



# Geographies of Mobilization and Territories of Belligerence during the First World War

Olivier Compagnon, Pierre Purseigle

► **To cite this version:**

Olivier Compagnon, Pierre Purseigle. Geographies of Mobilization and Territories of Belligerence during the First World War. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, Armand Colin, 2016. halshs-01667792

**HAL Id: halshs-01667792**

**<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01667792>**

Submitted on 24 Apr 2019

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

## GEOGRAPHIES OF MOBILIZATION AND TERRITORIES OF BELLIGERENCE DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Olivier Compagnon, Pierre Purseigle

Editions de l'E.H.E.S.S. | « *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* »

2016/1 71st Year | pages 37 - 64

ISSN 2268-3763

ISBN 9782713225116

This document is the English version of:

Olivier Compagnon, Pierre Purseigle « Géographies de la mobilisation et territoires de la belligérance durant la Première Guerre mondiale », *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 2016/1 (71st Year), p. 37-64.

Available online at :

[https://www.cairn.info/article-E\\_ANNA\\_711\\_0037--geographies-of-mobilization-and.htm](https://www.cairn.info/article-E_ANNA_711_0037--geographies-of-mobilization-and.htm)

How to cite this article :

Olivier Compagnon, Pierre Purseigle « Géographies de la mobilisation et territoires de la belligérance durant la Première Guerre mondiale », *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 2016/1 (71st Year), p. 37-64.

Electronic distribution by Cairn on behalf of Editions de l'E.H.E.S.S..

© Editions de l'E.H.E.S.S.. All rights reserved for all countries.

Reproducing this article (including by photocopying) is only authorized in accordance with the general terms and conditions of use for the website, or with the general terms and conditions of the license held by your institution, where applicable. Any other reproduction, in full or in part, or storage in a database, in any form and by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited without the prior written consent of the publisher, except where permitted under French law.

# Geographies of the First World War

---

*Dossier*

# Geographies of Mobilization and Territories of Belligerence during the First World War

*Olivier Compagnon and Pierre Purseigle*

From now on, when a battle takes place anywhere in the world, nothing will be easier than to make its artillery heard around the globe. The roar of Verdun would have been heard in the antipodes. One will even be able to glimpse something of the fighting and of men falling six thousand nautical miles away, three hundredths of a second after the shot.

Paul Valéry, *Regards sur le monde actuel*.<sup>1</sup>

**First World War studies have significantly evolved** over the past thirty years. The present vitality of this field largely stems from the cultural and comparative turn taken by historiography since the 1980s. In these decades, eager to break free of national frameworks in order to examine the transnational dimension of the conflict and the systems of representation relating to it, historians of the Great War frequently emphasized its cultural aspects, and their preferred themes came to occupy center stage in the historiography: the image of the enemy and the representations associated with various national communities, the mobilization of artists, intellectuals, and scientists in the service of belligerent states or in opposition to mass violence, the religious transformations that took place between 1914 and 1918, and the memory of the conflict and the forms taken by its commemoration.<sup>2</sup> In a context marked by the linguistic turn and the critique of what was seen as an excessively conventional social and economic history, these developments were hardly surprising.

Marked by the end of the Cold War and a reorganization of the international order that favored comparative approaches, the political context of the time also

This article was translated from the French by Ethan Rundell and edited by Chloe Morgan and Nicolas Barreyre.

1. Paul Valéry, *Regards sur le monde actuel* (Paris: Stock, Delamain and Boutelleau, 1931).
2. Jay M. Winter, "Catastrophe and Culture: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the First World War," *Journal of Modern History* 64, no. 3 (1992): 525–32; Antoine Prost and Jay M. Winter, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

played an important role in these historiographical developments. The events of 1989–1991, in particular, seemed to abruptly call into question the Concert of Nations that had resulted from the peace treaties of 1919–1923 (largely reshaped, it is true, in the aftermath of the Second World War). From one end of the ruins of the Iron Curtain to the other, calls were heard for a general revision of the grand narrative of European history. Even as French commemorations of the bicentenary of the 1789 Revolution drew to a close, political and intellectual milieus were confronted with the issue of the continent’s further economic and political integration, from the signature of the Single European Act in February 1986 to that of the Maastricht Treaty six years later. Allied with the grandiloquent announcement of the “end of history,”<sup>3</sup> all of these changes were the source of a new interest in “Europe” as a category of historical analysis.

