

Chapter 5

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

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**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.¹ 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.”² 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.”³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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.”⁶ 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.”⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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 participants¹²), 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.”¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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*.¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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)²⁰ 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”²¹ 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.²² 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.²³ 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.²⁴

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.²⁵

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.²⁶ 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.”²⁷

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.”²⁸ 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.²⁹ 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 1919.³⁰ 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.³¹ 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.³² 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.³³

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.³⁴ 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.³⁵ 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.”³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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).³⁸

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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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”⁴² 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.⁴³ 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 1918.⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

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.”⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

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!”⁵² The same was true for Gerhard Ritter, who at this stage lost for a while his critical distance toward the NS state.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴ 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 Europe⁵⁵), 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.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷

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.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹

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.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹ 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.⁶²

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.⁶³

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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶

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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ Most German historians, however, are not convinced by this re-reading of the German military defeat.⁷¹

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),⁷² 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.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴

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.⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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,⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ 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.”⁸² 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.⁸³

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.⁸⁴

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,⁸⁵ 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,⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷

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.”⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹ 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”⁹² 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.”⁹³ 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.⁹⁴ 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.⁹⁵ 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 I⁹⁶), 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.⁹⁷ 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.⁹⁸ 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.”⁹⁹ 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.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ They take particular aim at the standard reference work on the topic, *German Atrocities* by Horne and Kramer,¹⁰⁴ 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 2018.¹⁰⁵ 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 years¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷

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.¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰ 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.¹¹¹

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.¹¹²

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.¹¹³ 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.¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵

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.¹¹⁶ 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.¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸

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Notes

1. Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6–33.
2. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery* (New York: Picador, 2004). For a more recent development of that line of thought see Gerd Krumeich, *Die unbewältigte Niederlage: das Trauma des Ersten Weltkriegs und die Weimarer Republik* (Freiburg: Herder, 2018).
3. See Boris Barth, *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration: Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2003).
4. See for example Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
5. See for the following: Alexandra Kaiser, *Von Helden und Opfern: Eine Geschichte des Volkstrauertags* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010), especially 31–42.
6. “Reichsregierung und Reichsverfassung,” *Vorwärts*, 5 July 1924.
7. *Kreuz-Zeitung*, 3 August 1924.
8. See Kaiser, *Von Helden und Opfern*, 74–89, 171–75.
9. *Ibid.*, 176–209.

