

## BOOK REVIEWS/ KİTAP İNCELEMESİ

**Katrin Bromber, Katharina Lange, Heike Liebau, Anorthe Wetzel (eds.) *The Long End of the First World War* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2018).**

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British futurist writer, and a well-known pacifist, H.G. Wells wrote in an article titled “The War That Will End War,” published in *The Daily News* on August 14, 1914, that this would be “the war to end all wars.” The phrase was quickly adopted as slogan for legitimacy and propaganda by the Entente powers. History, on the other hand, had disproved Wells. Already in the immediate aftermath of WWII, the interwar period was interpreted as a mere truce. Evoking “the drama of the thirty years war,” Charles de Gaulle coined the term “Second Thirty Years War” (1914-1945). From a longer-term perspective on the effects of the war, especially regarding the Middle East, research still points to the “never-ending First World War.” Eugene Rogan, in *The Fall of the Ottomans: the Great War in the Middle East 1914-1920* (Basic Books, 2016), stresses that the legacy of the post-war settlement, the partition, cynical manipulations, broken promises and ruthless violence of the European empires still characterize the region today.

Edited by Katrin Bromber, Katharina Lange, Heike Liebau, and Anorthe Wetzel, *The Long End of the First World War* (Campus, 2018) also claims that World War I did not simply end in 1918. The volume brings together a selection of revised versions of papers presented in the international conference, “The Long End of the First World War: Ruptures, Continuities and Memories,” that took place in Hannover in May 2017. As the common name of the symposium and the edited volume suggests, the editors were particularly interested in bringing into light “the long end” of the war as their central focus. Furthermore, in line with their preoccupation with shifting the historiographic perspective away from Europe, the book intends to “look more closely at the multi-layered endings” of the First World War.

Globalizing the picture geographically, as the editors argue, challenges a static, and mainly Eurocentric, periodization of the First World War. The volume, in that respect, proposes a changed understanding of the war’s temporal structure(s) and chronology(ies). The editors also point to the necessity of re-thinking about the medium- and long-term consequences of the war, especially in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. This effort also involves questioning the paradigm of “the end of the ‘age of Empire’” and reconsidering how “(transformed) empires emerged from the War.”

The contributions to this book, projecting the trends in new research on the First World War, prioritize a global perspective and focus on ecological factors and results without losing sight of social history. The book has two sections with contributions from a variety of disciplinary as well as regional backgrounds. The first

section, "New Approaches, Methodologies and Sources," brings together five chapters dealing with new approaches and themes from a global socio-historical perspective. The second section, "Historiographies and Remembrance," is made up of seven chapters and focuses on the issues of historiography, politics of memory, and public commemorations through exhibitions and artistic productions.

### **NATION-STATES AND TRANSNATIONALISM**

The scholarship on the First World War has expanded in a number of ways in the past century. Geographical expansion, as the present volume proves, goes hand in hand with writing a global history of the war. The transnational approach and global social history perspective (social history beyond national frames) are the strengths of the volume. Radhika Desai, in the first chapter of the volume, "The First World War: Climax and Crisis of the Imperial Order," claims that it is necessary to return to classical theories of imperialism to understand both the cause and the ultimate outcome of the war – that is, multipolarity. Felix Brahm's "East Africa and the Post-War Question of Global Arms Control" also underscores the persisting importance of Empire and imperialism in defining postwar global politics, as much as the local circumstances in postwar nation-states. Christopher Rominger's contribution, "Migration and the Long First World War in Tunisia," stresses the importance of transnational dynamics in deepening political and ideological conflicts.

The second section of the volume also brings forth the interplay between transnational dynamics and the nation-state bias when it comes to remembrance, including historiographical writing and commemorative practices. The chapter by Katrin Bromber, Katharina Lange and Heike Liebau, "The First World War in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia: Commemoration, New Research and Debates around the Centennial," employs a comparative perspective and delineates the global character of the war, together with pointing to the nationalistic trends in historiography and commemoration on a global scale. The authors note that much of the discussion is still entrapped within the nation-state paradigm, as the geographies of the war are still defined with reference to today's nation-states, and that commemorative practices (including history writing) are also necessarily discussed with nation-states in focus. Barbara Christophe and Kerstin Schwedes' chapter, "Between Persistent Differences and Vagueness: Textbook Narratives about the First World War", is understandably based on the methodology and analysis of the nation-state framework. Veronika Hager's chapter, "The Long End of the Ottoman Empire: Historiographical Discourses on the First World War during the Consolidation of the Republic of Turkey" examines the "official" historiographical discourses in Turkey between 1930s and the 50s. Putting the nationalist state in focus, she stresses the silencing and utter denial of the Armenian genocide.

