman Empire/Middle East)," in *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, and Bill Nasson, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10269>.
63. Beside published sources like memoirs penned by members of the organization, one has mainly to look at the works of two Turkish historians: Ahmet Tetik and Safi Polat. For the latter, see first and foremost his unpublished dissertation: "The Ottoman Special Organization—Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa: An Inquiry into Its Operational and Administrative Characteristics" (PhD diss., Department of History, Bilkent University, 2012). Among published works in English, one may look at Safi Polat, "History in the Trench: The Ottoman Special Organization—Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Literature," *Middle Eastern Studies* 48 (January 2012): 89–106. Ahmet Tetik has been the head of the ATASE archives. See Ahmet Tetik, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Umur-ı Şarkıyye Dairesi) Tarihi* [The history of the Special Organization (the Office for Eastern Affairs)], vol. 1: 1914–1916, and vol. 2: 1917 (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014, 2018). Regarding the involvement of the Special Organization on the Caucasian Front, see Nikos Sigalas, "La Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa sur le front du Caucase: De la politique du front vers la politique de l'arrière-front; prélude au Génocide," in *Marges et pouvoir dans l'espace (post)ottoman. XIXe-XXe siècles*, Hamit Bozarslan (Paris: Karthala, 2018).
64. Nikos Sigalas, "Intention et contingence: L'historiographie de la violence sur les minorités dans son rapport avec le droit," in *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 12 (2011): 1–34, <http://ejts.revues.org/index4552.html> (online since 19 June 2012).
65. Nikos Sigalas and I edited three contributions to the *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (EJTS) that concern this phenomenon. For a general idea: Nikos Sigalas and Alexandre Toumarkine, "Demographic Engineering, Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing: Dominant Paradigms for Studying Minority Populations in Turkey and the Balkans," in *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 7 (2008): <http://ejts.revues.org/index2933.html> (online since November 16, 2009).
66. İlber Ortaylı, *İkinci Abdülhamit Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Alman Nüfuzu* [The German influence in the Ottoman Empire during Abdülhamid's reign] (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1981); Mustafa Gencer, *Jöntürk Modernizmi ve Alman Ruhü* [Young Turk modernism and the German state of mind] (Istanbul: İletişim, 2003); Cemil Koçak, *Türk-Alman İlişkileri (1923–1939): İki Dünyâ Savaşı Arasındaki Dönemde Siyâsal, Kültürel, Askerî ve Ekonomik İlişkiler* [Turkish-German relations (1923–1939): Political, cultural, military, and economic relations during the interwar period] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991).
67. Ulrich Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire: 1914–1918* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967); Jehuda Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe: Die preußisch-deutschen Militärmissionen in der Türkei 1835–1919* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1976).
68. Handan Nezir-Akmese, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to WWI* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010).
69. On the conscription of non-Muslim soldiers, see Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerin Askerlik Serüveni* [The experience of military service by Ottoman non-Muslims]

- (Istanbul: Simurg, 2000), 127–71, and Erik-Jan Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice. 1844–1918,” in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia*, ed. Erik-Jan Zürcher (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 437–49.
70. See Erik-Jan Zürcher, “Birinci Dünya Savaşı’nda Amele Taburları” [The battalions of forced labor in World War I], in *Savaş, Devrim ve Uluslaşma* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2005), 201–14. Regarding the systematic assassination of Armenians enlisted in these battalions, see Raymond H. Kevorkian, “Recueil de témoignages sur l’extermination des Amele tabouri ou bataillons de soldats ouvriers arméniens pendant la Première Guerre mondiale,” *Revue d’Histoire Arménienne Contemporaine* 1 (1995): 298–303. Concerning the fate of the Jews in these battalions, see Leyla Neyzi, ed., *Amele Taburu: The Military Journal of a Jewish Soldier in Turkey during the War of Independence* (Istanbul: Isis, 2007).
  71. The most successful conference thus far in this regard was “Not All Quiet on the Ottoman Fronts: Neglected Perspectives on a Global War (1914–1918),” organized by the Orient-Institut Istanbul, the Foundation for History (Tarih Vakfı), and five prominent Istanbul-based universities, held at İstanbul Bilgi University, 8–12 April 2014.
  72. These lecture series were supported by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and co-organized by the Orient-Institut Istanbul and Turkish host universities in Istanbul and provincial towns.
  73. See Naksan Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children and Youth during World War I* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019).
  74. See Elif Mahir Metinsoy, *Ottoman Women during World War I: Everyday Experiences, Politics, and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Nicole van Os, “Women’s Mobilization for War (Ottoman Empire/Middle East),” in *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.11287.
  75. See the abovementioned studies by Yücel Yanıkdağ.
  76. See Çiğdem Oğuz, “Prostitution (Ottoman Empire),” in *1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.11038.
  77. See Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (New York: Continuum Books, 2011); Hilmar Kaiser, “Armenian Property, Ottoman Law and Nationality Policies during the Armenian Genocide, 1915–1916,” in *The World War I as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Olaf Farschid et al., (Beirut: Orient-Institute Beirut, 2006); Bedross Der Matossian, “The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of ‘Armenian Capital’ at the End of the Ottoman Empire,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* (6 October 2011): retrieved 18 June 2015 from <http://ejts.revues.org/4411>; in Turkish, see Nevzat Onaran, *Osmanlı’da Ermeni ve Rum Mallarının Türkleştirilmesi (1914–1919)* [The Turkification of Armenian and Greek goods (1914–1919)] (Istanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2013); Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhü: Emval-i Metruke Kanunlarında Soykırımın İzini Sürmek* [The spirit of the laws: To follow the trace of the genocide through the abandoned properties Laws ] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012).
  78. See Emre Öktem and Alexandre Toumarkine, “Will the Trojan War Take Place? Violations of the Rules of War and the Battle of the Dardanelles (1915),” *International Review of the Red Cross* 97 (2015): 1047–64.

79. See Hilmar Kaiser, "Regional Resistance to Central Government Policies: Ahmed Djemal Pasha, the Governors of Aleppo, and Armenian Deportees in the Spring and Summer of 1915," *Journal of Genocide Research* 12, no. 3 (2010): 173–218; and Ümit Kurt, "A Rescuer, an Enigma and a Génocidaire: Cemal Pasha," in *The End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Margaret Lavinia Anderson, Seyhan Bayraktar, and Thomas Schmutz (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2019), 221–45. This book contains several chapters devoted to CUP and Teşkilat-I Mahsusa prominent figures (see contributions by Candan Badem, Mehmet Polatel, Hilmar Kaiser, Umit Kürt, and Ozan Ozavci).
80. For the historiography, see Taner Akçam, *Ermenilerin Zorla Müslümanlaştırılması* [The forced Islamization of the Armenians] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014).
81. Fethiye Çetin, *Anneannem* [My grandmother] (Istanbul: Metis, 2004). The book has been translated to English and published under the title *My Grandmother: A Memoir* (London: Verso, 2008).
82. The conference proceedings were published by the Hrant Dink Foundation under the title *Müslümanlıştırılmış Ermeniler* (Istanbul, Hrant Dink Vakfı, 2015).
83. These are Hilmar Kaiser, a German scholar who specialized in the study of the Armenian genocide, and Ara Sarafian, the director of the Gomidas Institut, based in London.
84. One of the aims of the protocol was to "implement a dialogue on the historical dimension with the aim to restore mutual confidence between the two nations, including an impartial and scientific examination of the historical records and archives to define existing problems and formulate recommendations." The ratification process of the protocols ended in 2010.
85. His dissertation defended at Hannover University in 1995 addressed this very topic.
86. Taner Akçam's main books in English are *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
87. The conference was held at Bilgi University (Istanbul) and supported by two other prestigious universities based in Istanbul: Boğaziçi and Sabancı.
88. Based on my own observation as a follower of the debates of the conference.
89. One of the measures that ensured the sustainability of the mobilization was the creation of the Hrant Dink Foundation (Hrant Dink Vakfı) in 2011.
90. The short text of the petition actually did not contain the word "genocide": "My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial of the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them."
91. Those held in Istanbul are commemorating the arrest and murder of 2,345 Armenian notables, among them many intellectuals and artists.
92. Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923* (London: Penguin Books, 2016).
93. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

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*Chapter 12*

**ITALIAN MEMORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY,  
AND WORLD WAR I**

1914–2019

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The Great War played a central role in the construction of Italian public memory, for two main reasons. On the one hand, it was considered from the outset as the final act of the Risorgimento, since the war had finally succeeded in making the natural boundaries of the peninsula coincide with its political borders. On the other hand, the war also marked the start of a new phase of history, thanks to the prestige and new international standing that victory had brought to Italy.

Even after interest in the political and diplomatic events that had made it possible to achieve these two fundamental results had dissipated between the 1950s and 1960s, attention to this period never disappeared. Rather, following the realization that the unique feature of the Great War was its total mobilization of the available human and material resources—and that for precisely this reason it was a true “test-bed of humanity” from a social, cultural, political, and institutional point of view—the years between 1915 and 1918 inevitably also became a fundamental “historiographical laboratory.”<sup>1</sup>

## Italian Memories of the *Grande Guerra* 1918–2018

The celebration of 4 November 1918, the day when the armistice with Austria-Hungary came into force, is the only date that has been kept through all phases of Italian history from 1918 onward. The occasion was proclaimed a national holiday and Victory Day in October 1922. It retained this role under fascism, though in a subordinate position with respect to 28 October (the anniversary of the March on Rome); it reclaimed its central status immediately after the fall of the dictatorship, and shortly thereafter was included in the republic's calendar as the Day of National Unity.

The fact that the Victory Day celebrations were only formalized in 1922, however, was because the fierce arguments that had broken out between 1914 and 1915 among those for and against intervention in the war erupted again even more violently after its conclusion. On the one hand, the socialists, influenced by the myth of the Bolshevik revolution, launched a violent attack on the bourgeois institutions, accusing them of having led the working classes of all of Europe to the “slaughterhouse.” On the other, the nationalists and the fascists claimed for themselves the merits of having brought the country to war, having struggled to keep it united during its ordeal, and, therefore, having led it to victory. In the middle, so to speak, were the liberals, who, while considering themselves the true drivers of the success achieved, could not compete with the nationalists and fascists on the symbolic use of the war. In part to prevent the victory celebrations becoming an opportunity for the latter to legitimize themselves, Francesco Saverio Nitti's liberal government decided in 1919 to postpone the celebration and to avoid holding public ceremonies. The first anniversary thus passed in the silence of Italy's institutions and in the conflict between opposing visions of what the war had meant for the country.

However, in the face of the pressure exerted by many liberal-led local administrations committed to celebrating the victory independently, and as a response to the success of the Socialists in the 1919 elections, a major event was organized on 4 November 1920 in Rome. The ceremony was held in the presence of the king in Piazza Venezia and on the Vittoriano, which on this occasion was renamed the “Altar of the Fatherland.”<sup>2</sup>

Having thus paved the way, the same day of the following year saw the grand ceremony culminating in the burial, again in the Altar of the Fatherland, of the remains of the Unknown Soldier. This was the most significant effort on the part of the liberal ruling class to construct a “religion of the fatherland” based on popular support and alternative to that of the fascists. In the following year, just weeks before the March on Rome, the Anniversary of Victory was finally instituted.

After the fascists came to power, the celebration, though maintaining an important role, was overshadowed by 28 October. The militarization and fascistization of the ceremonies, with fascist “martyrs” being equated to the soldiers who had died in combat, were completed during the 1930s, when, not coincidentally, even the King’s presence became increasingly sporadic or silent.<sup>3</sup>

Since the alleged continuity with the Great War and the Victory nonetheless represented one of the most powerful instruments for the legitimization of fascism, the regime devoted enormous energy to its “sanctification.” Indeed, even before, no one had wished to forget. Not even those who, like the socialists, railed against the deaths and destruction caused by the war. In those areas where the party was most strongly established, socialist administrations inaugurated monuments and plaques that, while commemorating the fallen, condemned their “pointless” sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> But this effort to construct a countermemory of the war was doomed to failure: inscriptions and monuments were quickly prohibited and removed by the prefects, who did not intend to allow the fatherland to be “denigrated.” Those that remained were removed under fascism. The latter, incidentally, in line with fascism’s vitalist and warmongering vision, did not spare harsh criticism for the representations (typical of the Catholic figurative tradition) of mourning mothers, wounded soldiers, or dying combatants slumped to the ground that still today characterize many of these memorials.<sup>5</sup>

The effort to celebrate the Great War as the event that regenerated the country drove fascism to embark upon an intensive project—developed especially since the tenth anniversary of the victory—to design and construct war cemeteries, celebratory monuments, and remembrance parks in which school pupils planted a tree for every local soldier who had not returned home. In towns, local governments, veterans’ associations, or individuals constructed monuments in memory of the fallen, but the birth of the great military cemeteries was concentrated on the battlefields and was the work of the state.

These shrines, vigorously promoted by the Duce himself, were the place where the long-forgotten virtues Italians were supposed to have rediscovered during the conflict were celebrated: heroism, discipline, self-sacrifice, voluntary subordination to the needs of the nation. But they were also the place to remind everyone that the fallen had not “disappeared” but were still present in the memory and life of the nation itself. Italy would not forget those who had shed their blood for her, as clearly shown, even today, by the word “present” repeated over and over again on the stepped tombs of the cemetery of Redipuglia in the province of Gorizia. The work to recover the remains and to construct a genuine sacred path

to be followed on a sort of pilgrimage—with about forty stations, comprising shrines, monuments and cemeteries—was completed only at the end of the 1930s.<sup>6</sup>

The Great War continued to occupy a prominent place even after Mussolini's arrest on 25 July 1943, albeit with very different political motivations. For the antifascists, 4 November was from the outset the date used to legitimize the fight against Nazi-Fascist despotism through the memory of what the Italians had achieved against the authoritarianism of the Central Empires.

In 1944, in recently liberated Rome and in the presence of both the various branches of the military and representatives of the partisan movement, the Bonomi government thus resumed celebrating the anniversary on the Altar of the Fatherland. To connect the war of 1915–18 to the patriotism that was now to guide Italians in their struggle against the German invader, it was decided that the orphan of a partisan would lead a blind veteran of World War I. Furthermore, the official speech was delivered by the 1918 prime minister, the President of Victory, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, while Bonomi spoke in the evening on the radio.<sup>7</sup>

This link between past and present was facilitated by the fact that the reformist socialist Ivanoe Bonomi had been a staunch interventionist in 1914–15 and later head of the government that in 1921 had organized the transfer of the remains of the Unknown Soldier to the Altar of the Fatherland. This was clearly an attempt to legitimize the new state emerging from the ruins of the totalitarian regime, on the basis of continuity, after the fascist interlude, with liberal Italy. This theory was espoused forcefully at the time in some writings by the philosopher Benedetto Croce.<sup>8</sup>

But there were other objectives as well: first, to remind a country demoralized by military defeats—invaded by two foreign armies at war with one another (the Anglo-American and German armies), bewildered and wounded by the massive bombings of its cities—of its capacity for resistance, crowned by the success of Vittorio Veneto. And, second, to establish a contrast between the fascist war—immediately described as not wanted but suffered by the Italians—and that of the nation, fought by the whole country as a single man between 1915 and 1918.

Since then, the latter perspective has dominated. Not coincidentally, while the protagonists, places, and battles of World War II were rapidly forgotten, 4 November continued to be celebrated until the mid-1970s not just in barracks and in the streets but also in schools, which continued to teach the songs composed and sung between 1915 and 1918. Even on the local level, traces of the Great War have remained strong, as is evident even today in every town of the peninsula, both in the names of

squares, streets, and public parks and in the presence of a monument, or at least a plaque, commemorating the names of the fallen.

However, shortly afterward, the tensions of the Cold War began to be felt. The partisan movement, in which the communists had had a significant weight, disappeared from the national celebrations of the war, which focused increasingly on the central role of the armed forces and the re-consecration of the monuments, plaques, remembrance parks, shrines, and war cemeteries that fascism had for twenty years identified with its own history.

Indeed, as noted by Maurizio Ridolfi, ever since the late 1940s, official celebrations began to equate the “fallen of all wars” and thus to place plaques listing the dead of 1940–45 alongside those commemorating the fallen of 1915–18. While this was intended to marginalize the political motivations that had inspired that choice, by celebrating the sacrifice made at the cost of one’s own life, another objective was also to initiate a process of pacification to overcome the ideological disputes that had torn the country from the advent of fascism onward.

In any case, as had already been the case after World War I, alternative and conflicting memories rapidly emerged alongside the official memory of the Great War. The Cold War and the failure to assign the city of Trieste to Italy until 1954, for example, fed the dispute between those who, like the governing parties, used the patriotism linked to 4 November to demand acknowledgment of the Friulan city’s Italian identity and those who, like the communists, distrusting everything they knew about nationalism, preferred instead to take this as an opportunity to express their revulsion against past wars.<sup>9</sup>

Within this context, the institutional calendar of national holidays was established in 1949. And while 4 November was proclaimed the “Day of National Unity,” it was to be understood, as became clear as the years passed, above all as the Day of the Armed Forces. This link, or more accurately this identification of nation and army that had emerged during the Great War and that had also been celebrated by fascism, thus returned to the forefront. However, in contrast to the twenty-year dictatorship of Mussolini, the central role of the military was now accompanied by a growing involvement of civilians through the opening, on 4 November, of barracks to the public, visits to air force bases and naval vessels, pilgrimages to monuments and cemeteries, the participation of school groups, concerts held by military bands in city squares, sporting competitions, the opportunity for families to host conscripts for lunch, and much more. The 1950s and 1960s were perhaps the period of greatest participation in this national holiday.

Furthermore, at the end of the decade, the Order of Vittorio Veneto was instituted to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war, assigning the title of knight and a gold medal to veterans, alongside an annuity to those who had obtained the cross of merit and had completed at least six months of military service between 1915 and 1918 or in previous wars. 1968 also saw the creation, at the behest of Prime Minister Giovanni Leone, of a National committee for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the victory, whose results did not, however, live up to expectations. These years, indeed, as we shall see later, saw the emergence of a gradually widening gap between the memory of the war passed on by institutions and the image that, thanks in part to the renewal of research and the growth of the student protest movement, was spreading in large sectors of the general public.<sup>10</sup>

The development of a militant antifascist mass movement among the young, which characterized the country from the early 1960s onward, made the central role still played by the army in the celebrations increasingly less acceptable, and even more so the rhetoric equating the “fallen of all wars.” How could one place the Great War wanted by the “bourgeoisie,” those unleashed by fascism, and the “people’s” war of the partisan movement on the same level? Not coincidentally, in the 1970s, 4 November also became an opportunity to hold demonstrations demanding the institution of conscientious objection to military service. In this political climate, and due in part to the economic and social crisis sweeping the country, 4 November was downgraded in 1977 to a non-holiday, and the celebrations were moved to the first Sunday of the month.