Against the backdrop of the brutal breakup of Yugoslavia—a reminder that war and mass violence are not just the scars of the European past but also very contemporary realities and permanent risks—historians set about rethinking European identity, and many cultural institutions responded in kind. Inaugurated in 1990 and 1992 respectively, the museum at Kobarid (formerly Caporetto) on Slovenia’s Isonzo front and the Historial de la Grande Guerre in the town of Péronne (France) adopted a deliberately transnational approach that was hailed by European commentators and authorities alike. At the same time, the all-out pursuit of economic and financial globalization underpinned by neoliberal “good governance” and the “Washington Consensus” seemed to lend credence to the notion that the world of twentieth-century borders had once and for all come to an end. It was in this context that global history gradually established itself on the historiographical agenda, opening the prospect of a genuine reorientation of First World War studies.

## Sizing Up a Global Conflict

A quarter of a century later, after the centenary of 1914 has given rise to countless colloquia, publications, and commemorations throughout the world, it must nevertheless be admitted that the history and memory of the First World War remain strongly anchored in national, and even sometimes resolutely nationalist, frameworks. While comparative and transnational approaches have gained ground in nearly all historiographical domains, a global history of the war seems as elusive as ever. Although a large portion of the profession now claims to be ready to produce a narrative of the conflict that will do justice to its geographical scale and to the multiple circulatory phenomena that characterized it, most recent work remains confined by the fetters of national borders, historiographical subfields, and the disciplines of the human and social sciences. As a result, vast chasms continue to exist between the military, diplomatic, economic, social, and cultural histories of the

war, between the various disciplinary and methodological approaches developed within First World War studies, and between the countless monographs devoted to particular spaces.

Hew Strachan has brilliantly deconstructed the process by which a conflict successively referred to as the Third Balkan War, the European War, the Great War, and, finally, the World War came to be named.<sup>4</sup> These terms do not simply refer to the geopolitical aspects of the war, its imperial dimension, or its global economic impact, but also reflect the full ideological burden of a conflict constructed in existential terms: it was precisely the protagonists' *Weltanschauung* (vision of the world) that explained their determination to fight and win this *Weltkrieg*. In other words, any consideration of the nature and geography of the First World War must take into account the high degree of globalization that—independently of considerations specific to imperial domination—already characterized the world on the eve of 1914: the commercial and financial globalization that spread outwards from the hubs of economic power that were the United States, Great Britain, and Germany; the demographic globalization brought about by the massive transatlantic migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and the intellectual and cultural globalization that took place within the “Global Republic of Letters” and the transnational space of artistic avant-gardes.<sup>5</sup>

The several attempts that have been made to write this global history of the conflict can be divided into two distinct genres. The first is that of the overarching synthesis, an example of which was offered by Strachan in the first volume of his history of the First World War.<sup>6</sup> Few scholars, however, are capable of meeting the linguistic, narrative, and analytical challenges posed by this kind of global history of the war. The second genre takes the form of edited volumes or thematic issues of academic journals, productions that nevertheless generally limit themselves to a juxtaposition of national case studies or disciplinary approaches.<sup>7</sup> Unprecedented in its ambition and scope, the *Cambridge History of the First World War* edited by Jay Winter in 2014 constitutes one of the first real successes in this genre. It offers an authentically transnational vision of the conflict and attempts to give attention to every part of the world, even though it also demonstrates the degree to which global history continues to depend on national or regional case studies.<sup>8</sup>

While these pioneering works have decisively contributed to our understanding of the conflict's global dimension, a question nevertheless remains: How can we integrate the diversity and complexity of experiences that unfolded at the

4. Hew Strachan, “The First World War as a Global War,” *First World War Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 3–14.

5. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, *Les avant-gardes artistiques, 1848–1918. Une histoire transnationale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015).

6. Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1, *To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Free Press, 2006).

7. John Horne, ed., *A Companion to World War I* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

8. Jay M. Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 1, *Global War*, vol. 2, *The State*, and vol. 3, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

global scale into a common analytical framework? This question is all the more crucial as a pronounced Eurocentrism continues to dominate the historiography of the First World War. While the conflict's military and strategic epicenter was undeniably located in Europe, historians have everything to gain from examining what have traditionally been described as "peripheral" experiences in order to better understand the nature of this first truly global war. This is the main objective of the present collection of articles: to "de-Europeanize," as it were, the historiography of the conflict by offering two possible paths to a global history of the First World War. On the one hand, it suggests broadening the discussion to encompass a number of objects that lend themselves to global history, including natural resources and manufactured goods, propaganda and its impact, scientific activity, diasporas, and wartime artistic production. The environmental history of the war proposed by Tait Keller offers some particularly innovative perspectives in this regard. On the other hand, the dossier advocates reevaluating the experience of war in what have long been considered—in both geographical and historical terms—"peripheral" regions of the world. One of course thinks of colonial territories, which histories of the years 1914–1918 generally approach in terms of their "contribution" to the war effort, thereby betraying a pronounced ethnocentrism that remains tenacious despite calls for history to be written in "equal parts."<sup>9</sup> It is in order to break with this traditional approach to colonial spaces in wartime that Pryia Satia addresses non-European theaters of the conflict. By evaluating their reciprocal effects on Europe and deconstructing representations of the Middle East, she seeks to understand how the geographical imaginary of the British Empire was employed in the service of what were simultaneously national and imperial projects. But this effort at decentering is also worth bringing to bear on spaces that escaped European colonial domination such as Latin America, where several recent works have shown that, contrary to traditional national narratives, the experience of the war was intense and contributed to major upheavals.<sup>10</sup>

The attention given to global history here is neither a fad nor merely a matter of methodological interest; it is a necessity stemming from the very nature of the Great War, something that older approaches tend to obfuscate. The 1914–1918 sequence was thus long understood as a quintessentially modern industrial conflict, with much ink spilled over whether it amounted to a "total war" or constituted a "revolution in military affairs."<sup>11</sup> These debates, which continue to engage many

9. Romain Bertrand, *L'histoire à parts égales. Récits d'une rencontre Orient-Occident, XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2011).

10. For instance, Olivier Compagnon, "Latin America," in Winter, *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 1:533–55; and Stefan Rinke, *Im Sog der Katastrophe. Lateinamerika und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2015). See also the many articles and chapters by María Inés Tato, whose research focuses on the town of Buenos Aires at the juncture of the Great War, including "An Overseas Trench: Social Mobilization in Buenos Aires during the Great War," in *Bellicose Entanglements 1914: The Great War as a Global War*, ed. Maximilian Lakitsch, Susanne Reitmair-Juárez, and Katja Seidel (Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2015), 43–59.

11. Jonathan Bailey, *The First World War and the Birth of the Modern Style of Warfare* (Camberley: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1996); Roger Chickering and