10. See Ralph Winkle, *Der Dank des Vaterlandes: Eine Symbolgeschichte des Eisernen Kreuzes 1914 bis 1936* (Essen: Klartext, 2007), 309–13.
11. See Jürgen Tietz, *Das Tannenberg-Nationaldenkmal: Architektur, Geschichte, Kontext* (Berlin: Verlag Bauwesen, 1999).
12. Nils Löffelbein, *Ehrenbürger der Nation: Die Kriegsbeschädigten des Ersten Weltkriegs in Politik und Propaganda des Nationalsozialismus* (Essen: Klartext, 2013), 295–305.
13. Hitler's speech at the Volkspalast, 10 February 1933, in Max Domarus, *Hitler, Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945*, vol. 1.1 (Wiesbaden: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1973), 206.
14. See Arndt Weinrich, *Der Weltkrieg als Erzieher: Jugend zwischen Weimarer Republik und Nationalsozialismus* (Essen: Klartext, 2013).
15. See *ibid.*, 200–244. See also Klaus Wieland, "Politische Reflexionen im Kriegsroman der Weimarer Republik," in *Jahrbuch zur Kultur u. Literatur der Weimarer Republik* 16 (2013–14): 115–43.
16. Volker Weidemann, *Das Buch der verbrannten Bücher* (Köln: Kiepenheuer&Witsch, 2008).
17. See Kaiser, *Von Helden und Opfern*, 226–33.
18. See Peter Steinbach, *Nach Auschwitz: Die Konfrontation der Deutschen mit der Judenvernichtung* (Bonn: Dietz, 2015).
19. See, for example, Bill Niven, ed., *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
20. Günter Grass, *Crabwalk* (London: Harcourt, 2002); Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The Bombing of Germany, 1940–45* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
21. See, for example, "Die Urkatastrophe des 20. Jahrhunderts. Die Spiegel-Serie über den Ersten Weltkrieg und die Folgen," in: *Spiegel-Sonderheft* (2004/1).
22. Gerd Krumeich and Gerhard Hirschfeld, "Geschichtsschreibung zum Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Enzyklopädie Erster Weltkrieg*, ed. Gerd Krumeich, Gerhard Hirschfeld, and Irina Renz (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 304–15; Gerhard Hirschfeld, "Der Erste Weltkrieg in der deutschen und internationalen Geschichtsschreibung: Auf dem Weg zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 29, no. 30 (2004): 3–12; Wolfgang. J. Mommsen, *Der Große Krieg und die Historiker: Neue Wege der Geschichtsschreibung über den Ersten Weltkrieg* (Essen: Klartext, 2002).
23. Gerhard Hirschfeld, "Die Stuttgarter Weltkriegsbücherei, 1915–1944," in *Der Erste Weltkrieg in der populären Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Barbara Korte, Silvia Paletschek, and Wolfgang Hochbruck (Essen: Klartext 2008), 47–58.
24. Albert Buddecke, *Die deutschen Kriegssammlungen: Ein Nachweis ihrer Einrichtung und ihres Bestandes* (München: Oldenburg 1917). See also Christine Beil, *Der ausgestellte Krieg: Präsentationen des Ersten Weltkriegs 1914–1939* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 2004).
25. Hermann Stegemann, *Geschichte des Krieges*, 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1917).
26. Justus Hashagen, *Das Studium der Zeitgeschichte* (Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1915). See also Mathias Beer, "Hans Rothfels und die Traditionen der deutschen Zeitgeschichte: Eine Skizze," in *Hans Rothfels und die deutsche Zeitgeschichte*, ed. Johannes Hürter (München: Oldenburg, 2005), 165–72.
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,

- eds., *Kriegserfahrungen: Studien zur Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Essen: Klartext, 1997).
74. Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany 1914–1923* (Oxford: Berg, 2007).
 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).
 77. See as a summary, Stig Förster, “Im Reich des Absurden: Die Ursachen des Ersten Weltkriegs,” in *Wie Kriege entstehen: Zum historischen Hintergrund von Staatenkonflikten*, ed. Bernd Wegner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003), 211–52.
 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:

- Der Erste Weltkrieg als Auftakt und Vorbild für den Zweiten Weltkrieg,” *Spiegel: Sonderheft 1* (2004): 138–43, for a critical assessment of this idea, see Jörg Echternkamp, “1914–1945: A Second Thirty Years War? Advantages and Disadvantages of an Interpretive Category,” in *Imperial Germany Revisited: Continuing Debates and New Perspectives*, ed. Sven Oliver Müller and Cornelius Torp (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 189–200. As an example for the use of the Era of World Wars approach in German-language historiography, see Volker Berghahn, *Europa im Zeitalter der Weltkriege: Die Entfesselung und Entgrenzung der Gewalt* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002).
83. Vejas G. Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); for a recent study, see Stephan Lehnstaedt, *Imperiale Polenpolitik in den Weltkriegen: Eine vergleichende Studie zu den Mittelmächten und zu NS-Deutschland* (Osnabrück, Fibre Verlag, 2017).
 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).
 91. Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Thomas Kühne, *The Rise and Fall of Comradeship: Hitler’s Soldiers, Male Bonding and Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Weinrich, *Weltkrieg als Erzieher*; Löffelbein, *Ehrenbürger der Nation*; Silke Fehleemann, “Weibliche Angehörige im Ersten Weltkrieg und in der Zwischenkriegszeit” (Habilitationsschrift, Universität Düsseldorf, 2018). See also, with a slightly different approach, Nicolas Patin, *La catastrophe allemande 1914–1945: 1674 destins parlementaires* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).

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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