However, there were also some positive developments. In these same years, the election of Sandro Pertini, a reserve officer in World War I and later an antifascist leader and partisan in the World War II, as president of the republic in 1978 helped to render possible the gradual reconciliation of left-wing political forces with the celebrations and their definitive recognition of the Great War as a milestone in Italian history, symbolically connecting the Risorgimento to the resistance.

This reconciliation accelerated in the 1990s thanks to two connected factors: first, the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the consequent change of name of the Communist Party and the end of the ideological conflicts that had accompanied its history. Second, the need to defend those political mainstays that had hitherto protected the democratic system from the criticisms unleashed after the election of parties falling outside the spectrum of forces that had founded the republic: the postfascist Alleanza Nazionale, Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, and the Lega Nord of Umberto Bossi.

In addition, the need to present a front that was as united as possible with respect to the accelerating process of European unification and the commitment to countering the secessionist ambitions of the Lega Nord conferred unprecedented importance on the issue of national identity, whose weakness has always been considered one of Italy's main vulnerabilities. For substantial swathes of the general public, the mainstream press, the intellectual world, and, albeit in a more contradictory manner, the larger political parties, the construction of a more pacified collective memory thus began to seem a pressing need.

Indeed, the heated controversies typical of recent decades have slowly but progressively faded away. In this context, a fundamental role was played by the efforts of recent presidents of the republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and Giorgio Napolitano. They devoted many of their efforts to making the symbols and anniversaries related to the achievement of national unity and the establishment of democracy shared reference points. In this regard, their successor, Sergio Mattarella, who had been elected president of the republic in 2015, alluded quite extensively to the Great War, although with a more marked attention to the reality experienced by combatants and civilians, a reality very “different, at the proof of the facts,” to the “bright dream of glory,” the myth of victory, upheld by intellectuals and poets in the months before the entry into war. “We must not be afraid of the truth—he added in his speech on the occasion of the centenary of Italy's entry into the conflict—without truth, without historical research, memory would be doomed to pale. And the celebrations would risk becoming a vain rhetorical exercise.”<sup>11</sup>

Today, some national holidays, such as Liberation Day (25 April 1945) and that of the republic (2 June 1946), still mobilize large numbers of people, while 4 November, though recovering with respect to the period of the late 1970s and 1980s, has a more modest appeal. Yet not only has 4 November once again become a symbolic and ritual anniversary for the whole country, but the Vittoriano, closed in 1969 after one of the attacks presaging the “strategy of tension” of the following decade, was reopened to the public in 2000 in part as a venue for cultural events. The Altar of the Fatherland, which forms part of the monument, has since become the stage for the majority of state commemorations, during which it has also become customary to hear “La Canzone del Piave” again.

The approval of Law No. 78 in 2001 was also indicative of that trend, insofar as it insisted, as its first paragraph stated, on “the historical and cultural value of the remains of the First World War.”<sup>12</sup> More recently (and arguably more importantly), the rediscovery of World War I was demonstrated by the hundreds upon hundreds of local and regional initiatives organized across Italy from 2014 to 2018. These included, among

other things, numerous school projects whose objective was to rediscover the World War I-related cultural heritage at the local level or to collect (and eventually to put on the internet) letters or other documents of the pupils' families during the war. Quite an important activity was also the restoration of various monuments and memorials throughout the country. Nine thousand monuments to the fallen were recensed and catalogued by another project, whose database is now available on the website of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione.<sup>13</sup> Last but not least, there were different civil society initiatives aiming at promoting the memory of the Great War and developing a culture of peace.<sup>14</sup> Overall, it seems that the rediscovery of the memory of the *Grande Guerra* in the last years has been accompanied by a rather consensual interpretation of the war as a catastrophe and that the wounds opened by opposing and conflicting visions of the Great War have been overcome.

## Historiography of World War I

### Early Historiography

We have seen that the conflict, from its conclusion, was immediately interpreted as the point at which Italy finally succeeded in redeeming itself from a past of servitude and decadence. In other words, thanks to World War I, or, rather, the Fourth War of Independence after those of 1848–49, 1859, and 1866, the geographical, political, and above all moral unification of the country had finally been achieved.

This reading of the war was given official expression from the start, as early as 1915, with the work to collect testimonies and historical documents, including the diaries and letters of soldiers, organized by the National Committee for the History of the Risorgimento.<sup>15</sup> There were also several attempts to write an immediate, spur-of-the-moment history (or more accurately chronicle) of the present day; this was true, for example, of the *Storia della Grande Guerra d'Italia*, published in twenty-four volumes between 1916 and 1921.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the fact that after the war Italy could be considered one of the world's major military powers appeared to be a confirmation that another milestone had also been reached, that envisioned by the nationalist movement in the early twentieth century: the goal of a "Greater Italy," in other words a nation finally capable of regaining its rightful place among the great nations.<sup>17</sup>

There were thus two different coexisting narratives on the role played by World War I in Italian national history: the nationalist and antiliberal narrative of fascism and that linked to the liberal Risorgimento tradition. The former, as is known, made the conflict one of its most potent founding

myths, as the source of legitimacy of a new ruling class made up of the men who had fought in the trenches. However, one might argue that the two narratives shared in essence the same patriotic glorification of the war.

To be sure, this shared ground had been defined, on the level of politics before that of historiography, even before Italy entered the war. During the so-called “radiant days” of May 1915, the complex galaxy of groups supporting Italy’s intervention in the war—uniting people of very different political faiths: syndicalists and revolutionary socialists, anarchists, republicans, radicals, reformist socialists, nationalists, liberals, and even sectors of the Catholic world—joined in noisy and sometimes violent demonstrations in the streets of Rome and other major cities, with the aim of countering the neutralism of parliament and dragging the country into war. At the very same time, patriotic motivations (to unify Italy and liberate the “unredeemed” brothers, still under the Austrian yoke) were combined and confused with the desire to win for the country a leading role on the international stage.

In the dramatic days of the “radiant May,” anyone who dared to express disagreement with participation in the conflict—like the majority of the socialists, the liberal followers of Giovanni Giolitti, and most Catholics—was painted by the interventionist minority as a traitor who had sold out to foreigners, an enemy, a “defeatist.”<sup>18</sup> After the war, the fascist regime institutionalized, so to speak, this criminalization of the neutralist movement, particularly by attacking the socialists.

Yet before this nationalistic-patriotic vision came to dominate unquestioned, there was a time when the possibility of telling the story of the conflict outside—or rather, against—its myth emerged. This was the immediate postwar period and in particular the summer of 1919, when a strong wave of popular protests against high inflation aggravated a general strike in solidarity with revolutionary Russia. In these weeks, socialist propaganda abandoned the cautious approach of the Partito socialista italiano between 1915 and 1918, and unleashed fierce attacks on the myth of the patriotic war, now seen as a conflict wanted by the bourgeoisie to curb the gradual emancipation of workers and enrich the “possessing classes” at the workers’ expense.

This controversy was compounded by the publication of the Committee of Inquiry on Caporetto, commissioned by parliament to investigate the causes of the disaster. Made public in August 1919, the report revealed the enormous responsibility of the military command, and especially of the supreme commander, Luigi Cadorna, with respect to the strategic mismanagement of the conflict. By underestimating the human price to be paid, the high-command had continued to consider mass assaults as possible means to victory. Furthermore, it had created a system based

solely on repression and the serious underestimation of a strategic element: winning the support of soldiers as a powerful individual and collective motivational factor.<sup>19</sup>

The investigation's findings momentarily gave new force to the criticisms of those who had opposed Italy's entry into the war: the Catholics and above all the socialists. At the same time, however, and in reaction, it also increased the anger of those who had viewed the conflict as an opportunity to rebuild the country and who saw, in its denigration, the triumph of antinationalist forces. The latter were thus charged with first having boycotted the war effort and then of aiming to destroy that sense of unity that the sacrifices, deaths, and victory had finally succeeded in creating in Italy.

At the same time, strong criticisms of the dominant view of the conflict also emerged among Giolitti's supporters. The latter, moreover, who had seen parliament (where they held strong positions) being systematically bypassed by the executive branch during the war years, had an interest in investigating the role and influence of the liberal-conservative parties (which had pushed for Italy's entry into the war) on the conduct of the war and the government.

However, popular protests and the fear that a Bolshevik-style revolutionary movement might break out in Italy as well rapidly quelled internal differences within the bourgeois forces.<sup>20</sup> As a consequence, all critical views were shelved and replaced by a hagiographic and celebratory vision, with the aim of making 1915–18 the “shared ideological background” to which all Italians were to refer. The twenty years of fascism saw the definitive consolidation of the stereotype of the Great War as the “patriotic war” by definition and, at the same time, as a war inspired by a desire for the “rightful” recognition of the role that Italy aspired to play on the international stage.

This stereotype began to be questioned only during the 1960s, when “critical” historiography, born at this point, started off from the conclusions of the commission's final report to dismantle the sugarcoated version of the “patriotic war” that had hitherto dominated unchallenged.

### **The Postwar Period and Fascism**

After the end of the war, in Italy as elsewhere, there was a flood of publications, mostly of an essentially hagiographic and celebratory nature. These were more interesting from the point of view of the birth, consolidation, and dissemination of the myth of the war than from that of historical analysis. At any rate, from the early 1920s, studies focused almost exclusively on the events and on military aspects. Political issues,

by contrast, were examined essentially as a background to the conduct of the war.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, though it is true that military history was traditionally kept separate from political history, it was mainly the atmosphere, the lacerations of the postwar period, and subsequently the coming to power of fascism that rendered a complex and nuanced reconstruction of Italian political life between 1914 and 1918 impossible. The works most attentive to the contradictions within the ruling class and the political parties written in these decades were published only after the fall of the dictatorship. This is true of the works of Luigi Albertini, until 1925 editor of *Corriere della Sera*; Olindo Malagodi, editor until 1923 of the Giolittian *La Tribuna*; and Sidney Sonnino, foreign minister from 1914 to 1919.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1920s, all those aspects that had aroused bitter controversy in the war years were thus quickly set aside. Censorship, and more often self-censorship, also affected the new editions of the most famous memoirs published immediately after the war; these were harshly critical of both the conduct of the war by politicians and the military High Command, and of its distorted narration by the press. Their gritty realism, denouncing the absurd massacres of young soldiers in futile frontal assaults against the enemy trenches, the appalling lack of hygiene and inhumane lives of combatants, were toned down and not infrequently deleted from the reprints of the late 1920s and 1930s.<sup>23</sup> As Mussolini clarified, in response to a request of General Angelo Gatti, who wanted to write a work on Caporetto, "It was not time for history, but for myths."<sup>24</sup>

The most significant exception to this tendency to neglect political issues was the writings of the former chief of staff, Luigi Cadorna, who had been dismissed as a direct consequence of the precipitous retreat of Caporetto in October 1917. In his most important books, published in the first half of the 1920s, there continued to be room for criticisms of "defeatists" and governments, incapable, in his opinion, of running the country with the necessary firmness and therefore responsible for Italy's temporary defeat.<sup>25</sup>

The freedom to criticize enjoyed by the "generalissimo," a freedom denied to others, was probably made possible by two factors: the enormous prestige that, despite everything, he continued to enjoy until his death (Mussolini appointed him, along with Diaz, "Marshal of Italy" in November 1924 in order to pacify the memory of the war and erase all controversy, as well as to secure the support of the army), and the desire, shared by large sectors of the army, to shift onto others all blame for a defeat (Caporetto) that had brought Italy to the brink of surrender.

In any case, the impossibility of escaping the stereotype of the world war as the completion of national unity and as the re-conquest of a prom-

inent place on the international stage made it impossible to tackle the appalling conditions experienced by soldiers at the front. Even historians of an antifascist bent—to whom the regime, more self-confident, granted some freedoms in the 1930s—such as General Roberto Bencivenga or Adolfo Omodeo, shared the same attitude.<sup>26</sup> The actual war experience tended thus to be disregarded by historians, who left this aspect of the war to those who had lived through it.<sup>27</sup>

Even the investigation of Italian foreign policy remained sketchy, given both the considerable political weight that discussions of this kind would have had in a fascist regime extremely sensitive to such issues and because it was hampered by the failure to publish collections of diplomatic documents, as many other countries had done. Indeed, the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remained only partly accessible—and to few scholars—for decades: until the mid-1970s, the only volume of diplomatic documents published was that relating to the period from May to October 1915.

In the field of economic history, the situation was entirely different, given the publication in Italy too of a series of studies sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, directed by the prestigious figure of Luigi Einaudi and involving the participation of leading Italian scholars and experts on this topic.<sup>28</sup> Again, however, the impressive collection of data and analyses that long led to these works being considered a useful starting point for the various areas covered was accompanied by an overall interpretation of the years of conflict that did not challenge the official view of a war fed by the patriotic efforts of the entire country.

## The Aftermath of World War II

Naturally, after the fall of the fascist regime, only the latter of these two dominant interpretations—the Great War as a war waged to consolidate the Italian position in the international system or as a “patriotic war”—could be used as a powerful historical example in the attempt to educate Italians in nationhood.<sup>29</sup>

The myth of the patriotic war, as shown by the identification of 4 November as a national historic date, thus continued to survive, though in a profoundly changed context. This continuity was certainly encouraged by several factors: first, the very limited purge of former fascists after the fall of the dictatorship, directed at leading figures in the institutions, the army, the judiciary, and the public administration, including schools and universities; and second, the need for antifascist political forces—who were ideologically deeply divided—to find an area of common ground. This common ground was Italy’s unitary tradition and thus the Risorgi-

mento, as tellingly shown by the nickname “second Risorgimento” given to the war of resistance against the Republic of Salò and its Nazi allies.

As concerns research topics, these initially focused particularly on two fundamental issues: the period leading up to the “rebirth,” in other words the resistances and uncertainties encountered in the months during which Italy had remained neutral, between August 1914 and May 1915; and the consequences of the conflict, namely the milestones reached and its frustrated hopes (the “mutilated Victory” according to Gabriele D’Annunzio’s famous expression). This was encouraged by the publication of many of the major protagonists’ memoirs of the years between 1914 and 1918. Besides those already mentioned, by Albertini, Malagodi, and Sonnino, those by Vittorio Emanuele Orlando and Ferdinando Martini, minister of the colonies until 1917, also appeared.<sup>30</sup>

One topic that attracted immediate attention was the oscillation of Italian foreign policy in the early months of neutrality. Indeed, for the second time since 1914–15, Italy was, in 1943, again accused of having “waltzed over” to the other side. These new studies claimed that a key reason for this was that Austria-Hungary, supported by Germany, had ensured to Italy at least their benevolent neutrality—too little and too late.<sup>31</sup> A few years later, a major study by Alberto Monticone reconstructed the widespread attempts by Germany to bribe politicians and the editors of Italian newspapers to support her cause.<sup>32</sup> Similar attempts were made by France, aimed especially at Mussolini and his *Il Popolo d’Italia*, as already demonstrated by the first volume of Renzo de Felice’s biography of the future fascist leader.<sup>33</sup>

From the mid-1950s, however, new topics began to emerge, and some scholars showed how strong and deep were the breaks between the Italy of the Risorgimento and that of the second decade of the twentieth century. Despite the rhetoric of the official celebrations and the customary image of the “patriotic war” imparted by school textbooks,<sup>34</sup> within a few years the idea of the “fourth war of independence” began to be seriously challenged.

This point of view, espoused by Alberto Caracciolo<sup>35</sup> among others, was also indebted to some insightful considerations developed by Palmiro Togliatti, the secretary of the Communist Party, in his 1950 essay “Discorso su Giolitti.” Here Togliatti pointed out that Giolitti’s defeat of 1915 was caused not merely by “the incoherent shouting of demagogic intellectuals and amateur politicians who have lost their heads” but by an Italy different from that of 1900: the “Italy of the great industrialists nourished by protective tariffs and government contracts, producers of battleships and merchants of cannons, the imperialist Italy” whose “imperialist appetite” had been stimulated by the Libyan war.<sup>36</sup> In this context, it has

been argued, not without oversimplification, that Italian heavy industry and finance had considered territorial and commercial expansion via the war as the most reliable guarantee of a rapid and powerful development of Italian capitalism. This was the true origin of the crisis and later of the collapse of the Giolittian system.

Even the Pact of London was interpreted along these lines, given the need for big business in the financial and industrial sectors to conquer areas of influence sufficient to fuel its growth, but not too far from home, given the still limited development of the country. The problem was taken up again in the following decades in part by analyzing the strong influence that some industries—like steel and automotive—and some lenders—like the Banca di Sconto—exerted on political parties and institutions, both in pushing them into the war and during its progress.<sup>37</sup> The focus on “interests” as the dominant factor, or rather as the root cause of the conflict, thus took the place of the focus on patriotic “ideals.”

Another issue brought to light by the historiography of this period, already stressed by fascist journalism, was the relationship between the “radiant days” of May 1915 and the political climate prevailing in the country between 1919 and 1922. Leading the way was Luigi Salvatorelli in a famous essay published in 1950, which spoke of a “first” coup, that of May 1915, and a “second” coup with the March on Rome in October of 1922.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, thanks also to the possibility of finally consulting the historical archives, this new interpretation of the war was developed and revised. The works of Brunello Vigezzi, for example, showed that these two viewpoints—the patriotic war versus the war to consolidate Italian influence—were not mutually exclusive but overlapping.<sup>39</sup> The scholar stressed that the expansionist aspirations of much of the ruling class coexisted with the patriotic and Risorgimento education imparted in the kingdom’s schools. This education had a profound effect on the behavior of combatants during the conflict.