### **ANTHROPOCENE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR STUDIES**

From a historiographical perspective, the volume also represents the new trends in centennial scholarship on the First World War, which often goes beyond a merely political and military history, to provide also a non-military, civilian history of the war, focusing on the home-front, everyday life, and non-combatants. The editors also highlight another strong trend within the field, namely of writing an environmental history of the war, focusing on diseases and epidemics, shortages and famines, deforestation, and the use and

abuse of animals. In a sense, contemporary scholarship embraces the perspective of the Anthropocene in the First World War studies.

Iftikhar Iqbal's contribution, entitled "The First World War and the Global Environment: A View from South Asia", argues that the First World War had a major impact on the use of global ecological resources and led to long-lasting environmental transformations. Chris Gratien's chapter in the volume, "Malaria and the Legacy of the First World War in the Ottoman Empire", is also written from an environmental perspective. Defining the First World War as an "ecological disaster", he argues that "war malaria" continued to endanger the health of the population long after the official end of hostilities.

### **AESTHETICS OF COMMEMORATION**

The edited volume also brings together chapters that investigate different forms of public commemoration of WWI. Oksana Nagornaja's chapter, "2014: An Invented Anniversary? Museum Exhibitions on the First World War in Russia" delineates the resurrection of an imperial past, focusing predominantly on heroism and patriotic duty. Hanna Smyth's chapter, "The Material Culture of Remembrance and Identity: Imperial War Graves Commission Sites of South Africa, India, Canada, and Australia on the Western Front", gives a general summary of her PhD project, which treats sites of memory as sites of identity. Franziska Dunkel's article provides an analysis of the exhibition, 'Carnival of Hell', which she herself curated at the Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart. Taking its lead from the "sensual turn", the exhibition offered tactile, olfactory, and auditory experiences to the visitors, in addition to the more traditional textual and visual ones, so as to bring them closer to "a more authentic experience" of the war. Julia Tieke also provides an account of how she engaged with the Halfmoon Camp in Wünsdorf as a derelict site and the voice recordings of the Lautarchiv in her co-curated exhibition, "Digging Deep, Crossing Far." The inclusion of the latter two to the volume is especially welcome, as they attest to the uses of sources not only as objects of academic research, but also as artifacts to be recycled by artists and practitioners of art.

### **SITUATING THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE WITHIN WORLD WAR I HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The new research on the Armenian genocide, as well as on WWI, increasingly advocates the necessity of situating the genocide within the historiography of the First World War, as well as part of European, if not world, history. Stefan Ihrig underlines in his recent book, *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler* (Harvard Uni. Press, 2016) that the Armenian genocide "was and is of towering importance for German history." The Armenian genocide is also important for the present volume, since it was definitely among the factors that lengthened the end of the war, not only in Turkey and the Middle East but also elsewhere, as Armenian exiles in Aleppo, Marseille, Buenos Aires and Cyprus were trying to find their way and start a new life up until the 1930s and 40s. Despite the absence of a chapter on the Armenian genocide itself, the chapters by Gratien, by Bromber, Lange and Liebau, and by Hager contextualize the genocide within the war.

The Centennial of the First World War has led to the revival of a very prominent field of research in the past decade. An enormous number of new publications, conferences, documentaries, and museum exhibitions

have appeared from 2014 onwards. Now that we have left 2018 behind, those outside the First World War studies impatiently ask, “so, is the war over already?” It is hard to reply to them in the affirmative. As Robert Gerwarth’s (2017) well-acclaimed book’s title suggests, the First World War “failed to end” in 1918.

## REFERENCES

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