scholars and regularly contribute valuable new information, nevertheless tend to obscure the extreme diversity of experiences and contexts. On this point, much is owed to those who have written on the war's imperial dimension, as their efforts have prompted recent works to adopt a more nuanced approach to the idea that the First World War constituted a clear and distinct break with the past. For instance, it was long said that the Great War called into question the customary distinction between civilian and soldier. Yet this distinction had already been undermined by colonial wars, which need to be taken into consideration to the degree that they produced forms of violence that partly anticipated those observed between the shock of August 1914 and the November 1918 Armistice. As this blurring of boundaries between combatants and noncombatants was a fundamental feature of military operations and occupation policies across the world's battlefields, understanding the war at its supposed "centers" requires scholars to take into account the nature and transformation of the imperial project since the early nineteenth century—in other words, to pay serious attention to the "peripheral" spaces of coloniality beyond their human and economic mobilization during the conflict.<sup>12</sup> By moving beyond the dialectic of "centers" and "peripheries," combining scales of analysis, and reconstructing the spaces that corresponded to the population's lived and projected experience, one may explore what Antoinette Burton has called the structural and geographical "below."<sup>13</sup> This, in turn, makes it possible to resist ethnocentric approaches and unearth what has long been excluded by the conventional analytical categories inherited from political, diplomatic, and military history.

The chronology of the war, which convention states began in early August 1914 and ended with the Armistice of November 11, 1918, remains another burdensome legacy of this traditional history. Recent work has underscored the necessity of re-placing the First World War within a broader temporal sequence—from 1911 to 1923, at the very least—and along a continuum of colonial wars, European wars, civil wars, revolutions, political violence, and genocide.<sup>14</sup> For the Great War did not end with the Armistice of Rethondes: between 1918 and 1923,

Stig Förster, eds., *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge/Washington: Cambridge University Press/German Historical Institute, 2000); Chickering and Förster, eds., *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United States, 1919–1939* (Cambridge/Washington: Cambridge University Press/German Historical Institute, 2003).

12. John H. Morrow, Jr., *The Great War: An Imperial History* (London: Routledge, 2004); Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Sophie De Schaepdrijver, "Military Occupation, Political Imaginations, and the First World War," *First World War Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 1–5; Sönke Neitzel, "Der historische Ort des Ersten Weltkrieges in der Gewaltgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 64, no. 16/17 (2014): 17–23.

13. Antoinette Burton, "Not Even Remotely Global? Method and Scale in World History," *History Workshop Journal* 64 (2007): 323–28.

14. Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (New



four million people died.<sup>15</sup> In all regions of the world, including those that remained at a remove from the fighting, the end of the war was a process that took place over the medium term and set in motion a variety of repercussions—economic, diplomatic, and cultural. In his latest book, Adam Tooze thus explores the organic link between strategy and finance to examine the emergence of a new world order characterized by the ambiguous hegemony of the United States. In 1931, at the culmination of a fifteen-year process, it was the First World War that set the stage for a new cataclysm pitting the victorious liberal democracies against Fascist and Communist uprisings and which makes it possible to understand the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.<sup>16</sup>

With these elements in place, how might a historical geography or geographical history of the war attentive to notions of space and place be useful? Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands* supplies a partial response: situating the experience of war and examining sites of conflict—or, in this case, genocide—obliges scholars to rethink the meaning and temporality of the event.<sup>17</sup> By emphasizing the location of experienced or imagined battle, a geographical history can deepen our understanding of the totalizing and globalizing dynamics of the first global conflict. Situating the First World War is in no way to make the case for a “spatial turn” in studies of the conflict, however, and there are at least two reasons to be wary of this new methodological trend. First, history and the social sciences were already attentive to space well before the institutionalization of geography as an academic discipline. Second, simply affirming the war's spatial dimension might amount to no more than a reiteration of several truisms: that soldiers fought with maps, that battle transformed terrains and landscapes, and that the conflict created imaginary geographies.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, such is the domination of spatial metaphors in historical and social scientific discourse that a few definitions need to be revisited. John Lewis Gaddis has rightly underscored the role played by these metaphors in history, art, and the sciences,<sup>19</sup> but it is nonetheless important to clarify the categories of analysis—our understanding of “peripheries,” for example—if we want them to be truly useful. If gender historians have shown how effective metaphors can be when comparing the construction of distinctions in the public and private spheres, if Michel Foucault and his “heterotopias” have allowed bodies, identities, and sexual

York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Christoph Nübel, “Neuvermessungen der Gewaltgeschichte. Über den ‘langen Ersten Weltkrieg’ (1900–1930),” *Mittelweg* 36 24, no. 1/2 (2015): 225–48.

15. Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth, eds., *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

16. Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916–1931* (London: Allen Lane, 2014).

17. Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

18. Christoph Nübel, “Raum in der Militärgeschichte und Gewaltgeschichte. Probleme, Ergebnisse und neue Felder der Forschung,” *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 73, no. 2 (2014): 285–307.

19. John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

practices to be reconceived in a spatial framework,<sup>20</sup> and if specialists of queer studies have shown the need to take the spatial dimension of sexual “orientation” seriously,<sup>21</sup> the proliferation of spatial metaphors nevertheless threatens to diminish their heuristic potential. As Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift have underscored, “Space is the everywhere of modern thought. It is the flesh that flatters the bones of theory. It is an all-purpose nostrum to be applied whenever things look sticky.”<sup>22</sup>

While there is an abundant theoretical literature on spatial approaches in the human and social sciences, no real consensus exists regarding the notions of space and place in geography, history, sociology, or urban studies. These notions must thus be clearly defined if one is to construct a historical geography of the First World War, and in this regard Michel de Certeau remains an indispensable guide. The notion of place refers to the natural and material environment in which historical actors evolve; it is fundamentally a matter of position, whereas space is defined by the movement and the circulation of men, goods, and representations.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the notion of space is relational and opens the way to an approach to the Great War that does not isolate the places of fighting—battlefields—from the putatively nonbelligerent world located behind the lines. Maintaining a clear distinction between place and space nevertheless remains complex, since the historical experience permanently blurs the frontiers that separate them. Such was the case, for example, for the 1,500 to 2,000 Latin American volunteers who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion between 1914 and 1918. They of course experienced the trench as a place, with its litany of horrors and suffering, but they also experienced the relational space of the Atlantic Ocean, across which they transmitted—whether by letter or, in the event they returned safe and sound, in person—narratives and representations of the war to regions that had never heard the artillery’s roar.<sup>24</sup>

While conventional geography and military history tend to reduce the war to its operational aspects, shifting our attention to the varied forms of belligerence and mobilization makes it possible to redefine both the spaces and the temporalities of the conflict. Writing a global history of the First World War thus turns on comprehending the manner in which multiple vectors—people, goods, printed material, films, representations, and so on—served to spread it beyond the borders

20. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowicz in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 2002), 229–36.

21. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

22. Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, eds., *Thinking Space: Critical Geographies* (London: Routledge, 2000).

23. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Stephen F. Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

24. Michaël Bourlet, “Les volontaires latino-américains dans l’armée française pendant la Première Guerre mondiale,” *Revue historique des armées* 255 (2009): 68–78; Olivier Compagnon and Manuel Rodriguez, “‘Pour cette triple cause de la liberté, du droit et de la civilisation’: le volontariat latino-américain dans l’armée française (1914–1918)” (paper presented at the symposium “Se battre à l’étranger pour des idées. Volontariat armé international et politique, XVIII<sup>e</sup>–XXI<sup>e</sup> siècles,” Paris, 2012).

of the belligerent states to colonial societies and, perhaps most importantly, to neutral countries that lacked political ties with European metropolises and had putatively remained on the war's sidelines. It is only in this way that a new cartography of the Great War becomes possible, one that is emancipated from the "center/periphery" dichotomy and reveals the conflict's genuinely global nature.

## Geographies of Combat

In defining the war by reference to combat operations, their location, and their scale, military geography fails to fully take into account the planetary nature of the first global conflict. Edited by two British historians, the *Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the First World War* thus draws an explicit distinction between the conflict's epicenters, zones of low intensity combat (in Italy, Greece, the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and so on), and places that were truly at the margins of the war.<sup>25</sup> In this perspective, most of Africa and Asia as well as the Americas seem to have been hardly affected by the conflict. Even as the centenary of the Great War is commemorated, this traditional vision of the state of war, defined by reference to the direct experience of conflict, has unfortunately not loosened its grip. Two more recent syntheses intended for English-language readers attest to the persistence in the historiography of this combat-centered geography of war.<sup>26</sup>