Nonetheless, the image of the “fourth war of independence” was abandoned, in part because its basic premise was a belief that the vast majority of Italians had been hostile to Austria-Hungary. This was definitely disproved by the studies undertaken from the 1960s onward. In addition, an important document tracked down by historians only in the late 1950s and that strongly conditioned later historiography showed clearly that the ruling class had been aware that most Italians did not want the country to enter the war. The reports sent by prefects to Prime Minister Antonio Salandra in response to his circular of 12 April 1915 had evidenced that neutralism was absolutely dominant in the peninsula.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, one might say that precisely this awareness of being a small minority isolated from the rest of the nation had made a crucial contribu-

tion to radicalizing the positions of interventionists and heightening their contempt for a country “sick” with poor self-awareness and indifferent to this important opportunity that history had once again given Italy to help shape the present and the future of the continent. It was hardly a coincidence that these reports remained buried for forty years in a drawer and that Salandra himself made no mention of them in his own memoirs.<sup>41</sup>

Starting from these new facts, it became something of a historiographical commonplace to insist on the conservative project that drove large sectors of the ruling class to see the war as an opportunity for an “authoritarian” turn of the liberal state, in order to create a “Prussian-type power bloc” capable of putting a brake on parliament and giving the king back his central role. In this vein, scholars thus began to give new weight to domestic political motivations as fundamental in pushing Italy to enter the war.<sup>42</sup> Earlier than in other countries, where the image of a national war still dominated, Italian historiography thus began the process of freeing itself from interpretations of 1914–18 based on the myth of the “people’s war.” Like all myths, it had contributed significantly to hampering historical analysis.

New studies demonstrated that the ways in which the decision to go to war was made—a highly elitist and minority decision with respect to dominant sentiment in Italy—influenced the conduct of the war itself. The evident distance of the ruling classes from the common people heavily conditioned both the methods of combat and the relation, wholly hierarchical and authoritarian, between officers and their troops.

Finally, in 1964, the publication of General Angelo Gatti’s war diary brought to light, with its vivid descriptions, the mutinies, summary executions, and decimations of soldiers, together with the uncertainties and confusion of the military commanders, a reality that was known but had hitherto generally been considered marginal.<sup>43</sup> From then onward, rather than the celebration of the unanimous support for the conflict, scholars began to stress also (and often above all) the expressions of dissent and insubordination by soldiers and, with them, the repressive and coercive policies implemented by the military commands to prevail over the common people, at once idealized—through the infantryman-peasant stereotype—and feared as unpatriotic. Of these masses, obedience and discipline were expected, but also, paradoxically, disobedience and rebellion if anyone showed reluctance to resort to the iron fist at the smallest signs of resistance to the commands of the elites.<sup>44</sup>

This new historiography, which emerged alongside the wave of student protests in the late 1960s, brought to light the seriousness of the delay with which the ruling classes had become aware of the need to actively integrate the common people into the state. Indeed, it was only after the

defeat of Caporetto, in the autumn of 1917, that a new type of authoritarianism appeared, a “reformist neo-authoritarianism” with a very specific purpose: to weld together “the nation and the people in a politically authoritarian and socially reformist framework.”<sup>45</sup>

As Forcella and Monticone showed in open contradiction with the “liberal-risorgimental” interpretation of the war, there were 100,000 trials for draft dodging during the war, 340,000 trials for offenses committed under arms, and 60,000 trials of civilians for military offenses. In addition, between 1915 and 1918, Italy’s Supreme Military Court, in an army of over 5 million men, issued 4,028 death sentences, almost 3,000 of which were given out in absentia and just over 1,000 in the presence of the accused. Of these, as many as 750, and thus about 75 percent, were actually executed. In Italy 15,345 life sentences were handed down, 15,096 of which for desertion. Furthermore, alone among the warring countries, Italy gave permanent authorization to officers not just to carry out summary shootings, in other words without any trial, but even decimation if it proved impossible to identify precisely those responsible for serious crimes.

More recent studies on these issues have revealed that, despite the imprecision of the figures, given the interest of the commands in concealing these episodes, decimations and on-the-spot shootings led to approximately 300 deaths that need thus to be added to the abovementioned 750 executions.<sup>46</sup> In any case, we might also include machine-gunning and bombing to stop fleeing troops or those who had disbanded before the enemy among the summary executions, and this would significantly raise the total number of deaths.

Cadorna’s rigidly offensive strategy, resulting in the continuous repetition of frontal attacks, was thus interpreted as having been dictated by specific political requirements: firstly, the “imperialist” character of the war, which rendered a radically offensive conduct necessary to conquer territorial objectives (especially Trieste, which would have opened the doors of the Balkans, a goal also pursued by the expeditions to Thessaloniki and Albania) to crown the expansionist dreams of that part of Italy’s ruling class that had wished the country to participate in the conflict. Secondly, there was a belief that only major military victories would strengthen the anti-Giolittian power block and definitively marginalize the Piedmontese statesman. The latter, indeed, was still an essential reference point for parties that remained neutralist or in any case favorable to a separate peace that would take Italy out of a war that was proving more and more expensive in human and economic terms, and was increasingly destabilizing both socially and politically.<sup>47</sup>

The year before the publication of *Plotone d’esecuzione*, another work had already appeared that attempted to investigate, albeit indirectly, the

true reality experienced by soldiers: *I vinti di Caporetto*. The book collected the memoirs of officers in direct contact with the troops to reconstruct aspects that had hitherto been excluded from the history books: the explosion of protests, attempted mutinies, episodes of insubordination, and all the other forms of dissent that the documentation presented made it possible to track down (self-harm, songs of protest, fraternizing with the enemy, the spread of draft dodging and desertion, etc.). The editor of the anthology was interested in collecting the echoes “of the mute dissent and practically helpless anguish of the subaltern masses forced into the war.”<sup>48</sup> Additionally, these studies led to the questioning of another dominant stereotype: namely, that the mass of combatants, mainly peasant-soldiers, was passive and resigned but ready to obey, like children, if guided with the necessary firmness by those with the skills to do so.

The prospect of broadening the analysis from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom was also achieved thanks to an innovative overview of those years, *Storia politica della Grande guerra 1914–1918*, by Piero Melograni. Here, the scholar examined the extraneity to the war not only of the peasant world, as was now generally accepted, but even of those urban contexts that had nonetheless seen numerous noisy interventionist demonstrations in May 1915. Political history was thus transformed from a history of parties and elites into one of civil society in all its various expressions: the peasants at the front and the workers in the factories, the High Commands and junior officers, the front line and the rearguard, large cities and small villages. This despite the conviction, expressed in this work, that the hold on the Piave until the final victory at Vittorio Veneto showed that their distance from the masses was eventually overcome and metabolized by the institutions,<sup>49</sup> a claim with which critical historiography in no way agreed.

The studies by Forcella and Monticone, like that by Melograni, revived interest in the military dimension, which the fall of fascism had generally marginalized in research. But the start of the youth protest again drew attention away from this sphere in favor of political, social and cultural history.<sup>50</sup>

Another important step taken in those years was a later work by Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande Guerra: Da Marinetti a Malaparte*. Here, using war literature as a historical source, the scholar in many ways anticipated the approach taken by a text of great international success like that of Paul Fussell, published some years later. Furthermore, attempting to identify the complex interplay between the different images of the war and the expectations invested in it between the early years of the twentieth century and the end of the conflict, he began to define the outlines of that

“generation of 1914,” launched as a historiographical category at the end of the decade by Robert Wohl.<sup>51</sup>

Analyzing magazines, writings, diaries, and accounts of the war by more or less well-known intellectuals, many of whom participated in the war, Isnenghi reconstructed the myth of the war in all its different facets: the war-as-medicine, as a means of healing a country that was sick because it lacked the necessary social cohesion to become great; the war-as-party of the Futurists; the regenerative war-as-ascent of those who dreamed of building, through conflict, a nation free of individualism, materialism, and selfishness; the war-as-order, needed to restore vigor to a fragmented country and ensure the emergence of a new anti-Giolittian and anti-socialist ruling class; the war-as-cataclysm, to be accepted as a natural disaster; and the war-as-integration, as a tool for broadening the foundations of the state through the direct participation of the peasant masses in the life of the country.<sup>52</sup>

To illustrate the link that the new generation of historians was beginning to cultivate with new trends in international historiography, we could mention a third book by Isnenghi, *Giornali di trincea*, where we see the influence of the debate on the “nationalization of the masses” sparked by George L. Mosse in the mid-1970s. Also evident was the connection with the debate, closely tied to the Italian context, over support for fascism, which had erupted after the publication in 1975 of a famous book-interview by Renzo De Felice.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, in his study Isnenghi dwelled precisely on the attempt, especially after Caporetto, to impart a “national education” to the combatants using the instruments of mass culture.<sup>54</sup>

The specificity of the Italian historiographical debate over support or dissent, the integration into the state or the extraneity to it on the part of the masses, lay primarily in two factors: the negative judgment pronounced on the effective capacity of the ruling class to reach and influence the common people, except through force and repression, and the emphasis on the latter’s cultural “autonomy” from the establishment. Moreover, these were the years when the study of the “lower classes” was gaining increasing space on the international level, a space that in Italy was also conditioned by the strong theoretical influence exerted by the workerism of Mario Tronti and Toni Negri on the circles of the so-called New Left.

Indeed, workerism placed the notion of the “autonomy” of the working class at the center of its analyses. Glorifying “autonomy” and with it class “spontaneity” was equivalent to affirming that the working classes were bearers of needs, values, and behaviors alternative to those of the dominant classes, and that these needs, values, and behaviors had never found effective political representation, not even in socialist parties and trade

unions.<sup>55</sup> The new field of investigation for historians at this time thus became the dialectics between the complex system of social control put in place by the ruling classes and the masses, never fully tamed but always ready to find new ways of expressing their disadvantages and extraneity to the dominant system.

In conclusion, this new attention to leadership from below—supported in the field of history not just by notions derived from studies of the French Revolution but also by the enormous popularity in Italy of the works of Michel Foucault, Eric J. Hobsbawm, and Edward Thompson—led historians to see the so-called “lower classes” as a subject and no longer an object of history.<sup>56</sup> The main subject of history now no longer consisted of the ruling classes or the elites but of the “lower classes,” just as the focus of analysis was no longer political history but social history. This perspective was also legitimated and furthered by the publication of the monumental *Storia d'Italia* by the Einaudi press in the early 1970s. This work evidenced the strong influence that the historiography of the “Annales” was beginning to exert on Italian historiography: political history lost its central role to the advantage of “material history,” social history, and the study of the “collective sensibility.”<sup>57</sup>

Naturally, this generalized renewal of Italian historiography also extended to the analysis of 1915–18. The “home front” gradually became one of the favored fields of investigation.<sup>58</sup> While the total mobilization that took place between 1915 and 1918 represented the true focus of the historiographical renewal of these years, the analysis naturally extended to the role of the state in the economic management of the war.

After Paolo Spriano’s pioneering 1960 study of working-class Turin, research on these issues had gradually petered out.<sup>59</sup> Thanks to this new trend, however, light was shed on the appalling conditions in which workers had found themselves, with decreasing real wages, the intensification of production rates and longer working hours, the control over factories entrusted to the military, the resulting ban on strikes and all other forms of protest, and the equation of abandonment of the workplace with desertion. In 1978, however, a major conference held in Vittorio Veneto, one of the cities symbolizing the conflict, strove to go beyond what was now emerging as the “historiography of dissent” and attempt to keep together two aspects that were tending to diverge: the quest for support on the part of the ruling classes (by identifying appropriate instruments and mediators, such as parish priests, army chaplains, committees for civic assistance, the cinema) and the forms—explicit or, more often, masked and silent—of dissent on the part of the working classes. The subtitle of the book collecting the conference proceedings was explicit from this point of view: “Materials for the analysis of social insubordination and national

education.” Here, social history became the focus of attention, but starting from a wholly political question: how had a minority managed to drag into the war that majority of Italians who, although initially opposed to it, had nevertheless accepted it and fought?<sup>60</sup> And indeed, the state was again studied also in terms of its capacity for control and mediation. This new line of inquiry was also reinforced, as we have already seen, by the influence of the studies that appeared in these years on the issue of support during the fascist regime.<sup>61</sup>

This conference represented an important turning point because the topics tackled here resumed a discussion that had begun in the previous decade but broadened it, setting the stage for historiographical research in the following years.<sup>62</sup> The important achievement of these studies was the destruction of another founding myth of the historiography on the war: that army and country had undergone two fundamentally different and unconnected experiences. Indeed, antisocialist propaganda during the war first and later that of the fascists had significantly exploited the contrast between peasant-soldiers, sent off to war, and workers-shirkers, who had remained safe at a distance from the front and on top of that enjoyed rising wages. This contrast was long taken for granted and thus accepted.

Yet the historiography of these years identified the central role of the repressive element both in the army and among workers as the specific feature of Italian industrial mobilization compared to that of other countries. The ample discretionary powers entrusted to local authorities in the management of public security and the complete freedom left to industrialists in managing the technical aspects and accounts of their factories were considered the most important legacy that the war had left to the fascist regime.<sup>63</sup> However, we should not forget that restrictions in factories on civil and political rights were also accompanied by an expansion of some forms of social protection, with the establishment, for example, of bodies to mediate between industrialists and workers or the intervention of the state in overseeing health and hygiene (albeit at a minimal level). This was because the ruling class realized that a purely authoritarian management of the home front did not suffice to achieve its main aims: effective control over the working class and the necessary increase in productivity.<sup>64</sup>

As we know, however, things were very different on the military front. Indeed, one of the most significant results of this meeting of political history and social history was Giovanna Procacci’s work on Italian soldiers in enemy internment camps.<sup>65</sup> Her book revealed a completely forgotten story: the fate of Italian prisoners, of whom about one hundred thousand had died in internment or labor camps in Eastern Europe and the Otto-

man Empire. Moreover, it showed that the main causes of their deaths were not injuries sustained in battle but disease. The most frequent diseases, along with tuberculosis, were those caused by malnutrition and a lack of suitable clothing.

The Italian government had refused to arrange for food and clothing to be sent to their prisoners and even rejected the help offered in this respect by France and Great Britain. Officially, the foreign minister Sidney Sonnino—strongly supported by the Supreme Command—had stated that government provision of assistance would have worsened the already compromised state budget and allowed the enemy to appropriate the basic necessities lacking in their territory. But the true reason for this choice was entirely different: Sonnino, obsessed like many in the ruling class with the idea of soldiers “running away” because of their lack of patriotism, wished to prevent the spread of the belief that, all things considered, life in prison camps was satisfactory and without the dangers of combat. Were this to happen, it was in his opinion inevitable that mass desertion would follow. And in any case, anyone who had been taken prisoner had essentially surrendered, and should thus be punished for it. For these reasons, which remained concealed for more than seventy years, the fate of Italian prisoners became something unheard of, or, in the words of the scholar, “a genuine instance of collective extermination.”<sup>66</sup>

Within this general renewal of Italian historiography, which had found and would continue to find space in journals such as *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, *Italia contemporanea*, and *Movimento operaio e socialista*, a second crucial development was the conference held in 1985 in Rovereto, another city symbolic of the conflict. This conference marked a clear shift from the themes, by and large still dominant, of the relationships between social classes, the world of production, and material living conditions to the more interdisciplinary topic of the “history of mentalities,” to use a French expression that became extremely popular in Italy in the 1980s. Again, the themes identified by the title were clear—experience, memory, images—and evidenced the importance for the conference program of two texts published in the United States a few years earlier but which had only recently been translated into Italian: that by Fussell, mentioned above, and that by Eric J. Leed, *No Man’s Land*.<sup>67</sup> Both authors also attended the conference.

Their presence indicated the commitment of Italian historians to engaging more decisively, from a methodological point of view, with the social sciences and to take into account the experiences of other countries and other military fronts. Already in a 1983 conference the debate was extended—with respect to the workers and the role of the state in regulating industrial conflicts—to the experiences of Austria, Germany,

and Great Britain.<sup>68</sup> However, it was above all Leed's influence that urged them to broaden their approach to include anthropological issues, such as identity and the imaginary.

The general historical context also encouraged this transformation and accelerated the expansion of horizons beyond more specifically political and ideological themes. It suffices to think of the accelerating path toward European unification and the gradual fading of the Cold War. This allowed for a more pacified view—that is, less tied to the memory of nationalism and the ideological and military conflict—of those difficult years and, at the same time, encouraged an increasingly broad comparative approach, as indicated by the presence of European and American scholars at the conference. However, other factors also had an impact, such as the significant cultural changes that had taken place in Italy with the end of the decade-plus-long phase of protest that began in the 1960s and the simultaneous arrival of neoliberal policies that had appeared, between the late 1970s and early 1980s, in Great Britain and the United States. These policies also took hold in Italy—through the new central role taken on the political scene by Bettino Craxi's Socialist Party—albeit in a version whose impact was felt much more on culture and the media than on economics.

This triggered a profound reformulation of the historiographical agenda that encouraged the emergence of issues more connected to the significant development of the communications society at this time. These were immaterial issues, so to speak, relating to the use and meaning of symbols, myths, and rituals, in other words issues that, despite having already penetrated the Italian debate at least since the mid-1970s, had not yet been given adequate space in the field of research.

Thus, the 1985 conference represented and simultaneously encouraged a significant broadening of perspectives. It marked the emergence of new topics (memory, leisure time, the relationship with pain, fear, sexuality, death, and madness), new sources (oral, medical, and psychiatric; monuments and cemeteries; letters and songs; cinema, theater, and photography), and new protagonists (no longer the great collective subjects like the state, the nation, social classes and political parties, but rather women, young people, and children). These new perspectives were extremely rich, and held together by a clear thread: the link between war and subjectivity. Once placed at the forefront of historical analysis, this led to the exhaustive collection and publication of letters, diaries, and memoirs by soldiers, civilians, priests, refugees, and internees.<sup>69</sup>

The new unearthed documents and new studies made it possible to overcome a belief that had persisted for decades: that the liberal state had demonstrated substantial inadequacy in the understanding and thus in

the management of modern techniques of communication and mass mobilization. Now, it is true that the action of the institutions revealed its limits after the military setback in October 1917, when the need to centralize and nationalize activities in this sphere became evident; and it is also true that the propaganda and welfare systems activated were more evident in the cities than in the countryside. However, there was now a growing recognition that the self-mobilization of the middle classes, on which Italy had relied up to Caporetto, had nevertheless achieved remarkable results. The Citizens Committees, established in almost all Italian municipalities by the end of 1915, had demonstrated notable initiative in the fields of welfare and propaganda. And when in late 1916 the first census of active Citizens Committees was organized, subsequently repeated in 1917, it emerged that up to the month of June 1916 more than thirty-five hundred of them were active, rising to nearly sixty-two hundred a year later.

The profound questioning of old historiographical stereotypes opened up enormous spaces for new research on how the war had been experienced, how it had changed individuals and society, and which social, cultural, and mentality legacies it had left behind. Hence, studies on local history or in any case on restricted geographical areas multiplied, questioning easy generalizations and leading to a multiplication of viewpoints and highly nuanced interpretations.<sup>70</sup>

In this context, studies of political parties also made a contribution. From the 1950s onward, the Catholics and the Socialists had been the most researched, given their electoral weight and mass appeal both in early twentieth century and in post-World War II Italy. At this time, historiography on the Catholic movement had shown that, precisely during the war, it had basically ended up joining the patriotic front, approaching the milestone represented by its recognition by the Italian state, sanctioned by the Lateran Pacts of 1929. Research on the socialist movement, by contrast, had emphasized its continuously oscillating attitude between criticism of the war of the “masters,” the fear of favoring through its opposition the victory of strongly conservative regimes like the Central Powers and patriotic self-mobilization. This patriotic mobilization had two main motivations: a genuine desire to defend the country and the willingness to refute accusations of being “domestic enemies” in the pay of foreign interests.<sup>71</sup>

Other important studies focused on the interventionist galaxy, internally divided between the nationalists, democrats, and leftist interventionists. It was commonly believed that democrats and revolutionaries had in effect ended up submitting to the hegemony of the nationalists, above all by adopting the repressive instruments devised or enacted to subdue a country that they continued to perceive as reluctant to go to war. The

gradual shift toward the rigidly authoritarian vision of General Cadorna of a champion of reformist socialism like Leonida Bissolati, and the future convergence in fascism of many interventionists from the anarchist, republican, trade union, or socialist revolutionary spheres, and from the ranks of the liberals, Catholics, or reformists, seemed to confirm this reading.

What was not understood at the time is that during the war the various positions had in fact become mixed up, or, more accurately, had contaminated one another, laying the groundwork for a new ideology that would come to power after the war: that of fascism. The belief that the revolutionary interventionists had simply succumbed to the pressure exerted by nationalist groups actually resulted in part from an interpretative bias that weighed on fascism: that the latter did not have a cultural depth of its own but was instead an eclectic ideological phenomenon, without its own set of ideas—essentially, a mere armed wing of the most reactionary capitalism.

It was Renzo De Felice, with the first volume of his biography of Mussolini, who first departed from this then-dominant conviction. As we will see below, it was only between the 1990s and the early 2000s that a new period of research began, capable of shedding greater light on the political events of the war years and on the links between the conflict and the subsequent totalitarian experience. This change was encouraged by several factors: firstly, the gradual assimilation of the lesson of De Felice, who had finally made fascism a genuine historical topic, to be studied principally using the sources that it had produced itself and not simply, as had long been the case, through the sources and the memories of its opponents, in other words the anti-fascists. Secondly, the studies by George L. Mosse, Ernst Nolte, and later Zeev Sternhell had considerable impact. By emphasizing the contamination of the nationalist demands of the right and those for social justice typical of the left, they had begun to study the twentieth century no longer simply as the “age of extremes,” as it was termed some twenty years later,<sup>72</sup> but also as a time of the convergence, dialogue, and reciprocal imitation between seemingly opposing ideologies. Fascism was, in fact, the first complete incarnation of the new political synthesis born out of this dynamic.

### **New Perspectives on World War I: Assessing Trends and Developments in Italian Historiography**

In the past thirty years, as we have seen, once the belief became widespread that the “total war” originated not between 1939 and 1945 but in 1914, historians gradually shifted their attention to the lived experience

of those who participated in the war. Research has dealt with life in the trenches in increasing depth, as well as with the defensive reactions of the soldiers and their efforts to retain a minimum of control over their lives within an anonymous and radically depersonalizing mechanism.<sup>73</sup> Gradually, the number of studies tackling the changing role of women, with their mass inclusion especially in the world of work, as well as in the military, in the guise of Red Cross workers, “charitable ladies,” or *madrine di guerra* (war pen pals), has increased. These studies have shown that it was during the war that the sharp separation between the male and female spaces that had hitherto characterized European society began to be challenged in Italy.<sup>74</sup>

Within this new historiographical context,<sup>75</sup> the ninetieth anniversary of the Great War saw the publication in Italy of two major collective works. One was the Italian translation of the *Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre 1914–1918*, published in 2004 in France and in 2007 in Italy, but with the addition of some essays on the peninsula, much neglected in the original publication.<sup>76</sup> The other was the two-part volume *La Grande guerra: dall’Intervento alla “vittoria mutilata,”* part of a longer work on *Italiani in Guerra*.<sup>77</sup>

Leafing through the pages of this second work, in which Italy is central, we find a substantial survey of the fields of inquiry tackled by Italian historiography over the past twenty years. In this collective volume, in addition to taking up familiar themes such as the various political parties involved, the press, their leaders, leading intellectuals, symbolic landmarks (the Piave, Monte Grappa, etc.), and the main phases of the military conflict, we also find the younger generation as a specific social group, along with civilian internees, Italian military prisoners and the prisoners of the Italians, refugees, everyday life both in war zones and in the trenches and behind the lines, militarized factories, the *Case del soldato*, the frontline theater, war songs, and cinema. The work ends with a separate section on the legacy bequeathed by the conflict to the years immediately following it: the cult of the fallen and the rejection of war, the veterans’ associations, the memoirs of protagonists, and the memory of the war in the theater, cinema, and even families (consider the names given to children, for example: from the rarest, Esercito and Alpino, to the more frequent Guerrino/Guerrina, Guerriero, Trincea, Italia, and Cardorno, those taken from geographical references, Dalmazio/Dalmazia, Fiume, Isonzio/Isonzia, Carsio, Marnio/Marna, and Verdun, etc.).

All these themes now also appear frequently in the most recent doctoral and undergraduate theses that can be found on the relevant Italian websites. Here, too, in addition to classic themes such as the role of the Church and of the Catholic world, or the history of small communi-

ties during the conflict, we find a constant attention to the victims (the maimed, shell-shocked soldiers, etc.), propaganda strategies and those at whom they were aimed (including children), the places of memory (to adopt a French expression that has also had resonance in Italy), archaeology, popular writings, and local testimonies.<sup>78</sup>

A significant number of the most recent studies have also focused on the themes of propaganda from above and mobilization from below. This has shed further light on the parallel and complementary processes of demonization of both the military and the domestic enemy (political opponents), and thus on the new instruments of repression and consolidation of the home front that were identified during the war years, which began to make a totalitarian regime “thinkable” (and “feasible”).<sup>79</sup>

As is well known, a crucial role in radicalizing the conflict was played by intellectuals, and this group now increasingly tends to be studied using a comparative approach between the various countries and more particularly with attention not only to important individuals but to the “intellectual class” as a whole, with all its internal complexities.<sup>80</sup> The role of schools and of the Church in the patriotic mobilization is also increasingly explored, although much still remains to be done in this field (in particular, there are few studies on the effects of propaganda and its social hold in rural areas, much less studied than urban population centers).<sup>81</sup> Recent research has also continued to delve deeper into a theme that, as we have seen, emerged already in the 1960s: the specificity of Italian legislation and repressive practices compared to those of other countries.<sup>82</sup>

This theme—repression and violence on the civilian as well as the military front—is, moreover, closely linked to a change in sensibility experienced by contemporary historiography, including that of Italy, in recent decades. The “victims of war” now occupy a central place in historical reflection thanks both to the historiography, and perhaps to an even greater extent the filmography on the Holocaust, and to the impact on global public opinion of the tragedy that unfolded in the 1990s during the Balkan Wars. The images broadcast on television immediately brought to mind those of the two world wars, bringing home to everyone the dramatic impact of war violence on the civilian population.<sup>83</sup>

From this point of view, the reflection on the documents produced by both soldiers and civilians has also continued to deepen, given the importance gradually taken on by subjectivity. Letters, diaries, and autobiographical memoirs increasingly appear to be key sources for understanding the magnitude and meaning of the great cultural and social transformations of the war years.<sup>84</sup>

In this field, the work to collect such documents and make them available to scholars has also progressed considerably. Among the most im-

portant institutions, we could mention the Archivio Ligure della scrittura popolare, based in Genoa, which has been gathering these documents for nearly three decades and whose largest collection covers the period of the Great War, and the Archivio della scrittura popolare di Trento, with its journal *Materiali di lavoro* that has made “history from below” its main mission.<sup>85</sup>

Again, in the context of studies on popular writings and the related archives, we find a substantial continuity with the new areas of investigation already developed in the final two decades of the last century. But, in the ongoing effort to identify new groups “forgotten” by history, the paths already opened up have gradually expanded. This is true, for example, of the attention devoted to the nationalization of childhood between the Great War and fascism,<sup>86</sup> to the young volunteers from Trento and the Adriatic who abandoned their lands to fight in the ranks of the Italian army,<sup>87</sup> and to the Austro-Hungarian prisoners in Italian camps.<sup>88</sup> The fate of the Italians subject to Austro-Hungarian rule, who were considered as unreliable by both the Italians and the Austrian-Hungarians, has also been investigated, along with the experiences of the civil population in occupied territories in general.<sup>89</sup> Last but not least, other research areas that have enjoyed considerable attention in the international World War I historiography have also been opened up by Italian historians: First systematically tackled in a classic study by Antonio Gibelli, the theme of the impact of modernity and technology on the culture, psyche, and body of soldiers was later taken up by Bruna Bianchi,<sup>90</sup> and the topic has recently been developed both through the analysis of the events and of local archives and through growing debate in the field of medicine and psychiatry.<sup>91</sup> The issue of the mutilated and their maimed bodies, “repaired” and finally celebrated, has been covered by Barbara Bracco.<sup>92</sup> Speaking of internationalization, it is also noteworthy that the centenary has seen the publication of several English-language studies on the Italian army during the conflict.<sup>93</sup>

One final aspect worth mentioning that Italian historiography has recently turned to is World War I’s impact on the Italian colonial empire . . . *From Tripoli to Addis Ababa*, as one of the first books on the subject matter put it.<sup>94</sup> Inspired by the upsurge of “Imperial History,” this edited volume successfully embraced a variety of issues that help to understand the multiple imperial and colonial experiences of the Italian *Grande Guerra*: the Allied powers’ opposing geopolitical interests in the Mediterranean (and Red Sea) region; the consequences of the employment of Eritrean colonial troops, alongside Ethiopian voluntaries, in Libya (where they were employed in quelling local revolts dating back, for some of them, to the conquest of the region in 1911–12); the perceptions and representations

of the world war at the colonial periphery; the place of the Italian colonies in the emerging postwar order; the redefinition of Italian colonization policies as well as the way local (indigenous) authorities negotiated their involvement in the conflict; the “Holy War” against Italian domination that Ottoman propaganda provoked in the Muslim regions of East Ethiopia, which led to a civil war that did not end before 1917; finally, the impact of the Spanish flu across the Italian empire.

In conclusion, we can say that the picture offered today by Italian historiography essentially continues the themes that surfaced in the 1980s and 1990s. In those decades, in fact, social and political history gradually drew closer to one another thanks to the realization that during the war years the short-term perspective of politics and the medium to long-term perspective of economic processes, institutional evolution, and the definition of social groups and mindsets interacted and conditioned each other to an extent rarely seen at other moments in history.

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## Notes

1. Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra* (1970; Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 424.
2. See Maurizio Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 150–51; Quinto Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra: Cerimonie, monumenti, memorie e contromemorie* (Roma: Donzelli, 2018), 33–35.
3. Barbara Bracco, “Il decennale e il ventennale della Vittoria: Continuità e discontinuità della memoria di guerra nell’era fascista,” in *Celebrare la nazione: Grandi anniversari e memorie pubbliche nella società contemporanea*, ed. Massimo Baioni, Fulvio Conti, Maurizio Ridolfi (Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2012), 160–76.
4. See Gianni Isola, *Guerra al regno della guerra! Storia della Lega proletaria mutilati invalidi di reduci orfani e vedove di guerra (1918–1924)* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1990).

5. Claudio Canal, "La retorica della morte: I monumenti ai caduti della Grande Guerra," *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 11, no. 4 (1982): 657–69; and Renato Monteleone and Pino Sarasini, "I monumenti ai caduti della Grande Guerra," in *La Grande guerra. Esperienza, memoria, immagini*, ed. Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 631–62.
6. Bruno Tobia, "Dal Milite ignoto al nazionalismo monumentale fascista (1921–1940)," in *Storia d'Italia: Guerra e pace; L'elmo di Scipio. Dall'Unità alla Repubblica*, ed. Walter Barberis (Turin: Einaudi, 2002), 622–23.
7. Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali*, 164–65.
8. Now collected in Benedetto Croce, *Scritti e discorsi politici (1943–1947)* (Bari: Laterza, 1963).
9. Ridolfi, *Le feste nazionali*, 174–76.
10. For a strong critique of the attention paid to the resistance in official ceremonies, contrasting with the progressive marginalization of the "last and greatest of the wars of Independence," see Ugo D'Andrea, *La guerra 1915–18: Commemorazione cinquantenaria*, with a foreword by Gioacchino Volpe (Rome: Volpe, 1967). On the fiftieth anniversary of the Italian entry into the war (1965) and the end of the war (1968), see Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 339–55.
11. The emphasis on patriotism, albeit now in a pro-European perspective, that accompanied the war experienced by many young people who saw this war as "the last war of the Risorgimento" can still be seen in the preface by Carlo Azeglio Ciampi to Mario Righoni Stern, ed., *1915–1918; La guerra sugli Altipiani: Testimonianze di soldati al fronte* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005), vii–ix. For the Mattarella quotation, see Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 413.
12. Legge 7 marzo 2001, n. 78: "Tutela del patrimonio storico della Prima guerra mondiale," *Gazzetta ufficiale*, 30 Mars 2001, n. 75.
13. See Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, <http://www.catalogo.beniculturali.it/opendata/?q=dataset/grande-guerra/resource>.
14. The website *Centenario 1914–1918*, <http://www.centenario1914-1918.it/it>, provides an excellent overview over these different initiatives.
15. Ministero dell'Istruzione—Comitato nazionale per la storia del Risorgimento, *Raccolta di testimonianze e di documenti sulla guerra italo-austriaca: Relazione del Presidente On; Paolo Boselli agli onorevoli membri del Comitato nell'adunanza dell'11 dicembre 1915* (Rome: Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati, 1915).
16. Isidoro Reggio, *Storia della Grande Guerra d'Italia* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1916–21).
17. Emilio Gentile, *La grande Italia* (Milano: Mondadori, 1997).
18. For a reconstruction of the events, see Brunello Vigizzi, *Da Giolitti a Salandra* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1969), and for the demonization of those opposed to the war, see Angelo Ventrone, *Il nemico interno: Immagini, parole e simboli della lotta politica nell'Italia del Novecento* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005), 5–10 and the illustrations accompanying the text.
19. *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta, R.D. 12 gennaio 1918, n. 35. Dall'Isonzo al Piave. 24 ottobre—9 novembre 1917. Relazione*, 3 vols. (Rome: Stabilimento Poligrafico per l'Amministrazione della guerra, 1919). The main volume was the second, *Le cause e le responsabilità degli avvenimenti*. A recent analysis of the commission's conclusions, based on the discovery of the notes of its members, can be found in Luca Falsini, *Processo a Caporetto: I documenti inediti della disfatta* (Roma: Donzelli, 2017).
20. Giorgio Rochat, *L'Italia nella Prima guerra mondiale: Problemi di interpretazione e prospettive di ricerca* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), 9–12.

21. Aldo Valori, *La guerra italo-austriaca* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1921). It was above all some of the most famous generals who moved in this direction, such as Enrico Caviglia, *La battaglia della Bainsizza* (Milan: Mondadori, 1930); Enrico Caviglia, *La dodicesima battaglia: Caporetto* (Milan: Mondadori, 1933); Enrico Caviglia, *Le tre battaglie del Piave* (Milan: Mondadori, 1935), and Gaetano Giardino, *Rievocazioni e riflessioni di guerra*, 3 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1929–30).
22. Luigi Albertini, *Venti anni di vita politica*, vol. 2: *L'Italia nella guerra mondiale*, 3 vols. (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1951–53); Brunello Vigezzi, ed., *Olindo Malagodi: Conversazioni della guerra 1914–1919* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1960); and Sidney Sonnino, *Diario 1866–1922* (Bari: Laterza, 1972).
23. Among the best-known works to suffer this fate were Carlo Salsa, *Trincee* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1924), Attilio Frescura, *Diario di un imboscato* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1921), and Kurt Suckert (Curzio Malaparte), *La rivolta dei santi maledetti* (Rome: Rassegna Internazionale, 1921).
24. See the introduction of Alberto Monticone to Angelo Gatti, *Caporetto: Dal diario di guerra inedito (maggio–dicembre 1917)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1964).
25. Luigi Cadorna, *La guerra alla fronte italiana fino all'arresto sulla linea del Piave e del Grappa* (Milan: Treves, 1921), and Luigi Cadorna, *Altre pagine sulla grande guerra* (Milan: Mondadori, 1925).
26. See Roberto Bencivenga, *Saggio critico sulla nostra guerra*, 5 vols., published by various presses, 1930–38; Adolfo Omodeo, *Momenti della vita di guerra (Dai diari e dalle lettere dei caduti)* (Bari: Laterza, 1934). Omodeo's book can be considered one of the key texts of the liberal-Risorgimental interpretation.
27. See Angelo Gatti, ed., *Collezione italiana di diari, memorie, studi e documenti per servire alla storia della guerra del mondo*; the collection, which contained writings by Cadorna himself, as well as by other generals, alongside those of politicians like Antonio Salandra and Filippo Meda, was published in thirty-four volumes between 1925 and 1935 by Mondadori.
28. See, among others, Giorgio Mortara, *La salute pubblica in Italia durante e dopo la guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1925); Riccardo Bachi, *L'alimentazione e la politica annonaria in Italia* (Bari: Laterza 1926); Alberto De Stefani, *La legislazione economica della guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1926); Luigi Einaudi, *La guerra e il sistema tributario italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1927); Arrigo Serpieri, *La guerra e le classi rurali italiane* (Bari: Laterza, 1929); Luigi Einaudi, *La condotta economica e gli effetti sociali della guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1933).
29. Piero Pieri, *La Prima guerra mondiale 1914–1918: Problemi di storia militare* (Turin: Gheroni, 1947).
30. Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, *Memorie (1915–1919)* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1960); Ferdinando Martini, *Diario 1914–1918* (Milan: Mondadori, 1966).
31. Alberto Monticone, "Salandra e Sonnino verso la decisione dell'intervento," *Rivista di studi politici internazionali* 1 (1957): 65–89; and Leo Valiani, *La dissoluzione dell'Austria-Ungheria* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1966), 118–19.
32. Alberto Monticone, *La Germania e la neutralità italiana: 1914–1915* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1971).
33. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965).
34. Giorgio Rochat, "Inchiesta sui libri di testo per l'insegnamento della storia contemporanea nella scuola italiana," *Il movimento di liberazione in Italia* 101 (1970): 3–67; see also Antonelli, *Cento anni di Grande guerra*, 377–86.
35. Alberto Caracciolo, "L'intervento italiano in guerra e la crisi politica del 1914–1915," *Società* 10, no. 6 (October and December 1954).

36. Citation in Paolo Alatri, "La prima guerra mondiale nella storiografia italiana dell'ultimo venticinquennio," *Belfagor* 27, no. 5 (30 September 1972): 565.
37. Richard A. Webster, *L'imperialismo industriale italiano: Studi sul prefascismo 1908–1915* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975); Valerio Castronovo, *Agnelli* (Turin: Utet, 1971); Ernesto Galli della Loggia, "Problemi di sviluppo industriale e nuovi equilibri politici alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale: La fondazione della Banca Italiana di Sconto," *Rivista storica italiana* 4 (1970): 824–86; Franco Bonelli, *Lo sviluppo di una grande impresa italiana: La Terni dal 1884 al 1962* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975); Massimo Mazzetti, *L'industria italiana nella grande guerra* (Rome: Ufficio Storico SME, 1979); Umberto M. Miozzi, *La mobilitazione industriale italiana (1915–1918)* (Rome: La Goliardica, 1980).
38. "Tre colpi di Stato," *Il Ponte*, April 1950.
39. His most important work is *L'Italia di fronte alla prima guerra mondiale*, vol. 1: *L'Italia neutrale* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1966).
40. After having been neglected for a long time, this theme has been taken up again in Fulvio Cammarano, ed., *Abbasso la guerra! Neutralisti in piazza alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale in Italia* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2015), and Lucio d'Angelo, *Patria e umanità: Il pacifismo democratico italiano dalla guerra di Libia alla nascita della Società delle Nazioni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016). On the tensions between neutralists and interventionists in Rome, see Marco De Nicolò, *L'ultimo anno di una pace incerta: Roma 1914–1915* (Milan: Le Monnier, 2016).
41. Monticone, "Salandra e Sonnino verso la decisione dell'intervento."
42. Giuliano Procacci, "Appunti in tema di crisi dello Stato liberale e di origini del fascismo," *Studi storici* 2 (1965): 221–39. This question has recently been revisited by Elena Bacchin, *24 maggio 1915* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2019), and, from a geopolitical perspective, stressing Salandra's objective of transforming Italy into a "great power" in the Adriatic and the Balkans, Gian Enrico Rusconi, *L'azzardo del 1915: Come l'Italia decide la sua guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005). See also Giuseppe Astuto, *La decisione di guerra: Dalla Triplice Alleanza al Patto di Londra* (Rubettino: Soveria Mannelli, 2019).
43. Gatti, *Caporetto*.
44. Enzo Forcella and Alberto Monticone, *Plotone d'esecuzione: I processi della prima guerra mondiale* (Bari: Laterza, 1968).
45. Mario Isnenghi, "Prima guerra mondiale," in *Il mondo contemporaneo: Storia d'Italia*, ed. Fabio Levi, Umberto Levra, and Nicola Tranfaglia (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), 2:905–7. For a recent reflection on the historiography of Caporetto and the effects of the defeat on the memory of the Great War, see Nicola Labanca, *Caporetto: Storia e memoria di una disfatta* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017).
46. Marco Pluviano and Irene Guerrini, *Le fucilazioni sommarie nella Prima guerra mondiale* (Udine: Gaspari, 2004).
47. Rochat, *L'Italia nella prima guerra mondiale*, 97–100. A recent analysis of the high officer's personality and his place in the military and political culture of his time is provided by Marco Mondini, *Il capo: La Grande Guerra del generale Luigi Cadorna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017).
48. Mario Isnenghi, *I vinti di Caporetto nella letteratura di guerra* (Padova: Marsilio, 1967), 102n6.
49. Piero Melograni, *Storia politica della Grande guerra 1915–1918* (1969; Milan: Mondadori, 1998), in particular 151–53.
50. For an overview, see Nicola Labanca, "Militari tra fronte e paese: Attorno agli studi degli ultimi quindici anni," *Annali della Fondazione Ugo La Malfa: Storia e politica*

- 38 (2013), special edition *La società italiana e la Grande Guerra*, edited by Giovanna Procacci, 103–30. This volume contains a collection of historiographic essays on numerous fields of study relating to 1914–18. By the same author, see also the essays “L’esercito italiano” and “La guerra sul fronte italiano e Caporetto,” in *La prima guerra mondiale*, vol. 1, ed. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Jean Jacques Becker, Italian edition by Antonio Gibelli, ed., (Turin: Einaudi, 2007). As recalled by Labanca, it should be stressed that the publication of official reports on the conflict ended only in the late eighties, *L’esercito italiano nella Grande Guerra (1915–1918)*, 7 vols., 37 tomes (Rome: Ministero della Guerra [later: Ministero della Difesa], 1927–88).
51. Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra*; Robert Wohl, *La generazione del 1914* (1979; Milan: Jaca Book, 1983); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
  52. Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra*.
  53. George L. Mosse, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse: Simbolismo politico e movimenti di massa in Germania (1815–1933)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1975; English edition published in 1974); Renzo De Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1975).
  54. Mario Isnenghi, *Giornali di trincea (1915–1918)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977).
  55. The seminal work on Workerism is Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966).
  56. See the trilogy by Eric J. Hobsbawm, *I ribelli* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), *I banditi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), and *I rivoluzionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975); Edward Thompson, *Società patrizia e cultura plebea: Otto saggi di antropologia storica sull’Inghilterra del Settecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), and, among the many works of Michel Foucault, *Sorvegliare e punire: La nascita della prigione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976).
  57. “Presentazione dell’editore,” in *Storia d’Italia*, vol. 1: *I caratteri originali*, ed. Corrado Vivanti and Ruggero Romano (Turin: Einaudi, 1972).
  58. Renato Monteleone, for example, published an impressive collection of anonymous letters sent to King Vittorio Emanuele III with the aim of convincing him—alternating pleas and threats—to keep Italy out of the conflict or in any case put an end to the war; see *Lettere al Re, 1914–1918* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1973).
  59. Paolo Spriano, *Torino operaia nella grande guerra (1914–1918)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960).
  60. Mario Isnenghi, “Introduction,” in *Operai e contadini nella Grande Guerra*, ed. Mario Isnenghi (Bologna: Cappelli, 1982), 8.
  61. *Ibid.*, 18–19. On Fascism, see, in particular, Philip V. Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso: Fascismo e mass-media* (Bari: Laterza, 1975).
  62. Alessandro Camarda and Santo Peli, *L’altro esercito: La classe operaia durante la prima guerra mondiale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980), and Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, *La fede e la guerra: Cappellani militari e preti-soldati (1915–1919)* (Rome: Studium, 1980).
  63. In particular, see Giovanna Procacci, “Repressione e dissenso nella prima guerra mondiale,” *Studi storici* 1 (1981): 119–50.
  64. Luigi Tomassini, “Mobilitazione Industriale e classe operaia,” in *Stato e Classe operaia in Italia durante la prima guerra mondiale*, ed. Giovanna Procacci (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1983), 79–102.
  65. Giovanna Procacci, *Soldati e prigionieri nella Grande guerra (con una raccolta di lettere inedite)* (Roma: Riuniti, 1993).
  66. *Ibid.*, 175.
  67. Eric J. Leed, *No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). The book was translated into Italian in 1985.
  68. See Giovanna Procacci, ed., *Stato e classe operaia in Italia durante la prima guerra mondiale* (Milan: Angeli, 1983).

69. Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra, eds., *La Grande Guerra: Esperienza memoria immagini* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986). A comprehensive account of the historiography of the time on these issues is in Bruna Bianchi, "La grande guerra nella storiografia italiana dell'ultimo decennio," *Ricerche storiche* 3 (September–December 1981): 698–745.
70. On civilians, see the essays by Giovanna Procacci, published in the 1980s and 1990s, later collected in Giovanna Procacci, ed., *Dalla rassegnazione alla rivolta: Mentalità e comportamenti popolari nella grande guerra* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1999). On the two most important cities of Italy, see Alessandra Staderini, *Combattenti senza divisa: Roma nella grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), and Barbara Bracco, ed., *Combattere a Milano, 1915–1918: Il corpo e la guerra nella capitale del fronte interno* (Milan: Editoriale Il Ponte, 2005).
71. On the socialists, see Luigi Ambrosoli, *Né aderire né sabotare* (Milan: Avanti, 1961). On Catholics, Giuseppe Rossini, ed., *Benedetto XV, i cattolici e la prima guerra mondiale* (Rome: Cinque Lune, 1965).
72. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994); Mosse, *La nazionalizzazione delle masse*; Ernst Nolte, *Nazional-socialismo e bolscevismo: La guerra civile europea 1917–1945* (Milan: Sansoni, 1988); Zeev Sternhell, *La destra rivoluzionaria, Nascita dell'ideologia fascista* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1997; French version published in 1978).
73. Lucio Fabi, *Gente di trincea: La Grande guerra sul Carso e sull'Isonzo* (Milan: Mursia, 1994).
74. Barbara Curli, *Italiane al lavoro, 1914–1920* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1998), and Stefania Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra: L'assistenza ai feriti 1915–1918* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003).
75. See Antonio Gibelli, *La Grande guerra degli Italiani 1915–1918* (Milan: RCS, 1998); Mario Isnenghi and Giorgio Rochat, *La Grande Guerra 1914–1918* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 2000), and Angelo Ventrone, *Grande guerra e Novecento: La storia che ha cambiato il mondo* (Rome: Donzelli, 2015).
76. Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *La prima Guerra mondiale*.
77. Daniele Ceschin and Mario Isnenghi, eds., *Italiani in guerra: Conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni* (Turin: Utet, 2008).
78. See Pleiadi: Portale per la Letteratura scientifica Elettronica Italiana su Archivi aperti e Depositi Istituzionali (<http://www.openarchives.it/pleiadi>) and the National Book Catalogue (<http://www.opac.sbn.it>).
79. Angelo Ventrone, *La seduzione totalitaria: Guerra, modernità, violenza politica (1914–1918)* (Rome: Donzelli, 2003); Emilio Gentile, *L'apocalisse nella modernità: La "grande guerra" per l'uomo nuovo* (Milan: Mondadori, 2008), but also Daniela Rossini, ed., *La propaganda nella Grande Guerra tra nazionalismi e internazionalismi* (Milan: Unicopli, 2007); Nicola Labanca and Camillo Zadra, eds., *Costruire un nemico: Studi di storia della propaganda di guerra* (Milan: Unicopli, 2011).
80. Vincenzo Cali, Gustavo Corni, and Giuseppe Ferrandi, *Gli intellettuali e la Grande guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000).
81. See Daniele Menozzi, Giovanna Procacci, and Simonetta Soldani, *Un paese in guerra: La mobilitazione civile in Italia (1914–1918)* (Milan: Unicopli, 2010), 135–266. On the role of the Italian Church, see Sante Lesti, *Riti di guerra: Religione e politica nell'Europa della Grande Guerra* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015).
82. Daniele Ceschin, "Gli italiani nella Grande Guerra: Un bilancio storiografico," in *Italiani in guerra: Conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*, ed. Daniele Ceschin and Mario Isnenghi (Turin: Utet, 2008), vol. 3, 126–28, and Giovanna Procacci, "La società come una caserma: La svolta repressiva nell'Italia della Grande Guerra," *Contemporanea* 8, no. 3 (2005): 423–45.

83. Bruna Bianchi, *La violenza contro la popolazione civile: Deportati, profughi, internati* (Milan: Unicopli, 2006); Daniele Ceschin, *Gli esuli di Caporetto: I profughi in Italia durante la Grande Guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 2006), and Matteo Ermacora, *Cantieri di guerra: Il lavoro dei civili nelle retrovie del fronte italiano (1915–1918)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005). For a broad survey of the impact of war on civilians, see Enzo Traverso, *A ferro e fuoco: La guerra civile europea, 1914–1945* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007).
84. On the heuristic value of these sources, see Alberto M. Banti, *Sublime madre nostra: La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo* (Bari: Laterza, 2011), and Elena Papadia, *Di padre in figlio: La generazione del 1915* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013).
85. For a rich and detailed analysis of the main collections, see Fabio Caffarena, *Lettere dalla Grande Guerra: Scritture del quotidiano, monumenti della memoria, fonti per la storia; Il caso italiano* (Milan: Unicopli, 2005); Quinto Antonelli, *Storia intima della Grande guerra: Lettere, diari e memorie dei soldati al fronte* (Roma: Donzelli, 2014). See also Federico Mazzini, “*Cose de laltro mondo*”: *Una cultura di guerra attraverso la scrittura popolare trentina 1914–1918* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2013), and Elena Riccio and Carlo Verri, *Siciliani al fronte: Lettere dalla Grande guerra* (Palermo: Istituto Poligrafico Europeo, 2017).
86. Antonio Gibelli, *Il popolo bambino: Infanzia e nazione dalla Grande guerra a Salò* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005); Patrizia Gabrielli, *La guerra è l'unico pensiero che ci domina tutti: Bambine, bambini, adolescenti nella Grande guerra* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2018).
87. Caffarena, *Lettere dalla Grande Guerra*; on volunteers, see Fabio Todero, *Morire per la patria: I volontari del “Litorale Austriaco” nella Grande Guerra* (Udine: Paolo Gaspari Editore, 2005), and Patrizia Dogliani, Gilles Pécout, and Alesio Quercioli, *La scelta della Patria: Giovani volontari nella Grande Guerra* (Rovereto: Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra, 2006).
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*Chapter 13*

**FINDING A PLACE FOR WORLD WAR I  
IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

1914–2018

*Jennifer D. Keene*



World War I has occupied an uneasy place in the American public and political consciousness.<sup>1</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, controversies over the war permeated the nation’s cultural and political life, influencing memorial culture and governmental policy. Interest in the war, however, waned considerably after World War II, a much larger and longer war for the United States. Despite a plethora of scholarly works examining nearly every aspect of the war, interest in the war remains limited even among academic historians. In many respects, World War I became the “forgotten war” because Americans never developed a unifying collective memory about its meaning or the political lessons it offered. Americans remembered the Civil War as the war that ended slavery and saved the union, World War II as “the good war” that eliminated fascist threats in Europe and the Pacific, the Cold War as a struggle for survival against a communist foe, and Vietnam as an unpopular war. By comparison, World War I failed to find a stable place in the national narrative.

The 2014–18 global centennial commemoration created a cultural moment when it became almost mandatory for Americans to acknowledge the war. These remembrances occurred during an uneasy time in post-9/11

American society. The flawed military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, instability in the Middle East, worries that the “American Century” had ended, and concerns about maintaining civil liberties during an endless domestic “war on terror” prompted a myriad of articles and reflections in the popular press that drew parallels between the present and 1914–18. Public intellectuals used the exercise of centennial commemoration to interrogate the dilemmas plaguing the United States in the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the overtly nationalistic tone injected into the political arena during and after the 2016 presidential election reinforced the tendency in official commemorative events to emphasize American triumphalism. The American military victory was generally presented as the launching pad for the nation’s rise to superpower status, complimenting (perhaps unintentionally) the new Republican administration’s desire to resurrect pride in America’s past accomplishments and singular greatness.

At the same time, however, the centennial moment laid the foundation for a scholarly renaissance in World War I studies. The lectures, exhibits, and conferences organized by libraries, museums, and universities throughout the United States left a lingering footprint. Many archives took advantage of the sudden availability of funds to fully inventory, and sometimes even digitize, their World War I holdings. The Library of Congress, for instance, crafted a major exhibit, “Echoes of the Great War: The American Experiences of World War I,” accompanied by detailed summaries of World War I–related holdings and new online resources that included sheet music, photographs, maps, and manuscripts. Similarly, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts mounted a comprehensive art exhibit, “World War I and American Art,” that offered a major reinterpretation by challenging the traditional assumption that American artists barely noticed the conflict.<sup>3</sup>

Equally important, every public event prompted yet another American to delve into personal family history, and the material uncovered often found its way into the public domain through privately produced letter collections or as donations to local libraries and archives.<sup>4</sup> Andrew J. Huebner’s *Love and Death in the Great War* represented a scholarly take on this popular desire to evaluate the war’s impact on families.<sup>5</sup> The sudden sense that participation in the war was an important historical experience worthy of remembrance imbued letters and artifacts with new value to both families and professional archivists. Indeed, Huebner’s own family figures prominently in *Love and Death*.

The emphasis on local commemoration also received a boost when the National Endowment for the Humanities funded World War I lectures and exhibits in local public libraries across all fifty states.<sup>6</sup> Many towns “re-discovered” how World War I infused their own cultural landscape.

Art historian Mark Levitch initiated the World War I Memorial Inventory Project<sup>7</sup> and successfully relied on crowdsourcing to create a database of local monuments and memorials. Subsequently, the 100 Cities/100 Memorials project offered funds to restore these long-forgotten testimonies to American participation in the war. Interest in the local experience of war was mirrored in scholarly works that focused on particular cities or regions, such as Ross J. Wilson's *New York and the First World War: Shaping an American City*.<sup>8</sup>

The flip side of interest in the local were efforts to incorporate the American experience into the new scholarly turn toward examining the war as a global conflict. The 2014 three-volume anthology edited by Jay Winter, *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, fully incorporated the United States into the global history of the war.<sup>9</sup> The National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, also preferred events that helped educate the public about the entire war rather than just the U.S. experience.

The United States got a late start organizing for the centennial. Created in 2013, the twelve-member U.S. World War I Centennial Commission received minimal public funding (as opposed to the United Kingdom, which pledged £50 million to mark the occasion). A comprehensive website and podcast series publicized centennial-related news, but remembrance activities relied primarily on the ad hoc efforts of local museums, universities, state commissions, and dedicated individuals. The commission devoted considerable time trying to drum up support for the erection of a national World War I memorial in Washington, DC. To that end, the commission secured needed governmental approvals, held a competition to select a design, and even held a ground-breaking ceremony in Pershing Park—the site selected for the proposed monument. Nonetheless, as the centennial drew to a close, the monument remained unbuilt and underfunded. Frank Buckles, the last surviving American World War I veteran, had died in 2011.<sup>10</sup> Without any living veterans to honor, the commission lacked a compelling argument for creating the memorial beyond pointing out that World War I had been forgotten in the late twentieth-century monument-building frenzy that resulted in memorials to World War II, Korea, and Vietnam on the National Mall.

A hundred years earlier, the political imperative had been completely different. Initially, firsthand memories of the conflict dominated both fictional and historical interpretations of the American war effort as participants struggled to come to terms with the war. Scholars have been animated by a similar collective desire to recapture what the war meant to those who lived through it and its lasting legacy on the United States. Delving deeper into how cultural, diplomatic, military, political, and social

historians have examined the war reveals ongoing debates rather than firm answers to these two essential questions.

## World War I in American Popular Culture

Throughout the twentieth century, Americans' most sustained encounter with the war came through literature. Veteran novelists, including Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, wrote enduring classics that embraced themes of disillusionment, cynicism, absurdity, and sexual dysfunction.<sup>11</sup> These novels portrayed the war as a rite of passage for young men and women who lost their adolescent naiveté within the crucible of war. Classic American films also reinforced the prevailing portrait of senseless slaughter along the Western Front. *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Paths of Glory* condensed the war into the horror of trench warfare, corrupt officers, and disillusioned youth.<sup>12</sup> This emphasis on human carnage permeated the larger culture, setting a paradigm for understanding the war even among those who never actually read these books or watched these films. Novels and films that valorized the war's idealism and sacrifice, such as Willa Cather's *One of Ours*, Edith Wharton's *A Son at the Front*, and the Howard Hawks–directed *Sergeant York* had no lasting impact on popular memory.<sup>13</sup>

Over time, Lost Generation novels and films served less as indictments of World War I and more as universal statements on the shock of confronting the reality of war. The themes of disillusionment highlighted in these artistic works struck a nerve during the Vietnam War era when Americans began once again to question the efficacy of using war to spread democratic values. Stanley Cooperman's *World War I and the American Novel* drew parallels between the sentiments expressed in antiwar fiction of the 1920s and street protests against the Vietnam War. In *The Gun and the Pen: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and the Fiction of Mobilization*, Keith Gandal rejects the antiwar label attached to Lost Generation fiction.<sup>14</sup> Gandal instead argues that the root of postwar disillusionment came not from having experienced fighting firsthand but rather from Hemingway and Fitzgerald having failed to reach the Western Front as officers. In a subsequent book, *War Isn't the Only Hell: A New Reading of World War I American Literature*, Gandal reinterprets a broader range of veteran-authored fiction, viewing these works as uneasy mediations on how military mobilization challenged existing hierarchies of class, ethnicity, and gender.<sup>15</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the war, official committees mobilized to commemorate a war that they believed Americans would long regard

as a seminal event in the nation's history. Veterans' organizations and local communities mobilized to erect monuments throughout the nation. The American Battle Monuments Commission undertook the massive task of compiling a comprehensive battlefield guidebook. The commission expected tourists and pilgrims to retrace the steps of American soldiers as they paid their respects to the dead. Originally published in 1938, the guide instead became obsolete almost immediately, collecting dust on library shelves. Similarly, by the time the fundraising and construction of monuments had concluded in the late 1920s and early 1930s, public interest in the war had waned.<sup>16</sup> More recently, the World War I Centennial Commission and American Battlefield Monuments Commission tried to renew interest in the war by opening visitor centers and organizing official commemorative events to mark key battles, including simultaneous ceremonies at all official World War I overseas cemeteries on 11 November 2018.

Few Americans bought or read the slew of participant memoirs that appeared in the interwar period. Some were poorly written, while others appeared after the reading public had tired of rehashing the war. Many memoir writers also found that their accounts differed too dramatically with the now-accepted paradigm established by the Lost Generation novelists. Steven Trout notes, for instance, that the combat memoir of John Lewis Barkley, a highly decorated U.S. soldier, "did not line up with accepted wisdom (at least among artists and intellectuals) about how soldiers of the Great War were *supposed* to remember their experiences."<sup>17</sup> Barkley championed camaraderie and individual resilience. Something of a "war lover," he relished the excitement of battle and killing enemy soldiers. Out of step with the times, Barkley's memoir failed to find an audience.

Unlike the Somme for the British or Verdun for the French, the 1918 Meuse-Argonne campaign (the culminating U.S. battle in World War I) found no lasting place in American memory. The high death toll did not result in an indictment of American military leadership (as it did in Vietnam), nor did the victory cause subsequent generations of Americans to relish their role in defeating Germany (as in World War II). Other wars, historian Edward Lengel contends, simply offer Americans better stories—ones with a clear beginning and end, with easily identifiable heroes and villains who serve as mirrors that allow Americans to see their values, their strengths, and their flaws more clearly.<sup>18</sup> The memory of World War I, by contrast, focuses nearly exclusively on the universal horrors of war, and therefore offers no such prism for championing American exceptionalism.

Steven Trout offers a different argument for the indifference and ignorance that pervades American society about World War I.<sup>19</sup> Rather than

willfully purging the war from the national consciousness, Trout believes that Americans remembered the war in too many diverse ways. What exactly should the nation recall about the war? The failure of neutrality? The bravery of the combat soldier? The futility of trench warfare? The racial discrimination that permeated the ranks? The domestic attacks on German Americans? The botched peace processes? These competing memories reflected existing political and social divisions within American society during the twenties and thirties, preventing Americans from forming a sustainable, collective memory about the war.

Nonetheless, from 1918 through 1945, the war was anything but forgotten, suggesting that “forgetting” is a more recent phenomenon. America grappled with the loss of 120,000 soldiers (half of these in combat, the rest mostly as a result of the influenza epidemic), and the reintegration of nearly 200,000 wounded men. Historian G. Kurt Piehler has traced the physical presence of World War I in towns and cities where Americans drove their cars on Pershing Drives, attended meetings in Memorial Halls, and watched football games on Soldiers’ Fields.<sup>20</sup> Critical of the plethora of mass-produced statues erected after the Civil War that lionized leaders and foot soldiers, memorialization in the 1920s took a utilitarian turn, honoring servicemen through the creation of community structures that improved civic life. In 1921, the remains of an unidentified soldier were buried in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery, a noteworthy alteration of the nation’s commemorative landscape. At a time when no wars had national monuments (the present structures dedicated to World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam War appeared toward the end of the twentieth century), the creation of a national site of mourning and remembrance explicitly for World War I represented a unique commemorative practice.

Almost immediately, however, Americans splintered in the meaning they attached to the Unknown Soldier. Americans debated whether the tomb represented victory, peace, or valor (the sarcophagus erected in 1932 over the grave included allegorical figures for all three). African American civil rights activists adopted the trope of the Unknown Soldier to highlight the nation’s refusal to adequately recognize the contributions of black soldiers.<sup>21</sup> Town monuments also reflected this ambiguity over whether the nation was commemorating victory or mourning loss in the statues they erected with plaques listing the community’s war dead.

Over time, townsfolk added the names of fallen soldiers from other wars to these plaques, weakening their symbolic link to World War I. A similar dilution occurred when the remains of unidentified soldiers from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam were buried in the Tomb of the

Unknown Soldier.<sup>22</sup> The same fate befell the annual Armistice Day commemorations that began on 11 November 1919 to remember the fallen in World War I. In 1954 Armistice Day became Veterans Day, a holiday dedicated to honoring all living and deceased members of the armed forces. Such transformations were not unique to American remembrance of World War I. The passage of time had weakened ties between the Civil War and Decoration Days—originally two separate days when relatives in the North and South decorated the graves of fallen soldiers. By the twentieth century, as the divisions between North and South healed, the term Memorial Day came into vogue with commemorations now honoring the fallen of all wars on the same day in May. Memorial Day became an official federal holiday in 1971.

In the interwar period, the government erected eight national overseas military cemeteries in France and Belgium, placing the gravesites of individual soldiers in the shadows of massive memorials recalling the scope and complexity of American combat operations.<sup>23</sup> Lisa M. Budreau argues that the government constructed overseas memorials and cemeteries to underscore the emergence of the United States as a major world power during the war, but burying fallen American soldiers overseas proved domestically contentious.<sup>24</sup> In 1917, Secretary of War Newton Baker had promised to return the bodies of war dead to their families for burial in local communities. In 1919, however, the government reversed course and began pressuring families to keep their loved ones near the field of honor where they fell. The specter of thousands of coffins arriving home presented the worrisome prospect that grief might become the predominant memory of the war. Equally disturbing, the possibility that bringing home all war dead would allow France and Britain to downplay the American contribution to the overall victory. In the end, nearly 70 percent of families demanded that the government repatriate the bodies of their loved ones. With fewer bodies available to offer visual evidence of America's contribution to the victory, the American Battlefields Monument Commission designed the official overseas cemeteries with ample space between gravestones to camouflage the fact that so few American soldiers were buried in them.

The distinctly American way of mourning privileged some forms of remembrance over others. In *Of Little Comfort: War Widows, Fallen Soldiers, and the Remaking of the Nation after the Great War*, Erika Kuhlman argues that war widows became public symbols through which American society could grieve for the war dead, but only if they exhibited stoic acceptance of their loss.<sup>25</sup> Nancy K. Bristow, in *American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic*, argues that over time stories of loss from

influenza or combat became private rather than public stories.<sup>26</sup> Sustained despair and grief were culturally unacceptable within the United States, a society that privileged optimism and progress.

## World War I in American Political Culture

The war exerted its greatest impact on American domestic political culture during the 1930s. Two singular events in American history, the Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages and 1932 Bonus March by World War I veterans, revealed the resonance of the war's legacy during the Great Depression. These two staged events highlighted the emotional and financial cost of the war to average citizens, underscoring the government's responsibility to mitigate that suffering.

Between 1930 and 1933, the government funded twenty Gold Star Mother voyages for the mothers and widows of fallen soldiers to visit overseas gravesites. Gold Star Mothers derived their name from the flag embossed with a gold star that many families of fallen soldiers hung in their windows. The government had encouraged the families of servicemen to display flags with a blue star to advertise their support of the war. Once soldiers began dying, officials urged families to grieve discretely by changing the star from blue to gold instead of draping their doors and porches in traditional black crepe.

Effective lobbying by the Gold Star Mothers Association portrayed the trip as fulfilling a debt to the women who had first suffered the death of their loved ones and then lost a site of mourning once they agreed to let the government bury their soldier overseas.<sup>27</sup> Much like the impulse to create overseas cemeteries, government officials expected the Gold Star Mother Pilgrimages to advance broader diplomatic goals. The trips occurred in the wake of renewed cultural and diplomatic interactions with France including Charles Lindbergh's historic New York–Paris flight and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, an international agreement that outlawed wars of aggression. The pilgrimages served as visible illustrations of wartime sacrifice ushering in a peaceful future of international understanding and cooperation. The voyages were not without controversy, however. African American women traveled separately, received inferior accommodations, and faced pressure from civil rights organizations to boycott the pilgrimages to protest racial discrimination.

During the most severe years of the Great Depression, the nation proved willing to expend \$5 million to send 6,685 mothers and widows to visit graves overseas. The demand by living veterans in the early thirties that the government pay them their promised bonus proved much more

contentious. Controversy over the soldiers' bonus extended back to 1920. In *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* I argued that conscription created a social compact between the state and conscripted soldiers that endured well after they returned home.<sup>28</sup> In veterans' eyes, if the state had the power to draft men, it also had the ability and responsibility to prevent war from financially ruining the lives of those it conscripted.

In 1924, Congress awarded World War I veterans a monetary bonus in the form of a bond that matured in 1945. Once the Depression hit, however, veterans began agitating for early payment of the bond. This grassroots movement culminated in the 1932 Bonus March when thirty thousand World War I veterans marched on Washington, DC, and set up an encampment that lasted for six weeks until the army violently evicted the protesters from the capital. Veterans ultimately received their bonus payment in 1936, by which time they had become an influential part of the left-leaning political coalition pushing President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) to embrace liberal social welfare policies aimed at redistributing wealth more equitably throughout American society.

The climax of World War I veterans' influence over American politics came in the final years of World War II, when the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars steered the GI Bill of Rights through the legislative process. World War I veterans had created the American Legion in 1919 to form a veterans' organization that all servicemen could join, regardless of where they served. In contrast, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (established in 1899 after the Spanish American War) only admitted those who had served overseas. Recent scholarship reveals how these veterans' organizations helped erect the modern social-welfare state. The GI Bill, for instance, granted returning World War II veterans comprehensive benefits, including unemployment compensation, college tuition, healthcare, and low-interest housing loans.<sup>29</sup> In *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, Stephen Ortiz suggests that veterans, as New Deal dissidents, helped convince FDR to champion social justice measures such as the creation of the social security system.<sup>30</sup> Jessica Adler's *Burdens of War: Creating the United States Veteran Health System* examines how World War I veterans' claim that they had "earned" the right to life-long, federally subsidized medical care eventually resulted in the creation of a universal healthcare system for only one segment of the American population.<sup>31</sup> Other scholars, however, put more emphasis on the legion's reactionary rather than progressive impulses, detailing their active participation in the First Red Scare and pursuit of restrictive immigration laws and isolationist foreign policies.<sup>32</sup>

As these studies suggest, the political fallout from World War I affected more than veterans' benefits. In the 1930s, politicians also drew lessons

from the war to shape American foreign policy. The U.S. Senate's Nye Committee investigation accused bankers and arms dealers of working behind the scenes to convince President Woodrow Wilson to abandon neutrality and declare war. In this formulation, fears that an Allied loss would preclude repayment of war loans eventually prompted the United States to abandon its long-standing, self-imposed prohibition on overseas foreign entanglements. Distrust of financial elites as single-mindedly pursuing their own profits at the expense of the public good, irresponsibility that many Americans felt had caused the Great Depression, accounted for the popularity of this view. Economist John Maurice Clark's *The Cost of the World War to the American People*, published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, reflected this popular concern with the ongoing financial burdens of a war estimated to have cost \$32 billion.<sup>33</sup> The charge that the financial and business elite had callously sacrificed American youth to boost their own profits gained scholarly credence from works such as Helmut C. Engelbrecht and Frank C. Hanighen's *The Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry*.<sup>34</sup> When Britain and France defaulted on war loans owed to the U.S. government in the 1930s, a consensus developed that the nation had been duped into fighting and financing a meaningless war that now threatened to bankrupt the country. In the end, the Nye Committee only proved that munitions dealers quickly took advantage of the new markets that the outbreak of war created. But this conspiracy theory nonetheless proved satisfying during a time when many Americans worried about the disproportionate influence the rich exerted over the national economy.

The merchants-of-death argument resonated powerfully enough to spur Congress to adopt a series of neutrality laws from 1935 to 1939 that sought to limit American economic ties to belligerent nations as war clouds gathered once again in Europe. These laws restricted arms sales, loans, and transport of goods with nations at war, encapsulating the widespread view that actions by financial elites had forced the nation to fight an unpopular war that ultimately harmed the nation. Even after Adolf Hitler began his wars of conquest throughout Western Europe, the merchant-of-death argument held sway and slowed the sending of aid to Great Britain. Before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war in 1941, FDR had to work around the edges of the politically popular neutrality laws through programs like lend-lease, which claimed that the United States was "lending" rather than "selling" arms to Great Britain.

The last overt influence of the war on American political culture came when FDR and his advisors tried to "learn lessons" from Wilson's bungled management of the peace process. After World War I, the United States rejected the controversial Versailles peace treaty and refused to join the

League of Nations. To develop a strong relationship with the Senate (the body that ratifies treaties), Roosevelt chose Missouri senator Harry S. Truman as his running mate in 1944 and enlisted early support from prominent Republicans for his plans. The popular view that America's interwar isolationism had emboldened imperial militarism worldwide also convinced Americans that the United States needed to take a leading role in creating and maintaining the United Nations.

### Beginning and Ending the War

Political and diplomatic historians have focused on two essential questions: Why did the United States enter World War I, and why, having won the war, did the United States lose the peace? Over the decades, historians have disagreed over whether financial ties to the Allies, concerns about German aggression, or a desire to shape the peace ultimately prompted President Woodrow Wilson to abandon neutrality for belligerency. Historians have also continually debated how the new vision of American world leadership articulated by Wilson through his peace platform shaped the "American Century."

In assessing the causes of the war, the economic argument dominated in the 1920s and 1930s. Leading historians in the 1930s rejected the conspiratorial overtones of the merchant-of-death theorists but nonetheless linked the decision for war to economics. In their view, Wilson's desire to protect the overall health of the U.S. economy gradually eroded his commitment to neutrality. Certain that economics directly affected political decisions, historians Charles Beard, Clinton Grattan, and Charles Tansill noted that the entire American economy benefited from the increase in trade with the Allied nations.<sup>35</sup> This economic dependence made it difficult, if not impossible, for Wilson to risk a rupture with Britain over its blockade policies or accept Germany's attempt to curtail war-related trade with a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. Rather than blaming special interests for pushing the nation into war, this perspective tended to sympathize with the difficult choices facing Wilson. By 1917, "the alternative policy of strict adherence to its earlier standards of neutrality meant economic depression on a national scale," Paul Birdsall argued.<sup>36</sup>

In subsequent decades, the economic argument continued to persuade some, albeit in more nuanced form. Ross Gregory, in *The Origins of American Intervention in the First World War*, noted that disproportionate trading and lending to the Allies increasingly tied American economic prosperity to an Allied victory, while negative publicity surrounding the *Lusitania* sinking and Zimmermann Telegram hardened American views against

Germany.<sup>37</sup> More recently, Benjamin O. Fordham argued for a reconsideration of economic causes to explain American entry into World War I by disaggregating national economic figures to reveal the correlation between regions that benefited from the wartime export boom and voting patterns by their congressional representatives.<sup>38</sup>

In the wake of World War II and at the height of the Cold War, the idea that the United States went to war primarily to protect its economic interests fell out of favor. The muting of class conflict in the booming post-World War II economy and America's ideological and strategic battle with the Soviet Union influenced the scholarly debate. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century historians placed increased emphasis on Wilson's ideological desire to spread democratic values and how German aggression threatened national security.

Two influential Wilson biographers, John Milton Cooper Jr. and Lloyd E. Ambrosius, agreed that Wilson's desire to spread American-style democracy and capitalism was the catalyst that drew the United States into war.<sup>39</sup> Others like Arthur Link argued that the resumption of aggressive unrestricted submarine warfare gave Wilson no choice but to enter the war.<sup>40</sup> "The weakness of Link's argument is that it accepts too easily Wilson's contention that there was no other way to protect American interests than to go to war," Kendrick Clements countered.<sup>41</sup> Clements believed that Wilson painted himself into a corner by not thinking through the potential ramifications of taking a hard line with Germany in 1915 and 1916 concerning unrestricted submarine warfare. He concluded that the administration's inexperience with foreign policy reflected the nation's growing pains as it sought to assert itself as a world power, resulting in an unnecessary war.

Some national-security-based arguments have focused on the Zimmermann Telegram as the *deus ex machina* that brought the United States into the war.<sup>42</sup> Barbara Tuchman and Frederick Katz viewed the telegram as the culmination of a long, secretive German campaign to incite a border war between the United States and Mexico.<sup>43</sup> Taking advantage of newly released German records, Thomas Boghardt reevaluates the telegram as a spontaneous German decision, unconnected to any coordinated strategic plan.<sup>44</sup> The German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, Boghardt concludes, proved more influential than the telegram in bringing about a U.S. declaration of war.

Ross A. Kennedy emphasizes that as the European war spread throughout the globe, especially to the high seas, Wilson came to believe that the physical barriers of two oceans were no longer enough to protect the United States. By the time he asked Congress to declare war, Wilson thought that "if Germany won the war, power politics would persist,

and America would continue to be ensnared in its destructive dynamics,” Kennedy writes.<sup>45</sup> In Kennedy’s interpretation, Wilson’s desire to rebuild the international political system to safeguard American sovereignty mattered more than spreading democracy or protecting the economy when it came to declaring war.

More recently, scholars have turned the spotlight away from Wilson to better gauge Americans’ reactions to the European war. John Branden Little chides historians for overlooking the massive American humanitarian relief effort, totaling more than \$6 billion (\$120 billion in 2009 dollars), undertaken to alleviate civilian suffering in Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Near East between 1914 and 1924.<sup>46</sup> According to Little, through their donations of money, goods, and time, Americans developed faith that they could positively impact the direction of world affairs and therefore had their own reasons for embracing Wilson’s broader war goals. Julia F. Irwin’s *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation’s Humanitarian Awakening* further underscores how voluntary humanitarian work during World War I created the twentieth-century belief that foreign aid benefited both the world and the United States.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, Michael S. Neiberg believes that most Americans shared Wilson’s concerns about the nation’s growing vulnerability to German expansionism by April 1917, and therefore fought primarily to protect America’s borders rather than to advance Wilson’s broader peace scheme. Neiberg sees a consensus for war taking shape. Michael Kazin, however, believes that Wilson’s hesitancy reflected the strength of the peace movement, whose members continued to doubt the wisdom of war even after the United States entered the conflict.<sup>48</sup>

The nature of Wilson’s peace platform, especially its long-term influence, has generated scholarly debate as well. “Wilsonianism should be seen not as a transient phenomenon, a reflection of some abstract idealism, but a potent definer of contemporary history” because it established the ideological framework motivating the United States to become a global power, Akira Iriye wrote in 1993.<sup>49</sup> Cooper Jr. saw Wilson establishing a framework of fundamentally sound democratic values (self-determination, open trade, and collective security) that guided future foreign policy. Ambrosius, among others, lamented the birth of a destructive messianic impulse that would justify countless, and often unnecessary, American interventions throughout the world in the twentieth century.<sup>50</sup>

Scholars have also differed over whether the president was idealistic or pragmatic in pursuing his peace proposals. In *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, Wilson’s press secretary Ray Stannard Baker presented Wilson as an idealist whose Progressive reformer background and Christian faith encouraged him to foster a new international role for the United States,

helping peoples elsewhere obtain the right to self-government.<sup>51</sup> This idealistic interpretation of Wilson's principles and motivations held sway, even among the "realist" school of thought that criticized the president as too inexperienced to enact this vision.

"Realist" studies written in the shadow of World War II by Walter Lippmann (*U.S. War Aims*, 1944) and George F. Kennan censored Wilson for failing to understand the mechanics of international politics and the value of balance of power alliances to stop aggressive dictators.<sup>52</sup> Arthur Link challenged this depiction of Wilson as an unrealistic idealist animated by his Christian faith and scholarly study of American government. Wilson's notion "that an enduring peace could come only through a 'peace without victory,' a 'peace between equals,'" was more realistic than "the European leaders who thought that they could win decisive victories on the battlefields and on or under the seas, and who thought that they could impose their nations' wills upon other great peoples," Link argued.<sup>53</sup> At the height of the Cold War, Arno J. Mayer added a new dimension to the idealist/realist debate by highlighting Wilson's faith in capitalism.<sup>54</sup> Mayer argued that Wilson's Fourteen Points had a pragmatic purpose: to stop the momentum gathering in favor of communism as the political system of the future. Mayer, and other revisionist accounts in the 1960s, portrayed Wilson as successfully positioning the United States to emerge as a global economic hegemon in the twentieth century.<sup>55</sup>

Other historians took on the realists' characterization of Wilson as an inept diplomat. David F. Trask concluded that Wilson appropriately focused diplomatic discussions in 1917 on coordinating the Allied war effort rather than insisting on Allied support for his peace proposals as a condition for U.S. aid.<sup>56</sup> Maintaining American independence of action by fighting as an Associate Power, sending a large army overseas, and resisting pressures to amalgamate American armed forces into the British and French armies were all decisions that Wilson made with an eye on maximizing his influence over the eventual peace conference, according to David M. Esposito.<sup>57</sup> John Thompson noted that Wilson was savvy enough to prepare for the anticipated diplomatic showdown with the Allies at the peace conference by creating The Inquiry, whose multiple teams of specialists developed position papers for all the global trouble spots likely to require attention during the treaty negotiations.<sup>58</sup>

Once containing communism waned as the central issue dominating U.S. foreign policy, another major shift in the debate over Wilson's diplomatic acumen occurred. Thomas J. Knock and Ross A. Kennedy saw Wilson taking national security issues and domestic politics into account in crafting his peace plan.<sup>59</sup> In their view, Wilson linked America's national security to promoting friendly, stable, constitutional governments

overseas and then had to negotiate domestic support for his ideas among competing liberal, Progressive factions that disagreed over how to secure these goals. John Thompson furthered this view of Wilson as an agile politician by arguing that prosecuting the war caused Wilson to modify his overall peace plan as his views of Germany changed.

Erez Manela shifted the debate over Wilson's legacy away from American shores altogether. Instead, Manela focused on how colonized peoples around the world responded to Wilsonian ideals. Those leading postwar uprisings in Egypt, India, China, and Korea interpreted Wilson's words as a support for anticolonial independence movements, a meaning than Wilson never intended. Manela highlights the ways that Wilson tried, and failed, to contain the global appeal of his ideas by embracing the mandate system and downplaying use of the term "self-determination."

Debates over the lasting impact of Wilsonianism continued into the twenty-first century. Was the 2003 American invasion of Iraq a logical consequence or perversion of Wilsonianism?<sup>60</sup> Is American security linked to establishing and defending friendly, stable, constitutional governments overseas? Scholars' ongoing interest in debating these questions demonstrates the continued relevance of Wilsonian internationalism.

Regardless of what Wilson thought or intended, he ultimately failed to shepherd the Versailles peace treaty through the ratification process. Explaining this turn of events has fascinated generations of historians. After the Senate rejected the treaty, Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock (Democratic minority leader) argued that Wilson's 1919 stroke had impaired his political acumen. Edward Weinstein, Arthur Link, and John M. Cooper Jr. subsequently embraced the theory that Wilson's illness prevented him from compromising to secure ratification of the treaty.<sup>61</sup> Thomas Bailey, the first historian to work with records of the peace proceedings, along with the papers of Wilson's presidency, expressed mixed feelings about this interpretation. Bailey instead faulted Wilson for caving into Allied demands to exclude Germany from the peace process and for signing onto an unpopular treaty that punished Germany severely. Wilson compounded these mistakes by adopting a self-righteous refusal to compromise with Senate Republicans to ensure the treaty's ratification.<sup>62</sup>

Arno J. Mayer and N. Gordon Levin Jr. offered global-political explanations for the treaty's failure, shifting the emphasis from Wilson's political skills, psychological makeup, and health. Arguing from a Marxist framework, they shared the view expressed earlier by Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Lenin that Wilson primarily wanted to use the peace proceedings to build an international coalition to halt the spread of communism in war-torn Europe. He thus accepted Allied demands as the price he had to pay to create this unified anticommunist front.<sup>63</sup> Arthur Link

and Arthur Walworth maintained that Wilson's compromises on the Versailles treaty reflected the political strength that Wilson's political adversaries (both overseas and at home) wielded.<sup>64</sup> To Klaus Schwabe, in *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918–1919*, Wilson's key mistake was failing to explain adequately to the American public why geopolitical realities caused him to support the controversial reparations treaty clause.<sup>65</sup>

The figure of Woodrow Wilson thus dominates the scholarly debate over why America entered the war, how the nation defined its war goals, and why the Senate refused to ratify the Versailles peace treaty. These questions have remained the nearly exclusive domain of political and diplomatic historians. The histories of how average Americans affected these governmental and diplomatic decisions have yet to be written.

## The Home Front

The home-front experience has drawn attention from economic, political, and, more recently, social historians who seek to understand how the United States mobilized, and the subsequent consequences for the economy, regulatory reform movements, and civil liberties. Examining how the government utilized its new wartime powers provides a common thread to home-front studies. Scholarly interpretations also reflect the ongoing debate within American society over what role the federal government should play in managing the economy and safeguarding civil liberties.

Economic historians have evaluated the efficacy of wartime economic mobilization and assessed its legacy. In the immediate postwar period, the firsthand accounts of wartime administrators tended to reinforce the comforting narrative of Americans pulling together voluntarily to win the war, downplaying problems of war profiteering or business intransigence.<sup>66</sup> Studies in the 1940s and 1950s repeated this narrative of initial chaos giving way to eventual success, while acknowledging the increased influence of businessmen in governmental affairs. These conclusions mirrored generally accepted truths about how the United States fought and won World War II, while simultaneously recognizing growing concerns over the emergence of the Cold War–era military-industrial complex.

Scholars writing in the sixties offered a dramatically different characterization of wartime economic mobilization. New Left historians writing in the Vietnam era focused more fully on what they saw as the co-option of the war effort by business elites who wanted to derail the momentum of prewar regulatory reform movements. Gabriel Kolko, James Weinstein, and Melvyn Urofsky portrayed business as emerging triumphant from

the war, with the government now a willing partner advancing their interests.<sup>67</sup> David Kennedy, author of the widely read *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*, agreed that the war essentially re-empowered conservative and reactionary elements, preventing the decade-long Progressive reform movement from making any further regulatory gains.<sup>68</sup> William Leuchtenburg, however, urged historians to take a longer view in assessing the war's legacy.<sup>69</sup> Leuchtenburg saw continuity between the methods employed by wartime economic mobilization agencies and early New Deal approaches to stabilizing wages and prices during the Depression. Ellis Hawley continued this line of analysis, arguing that the cooperative wartime relationship between business and the federal government created a permanent role for the liberal state in the American economy.<sup>70</sup>

The decision to rely on conscription to raise a mass army also granted new powers to the state. In *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America*, John Whiteclay Chambers II argued that federal management of the selective service system contributed to the twentieth-century trend of transferring power from the local and state level to the national government.<sup>71</sup> Christopher Capozzola's *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* employed Kennedy's concept of "coercive voluntarism" to describe the phenomenon of local civic groups policing their communities to ensure 100 percent "voluntary" compliance with wartime edicts.<sup>72</sup> Capozzola believes that the increased willingness of localities to cede authority to the federal government resulted in a new national security state with vast investigative and policing powers.

These historians see World War I as a key transitional moment in state-building within the United States. Robert Cuff, however, examined "the gap between the rhetoric and reality" and concluded that administrators in charge of wartime economic agencies tended to exaggerate their influence in managing the wartime economy.<sup>73</sup> He drew a portrait of complex economic relationships between individual industries and government officials that defied easy categorization. Some were harmonious, others contentious, and in his view, all were temporary, casting doubt on the notion that the war represented a critical turning point in capitalist-state relations. Others carried Cuff's interpretative thread forward by examining the ideological objections among high-level federal administrators to monopolistic business practices, tensions between the civilian-led War Industries Board and the War Department's procurement bureaus, and the government takeover of the railroads during the war.<sup>74</sup> These studies suggest that the semiautonomous power wielded by individuals and agencies within the Wilson administration resulted in an array of priorities and strategies, preventing any one single wartime relationship with business from taking root. These scholars offered a more

nuanced view of government-business relations during the war years than New Left historians, but all agreed on the postwar resurgence of business in American politics.

More recent scholarship shifts the moment when the demands and desires of business prevailed from the period of mobilization to demobilization. Joseph McCartin and Robert H. Zieger analyzed the process of economic mobilization from the perspective of labor unions.<sup>75</sup> They agreed that federal agencies abetted the growth of moderate labor unions despite objections from business, prefiguring the labor-friendly policies of the 1930s New Deal. Unsurprisingly studies focusing on the fate of radical labor groups, who often opposed the war, told a dramatically different story of state suppression and harassment.<sup>76</sup> More recently, Carl R. Weinberg's *Labor, Loyalty, and Rebellion: Southwestern Illinois Coal Miners and World War I* challenged the notion that labor benefited from the war by focusing on how hyper-patriotism bred divisiveness within the ranks of labor unions.<sup>77</sup> The resulting disunity and distrust hampered efforts to mount effective strikes in 1919, Weinberg maintains.

Egregious violations of Americans' civil liberties occurred during World War I. The government gained significant power to limit free expression when the 1917 Espionage Act made interference with the draft illegal and gave the postmaster general the right to withhold materials deemed treasonous from the mail. The 1918 Sedition Act enlarged these prohibitions by outlawing abusive language about the government. Paul L. Murphy linked the arrests of dissidents and subsequent court challenges by socialists, radicals, and pacifists to the birth of a new postwar political movement dedicated to protecting civil liberties. Geoffrey Stone points out that court challenges forced the Supreme Court to define the right to free speech for the first time and concludes that Americans generally accepted the argument that civil liberties were a luxury the nation could not afford in wartime.<sup>78</sup>

Theodore Kornweibel's books tracing the federal surveillance of black civil rights organizations during and after the war, "*Seeing Red*": *Federal Campaigns against Black Militancy, 1919–1925* and *Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty during World War I*, reveal the government's determination to use the war as an opportunity to cripple the civil rights movement.<sup>79</sup> The Justice Department justified this suppression by claiming that civil rights organizations were infested with German spies trying to incite racial violence. German communities came under attack as the federal government demanded that German immigrants register with the police as enemy aliens, states passed laws banning the teaching of German, symphonies stopped playing German music, and people changed their names to avoid mob attacks. Vigilante

violence against Germans or German Americans suspected as disloyal became a mainstay of wartime America. As a result, Frederick Luebke argues in *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I*, people of German ancestry rushed to demonstrate their “Americanness” by assimilating as completely as possible.<sup>80</sup> Almost overnight, the nation’s largest and most influential immigrant culture disappeared and was never resurrected.

Jeannette Keith’s study of draft resistance throughout the rural South offers a counternarrative that demonstrates the possibility for some human agency in this police state environment. At a time when openly criticizing governmental policy became practically impossible, the surprise, she suggests, was not that the new selective service system operated with a minimum of protest but rather that there was any successful draft dodging at all.<sup>81</sup> As conscientious objectors discovered, outright evasion often worked better than trying to gain an official exemption based on religious or pacifist beliefs.

## Commanders, Strategy, and Operations

General John J. Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), took the lead in establishing one major interpretative school of thought among military historians with his two-volume autobiography, *My Experiences in the World War*.<sup>82</sup> This memoir championed Pershing’s tenacity in overcoming a series of obstacles, including Allied demands that the Americans amalgamate their troops into preexisting French and British armies. After a few trials by fire, the independent American army evolved into a first-rate fighting force that played a critical role in winning the war. In his autobiography, Pershing ignored the contributions of his chief of staff Peyton March, who established a second major interpretative thread by severely criticizing Pershing’s command in his memoir, *The Nation at War*.<sup>83</sup>

Harvey A. DeWeerd, in *President Wilson Fights His War: World War I and the American Intervention*, and Edward Coffman, in *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I*, added some qualifications to Pershing’s tale of glowing success but overall saw the AEF as eventually overcoming its “growing pains” to fight successfully on the Western Front.<sup>84</sup> In *Learning Lessons in the American Expeditionary Forces*, Kenneth Hamburger focused on how the AEF studied its mistakes and corrected them in time to win the war.<sup>85</sup> Subsequent scholarly biographies of Pershing and his commanders generally depicted Pershing as a wartime commander who chose his staff well, did not shy away from making

difficult decisions, and successfully created the organizational structure needed to fight a modern, industrial war.<sup>86</sup>

In the 1980s, a revisionist school went on the offensive and questioned the accuracy of the Pershing narrative. They portrayed the high U.S. casualty rate as avoidable rather than a necessary part of the army's growing pains. James W. Rainey, Timothy K. Nenninger, and Paul Braim characterized the AEF as a poorly trained, led, supplied, and deployed force whose slow improvements over time did not excuse the significant mistakes made by AEF commanders.<sup>87</sup> Rainey was perhaps the most severe critic, attacking AEF doctrine, training, and combat performance. "In having to grope its way to victory, the AEF succeeded not because of imaginative operations and tactics nor because of qualitative superiority in open warfare, but rather by smothering German machine guns with American flesh," Rainey wrote.<sup>88</sup> Revisionist scholars took particular issue with Pershing's insistence on undertaking the pre-planned attack in September 1918 on the Saint-Mihiel salient, even after Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the supreme commander of the Allied Forces, made it clear that the Americans would have to participate in a coordinated Allied attack two weeks later. The AEF consequently began the Meuse-Argonne offensive with its best divisions recovering in the rear and the logistical network in disarray.

Another body of work challenged the tendency to judge American success by how well Pershing realized his goal of creating an independent army. David Trask, Robert Bruce, and Mitchell Yockelson instead identified American participation in coalition warfare as the real reason the Allies prevailed.<sup>89</sup> Michael S. Neiberg makes an equally strong case for a coalition, rather than American, victory in the first monograph-length study of the Second Battle of the Marne, a pivotal battle and the only one where British, French, and American forces fought together during the entire war.<sup>90</sup>

Other historians have analyzed organizational structures and modes of command, not just personalities, to examine American combat effectiveness. Following in the footsteps of Tim Travers, who identified a "laissez-faire" system of command within British commander Douglas Haig's headquarters that made Haig resistant to change, Nenninger concluded that "most of the problems of American command in World War I concerned execution."<sup>91</sup> Nenninger argued that battlefield conditions hampered the flow of information between the front lines and headquarters, while poor map-reading skills prevented unit commanders from enacting carefully designed battle plans. Brian Neumann analyzed how ambiguity over the chain of authority caused nearly nonstop friction between the newly created, Washington-based, General Staff and Pershing's overseas

AEF headquarters. Neumann faulted Wilson and Secretary of War Newton D. Baker for not exercising civilian control over the military to clarify the lines of authority.<sup>92</sup>

Redressing the surprising lack of scholarly interest in American operational history, Mark E. Grotelueschen and Edward G. Lengel focused on the learning curve underway within divisions and companies directly involved in the fighting.<sup>93</sup> Their work followed the example set by historians who have studied the British Expeditionary Force. Travers, Robin Prior, Trevor Wilson, and Gary Sheffield argued that British field commanders had developed effective methods of attack by 1918.<sup>94</sup> Grotelueschen's *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* and Lengel's *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918* struck a middle ground between the Pershing narrative and revisionist accounts.<sup>95</sup> In their view, the most substantial and effective learning occurred from the bottom up. Pershing's training doctrine emphasized "open warfare," a set of ideas that privileged infantry manpower, the rifle and bayonet, simple attack plans, and maximizing maneuver with the hope of making a decisive breakthrough. Through coalition warfare and their own combat experience, Americans developed a better appreciation for "trench warfare," which was not strictly defensive as they originally thought, but instead integrated cutting-edge technology, employed detailed attack plans, maximized firepower, and relied on methodical attacks to achieve smaller, incremental gains. "Despite Pershing's hopes of driving the Germans out of their trenches and defeating them in 'open warfare' with 'self-reliant infantry,'" Groteleuschen writes, the men fighting the war "increasingly saw machines, and especially those technologies that maximized firepower, rather than flesh, as the proper means of waging war in the modern era."<sup>96</sup>

The most controversial issue surrounding the performance of the American military involves deciding whether the United States deserves all, some, or none of the credit for winning the war. John Mosier and Geoffrey Wawro carried into the present-day Pershing's claim that the Americans were responsible for the Allies' decisive win.<sup>97</sup> On the other side of the pendulum, World War I historians Gary Sheffield, Robin Prior, Trevor Wilson, and Tim Travers (whose works are cited above) viewed the American military contribution as negligible. Most American scholars of the AEF are more circumspect than Mosier, but not quite ready to grant the Allies exclusive credit for the ultimate victory. The consensus view contends that the Americans most certainly prevented the Allies from losing the war. Mainstream accounts emphasize the infusion of American troops that helped stem the 1918 German spring offensives and fueled the overall Allied counterattack and advance, German demoralization when faced with the prospect of millions more Americans arriving in 1919, the

effectiveness of the convoy system, and the importance of ongoing American financial support as critical contributions that the United States and its armed forces made to the Allied victory.

### The Doughboys' War

It took until 1963 for a soldier's memoir to become a bestseller. In *The Doughboys*, Laurence Stallings, a Marine who lost a leg in the Battle of Belleau Wood and later became a famous playwright, peppered his narrative with a nostalgic collection of vignettes that took stock of the hardships encountered by brave American fighting men on the road to victory.<sup>98</sup> Stallings essentially told the traditional Pershing story of tribulation ending with success through the eyes of average soldiers rather than military commanders.

The pathbreaking book by literary critic Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, showed social and cultural historians how they could make the war their own.<sup>99</sup> Fussell took readers on a tour of the trenches, entering the fighting men's secret world of combat, rituals, myths, superstitions, and rumors. The war, Fussell asserted, ushered in a new way of understanding the world as Europeans abandoned romanticism and embraced irony. Fussell relied heavily on writings from famous British literary figures who served along the Western Front to support his conclusions, leading to accusations that he had extrapolated vast cultural trends from a small sampling of sources. Despite his shortcomings as an historian, Fussell revolutionized World War I studies by demonstrating the validity of using a cultural and social history approach to understand the fighting man's experience.<sup>100</sup>

American social and cultural historians have subsequently offered new insights into the doughboy experience. Mark Meigs, in *Optimism at Armageddon: Voices of American Participants in the First World War*, juxtaposed the "official" culture created in top echelons with the "unofficial" cultural practices initiated by troops to trace the evolution of a military mass culture during the war.<sup>101</sup> In *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, I examined the internal strife over training, combat, discipline, race relations, and demobilization and argued that civilian soldiers exerted tremendous power in shaping the policies and behavior of the wartime military.<sup>102</sup> Richard Schweitzer and Jonathan Ebel have examined religiosity in the trenches.<sup>103</sup>

Foreign-born and second-generation Americans formed a significant proportion of the wartime force, but to date these experiences have received limited scholarly attention. Christopher Sterba's *Good Americans*:

*Italian and Jewish Immigrants during the First World War* analyzed how Jewish and Italian soldiers imbued their military service with meanings that strengthened their distinct ethnic identities while also offering new opportunities to demonstrate their “Americanness.”<sup>104</sup> Historians of the Mexican American experience have also examined how wartime mobilization accelerated assimilation in the Southwest, undertaking labor-intensive research to uncover the “hidden history” of Spanish-speaking soldiers in the official records.<sup>105</sup> Richard Slotkin interwove the experiences of foreign-born soldiers and African Americans to examine the war’s place in America’s ongoing struggle to create a multicultural and multiracial democracy.<sup>106</sup>

Progressive reformers more interested in social than economic reform found a ready laboratory in the wartime military. In *Americans All! Foreign-Born Soldiers in World War I*, Nancy Gentile Ford argues against the dominant idea that Progressivism fell on hard times during the war.<sup>107</sup> Ford examined the culturally sensitive training and recreational programs for foreign-born soldiers (20 percent of the total force) developed by a cadre of Progressive settlement house workers, reform-minded army officers, and civilian ethnic leaders. Similarly, Beth Linker traces how a Progressive health ethos that put a premium on rehabilitating wounded soldiers into productive citizens and workers shaped military rehabilitation programs.<sup>108</sup> These publications demonstrate that by working for wartime effort, Progressive reformers tried to advance their broader goals of enlarging state power through expertly designed and administered public policies.

Overall, social and cultural studies of the American fighting man have not kept pace with the proliferation of studies on combat, morale, and war culture for European soldiers. Social historians have tended to shy away from studying the military experience, not just of World War I but of all wars. The recent proliferation of studies devoted to the African American soldier experience offers one important exception, an area where the social history approach is thriving.

### **Struggles for Social Justice: African Americans and Women**

Works devoted to African Americans and women tend to examine how participation in the war effort ignited or transformed struggles for social justice. The rhetorical link between citizenship and wartime service created openings for blacks and women to demand equitable treatment. Nonetheless, ingrained racial and gender hierarchies remained remarkably resilient in the face of war-generated social upheaval. Scholarly

works on African Americans and women also underscore that routine violence was a fact of life for civilians and soldiers alike.

For years, Arthur Barbeau and Florette Henri's *The Unknown Soldiers: African-American Soldiers in World War I* (1974; reprint 1996) served as the stand-alone study of African American soldiers.<sup>109</sup> Heavily influenced by academic currents in the 1970s critical of the white-male-dominated narrative of American history, the book fit into a larger scholarly drive to "rediscover" the diversity of experiences that collectively made up the nation's historical past. The idea that one book would suffice to interpret this experience, however, also revealed the separate scholarly agendas of military and African American historians throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The former had yet to embrace social history, while the latter remained largely uninterested in the topic of military service.

In what is now a crowded field, recent studies of African American soldiers interpret the war as a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement. Scholars attribute this shift to the war's heightened democratic rhetoric, the emergence of more militant civil rights leaders, worsening racial violence, and black soldiers' experiences in France. *Harlem Rattlers and the Great War: The Undaunted 369th Regiment and the African American Quest for Equality*, a magisterial work by Jeffrey T. Sammons and John H. Morrow Jr., examines the war's most famous African American unit through the lens of local, national, and international politics to reveal just how many hurdles stood in the way of its eventual success.<sup>110</sup> Chad L. Williams provides the most extensive investigation to date of postwar veteran political activism within the African American community, albeit through often short-lived veterans' movements.<sup>111</sup> Adrienne Lentz-Smith primarily examines the experience of noncombatants, exploring how their daily encounters with unrelenting racism gave birth to a new political consciousness.<sup>112</sup> The resulting activism, not all of it successful, laid the groundwork for how activists would respond to the next world war. Collectively, these works demonstrate how wartime mobilization gave African Americans the opportunity and motivation to experiment with new methods and strategies for challenging white supremacy. Interestingly, these works also rely heavily on French archival material, a relatively new development in studies of the American war experience.

The 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granting women the right to vote occupies a central place in the political historical narrative of equal rights.<sup>113</sup> Most histories devoted to the suffrage movement credit female mobilization during World War I as an important, but not decisive, factor in securing women the right to

vote. More recently, historians have begun to consider other aspects of American women's wartime experiences.

One strand of inquiry investigates how the wartime mobilization of women fits into the history of working women. Susan Zeiger analyzes the experiences of the 16,500 working women who donned uniforms for the AEF and concludes that little changed.<sup>114</sup> The government mobilized working women out of necessity but tried to avoid any redefinition of societal gender roles by placing these women under male supervision. Lynn Dumenil's *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* argues that the American proclivity to forget—this time about how vital women's labor (both paid and voluntary) was to winning the war—meant that achieving “liberation through war work” remained little more than wishful thinking.<sup>115</sup> Another line of inquiry examines the leadership roles that middle-class women, who had the leisure time to belong to an array of social clubs, assumed as grassroots organizers who effectively mobilized white and black communities across the nation.<sup>116</sup> Kimberly Jensen, by contrast, explores how violence against women was accepted as a legitimate method of controlling unruly women (suffragists and striking workers) and ignored when U.S. soldiers assaulted female nurses and military workers.<sup>117</sup> Recovering this history of violence against women, Jensen sees the fight for full-fledged citizenship as a struggle to protect the female body, not just a campaign to acquire the right to vote.

## Conclusion

Over the last hundred years, scholars have debated multiple aspects of the war experience, and the centennial generated increased interest and attention in World War I. Nonetheless, the number of dedicated World War I historians remains quite small within the United States. Many of the historians included here would be surprised to see themselves identified as World War I historians. Instead, they position their scholarship within the historiographical debates of subfields such as labor-capital relations, domestic reform movements, women's history, African American history, and civil liberties. After writing their World War I-related books, many go on to publish books on other topics of greater appeal within their subfields. World War I does not hold their interest for very long. The challenge for scholars in the twenty-first century thus remains what it has been since 1945: finding a way to weave the war indelibly into the national historical narrative. Completing the proposed World War I Memorial in Washington, DC, would be a good start.

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## Notes

1. This chapter is a revised version of a previously published article: Jennifer D. Keene, "Remembering the 'Forgotten War': American Historiography on World War I," in *Historian* 78 (Fall 2016): 439–68.
2. Just one example of "lessons-from-the-past" scholar commentary occurred when the United States marked the one hundredth anniversary of the Fourteen Points. See, for instance, Stewart Patrick, "Trump and Wilson's Ghost: The Fourteen Points turn 100 Years," *The Hill*, 8 January 2018, <http://thehill.com/opinion/white-house/367837-trump-and-wilsons-ghost-the-fourteen-points-turn-100-years>; Daniel Fried, "100 Years Later, Wilson's Fourteen Points Deserve Another Look," *Atlantic Council*, 1 January 2018, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/100-years-later-wilson-s-fourteen-points-deserve-another-look>; Anthony Gaughan, "Donald Trump and the Ghost of Woodrow Wilson," *Faculty Lounge*, 10 March 2018, <http://www.thefacultyounge.org/2018/03/donald-trump-and-the-ghost-of-woodrow-wilson.html>.
3. "A Guide to World War I Materials," Library of Congress, 1 April 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/wwi/wwi.html>; Robert Cozzolino, Anne Classen Knutson, and David M. Lubin, eds., *World War I and American Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).
4. The United States World War One Centennial Commission website included advice on researching ancestors and created a "stories of service" web page where the public could upload stories of family members: <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/com-memorate/family-ties/stories-of-service.html>.
5. Andrew J. Huebner, *Love and Death in the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
6. The Library of America won this funding for local events that utilized its anthology; A. Scott Berg, ed., *World War I and America: Told By the Americans Who Lived It* (New York: Library of America, 2017).
7. World War I Memorial Inventory Project, <http://ww1project.org>.
8. Ross J. Wilson, *New York and the First World War: Shaping an American City* (London: Routledge, 2016).
9. Jay M. Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
10. In 2003 Richard Rubin had begun interviewing the few surviving World War I veter-

- ans, aged 101 to 113, to write *The Last of the Doughboys: The Forgotten Generation and Their Forgotten World War* (2013). These men, all since deceased, had a chance to tell their stories before they died.
11. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929); John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (New York: Doran, 1921); F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1920); F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Scribner, 1925).
  12. Kelly Andrew, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (London: Tauris 1998); Stanley Kubrick/Humphrey Cobb, *Paths of Glory* (2010).
  13. Willa Cather, *One of Ours* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922); Edith Wharton, *A Son at the Front* (New York: Scribner, 1923); Howard Hawks, *Sergeant York* (1941).
  14. Stanley Cooperman, *World War I and the American Novel* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1967); Keith Gandal, *The Gun and the Pen: Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and the Fiction of Mobilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
  15. Keith Gandal, *War Isn't the Only Hell: A New Reading of World War I American Literature* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2018).
  16. *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe* has been republished several times, most recently in 2016. Renewed interest in visiting the battlefields during the centennial years spurred the creation of updated travel guides, rendered necessary by modern improvements to roads and villages. Richard Rubin, *Back Over There: One American Time-Traveler, 100 Years since the Great War, 500 Miles of Battle-Scarred French Countryside, and Too Many Trenches, Shells, Legends, and Ghosts to Count* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017).
  17. John Lewis Barkley, *Scarlet Fields: The Combat Memoir of a World War I Medal of Honor Hero*, ed. Steven Trout (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 2–3.
  18. Edward G. Lengel, "Why Didn't We Listen to Their War Stories?" *Washington Post*, 25 May 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/23/AR2008052302455.html>.
  19. Steven Trout, *On the Battlefields of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919–1941* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).
  20. G. Kurt Piehler, *Remembering War the American Way* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).
  21. Mark Whalen, *The Great War and the Culture of the New Negro* (Pensacola: University Press of Florida, 2008).
  22. In 1998, genetic DNA testing identified the fallen Vietnam soldier, and the body was removed.
  23. In 2017, the American Battle Monuments Commission added a ninth World War I cemetery when it took over administration of the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial Cemetery outside of Paris. The Lafayette Escadrille was a unit of American pilots who volunteered to fight for France before the official U.S. entry into the war.
  24. Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919–1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
  25. Erika Kuhlmann, *Of Little Comfort: War Widows, Fallen Soldiers, and the Remaking of the Nation after the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).
  26. Nancy K. Bristow, *American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
  27. Budreau, *Bodies of War*.
  28. Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
  29. Ibid.

30. Stephen Ortiz, *In Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
31. Jessica Adler, *Burdens of War: Creating the United States Veteran Health System* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).
32. See, for example, Dixon Wecter, *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1944); William Pencak, *For God and Country: The American Legion, 1919–1941* (Boston: Northeastern Press, 1989); Thomas B. Littlefield, *Soldiers Back Home: The American Legion in Illinois, 1919–1939* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).
33. John Maurice Clark, *The Cost of the World War to the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1931).
34. Helmut C. Engelbrecht and Frank C. Hanighen, *The Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934).
35. Charles Beard, *Devil Theory of War* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1936); Clinton Grattan, *Why We Fought* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1929); Charles Tansill, *America Goes to War* (Boston: Little, 1938).
36. Paul Birdsall, “Neutrality and Economic Pressures, 1914–1917,” *Science & Society* 3, no. 2 (1939): 225.
37. Ross Gregory, *The Origins of American Intervention in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1971).
38. Benjamin O. Fordham, “Revisionism Reconsidered: Exports and American Intervention in World War I,” *International Organization* 61 (Spring 2007): 277–310.
39. John Milton Cooper Jr., *The Warrior and the Priest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); John Milton Cooper Jr., *Woodrow Wilson, A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2009); Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
40. Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace, 1916–1917* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).
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42. In January 1917, German foreign minister Arthur Zimmermann tried to persuade Mexico to start a borderland war with the United States, offering to help Mexico recover Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona if Germany won the war. The telegram was intercepted and decoded by British intelligence, and then shared with Wilson.
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