From such a perspective, spaces such as Latin America appear to have been entirely spared the war—whose global character thereby disappears—even though evidence has long pointed to a specifically Latin American experience of the conflict. Apart from two large naval battles that took place off the coasts of Chile and Argentina in November and December 1914 (and ultimately carry little significance), in early 1917 Mexico found itself at the heart of the conflict following the Zimmermann telegram, which played a crucial role in Washington's decision to enter the war in April of that year.<sup>27</sup> The continent's natural resources, both mineral and agricultural, were the object of particularly intense exploitation,<sup>28</sup> and the region

25. Matthew Hughes and William J. Philpott, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

26. William Kelleher Storey, *The First World War: A Concise Global History* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009); Lawrence Sondhaus, *World War I: The Global Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

27. Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1965); Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Esperanza Durán, *Guerra y revolución. Las grandes potencias y México, 1914–1918* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, Centro de estudios internacionales, 1985).

28. Roger Gravil, "Argentina and the First World War," *Revista de História* 54, no. 108 (1976): 385–417; Víctor A. Madueño, "La Primera Guerra Mundial y el desarrollo industrial del Perú," *Estudios Andinos* 9, no. 17/18 (1981): 41–53; Juan Ricardo Couyoumdjian, *Chile y Gran Bretaña durante la Primera Guerra Mundial y la postguerra, 1914–1921* (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello/Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 1986); Bill Albert and Paul Henderson, *South America and the First World War: The Impact*

was heavily targeted by the propaganda campaigns of the main belligerent states, eager to win over new allies.<sup>29</sup> The military and symbolic mobilization of European-origin communities proceeded on a massive scale,<sup>30</sup> and in each country many intellectuals took sides in favor of one of the rival camps or agitated for peace.<sup>31</sup> By the second half of the 1910s, the war had become a genuine political fault line throughout the region.<sup>32</sup>

*of the War on Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Chile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence*, 3rd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chap. 6, pp. 165–207; Marc Badia-Miró and Anna Carreras-Marín, “The First World War and Coal Trade Geography in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1890–1930,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 45 (2008): 369–91; Philip Dehne, *On the Far Western Front: Britain’s First World War in South America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Frank Notten, *La influencia de la Primera Guerra Mundial sobre las economías centroamericanas, 1900–1929. Un enfoque desde el comercio exterior* (San José: Centro de investigaciones históricas de América Central/Universidad de Costa Rica, 2012).

29. For Mexico and Argentina, see Ingrid Schulze Schneider, “La propaganda alemana en México durante la Primera Guerra Mundial,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia* 5 (1993): 261–72; and María Inés Tato, “Luring Neutrals: Allied and German Propaganda in Argentina during the First World War,” in *World War I and Propaganda*, ed. Troy R. E. Paddock, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 322–44.

30. The best documented cases are those of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, which received the great bulk of European migration between the 1870s and 1914. See Frederick C. Luebke, *Germans in Brazil: A Comparative History of Cultural Conflict during World War I* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Emilio Franzina, “La guerra lontana. Il primo conflitto mondiale e gli italiani d’Argentina,” *Estudios migratorios latinoamericanos* 15, no. 44 (2000): 57–84, in particular pp. 66–73; Franzina, “Italiani del Brasile ed italobrasiliani durante il Primo Conflitto Mondiale (1914–1918),” *História. Debates e tendências* 5, no. 1 (2004): 225–67; Álvaro Cuenca, *La colonia británica de Montevideo y la Gran Guerra* (Montevideo: Torre del Vigía Editores, 2006); Hernán Otero, *La guerra en la sangre. Los Franco-Argentinos ante la Primera Guerra Mundial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2009); María Inés Tato, “El llamado de la patria. Británicos e Italianos residentes en la Argentina frente a la Primera Guerra Mundial,” *Estudios migratorios latinoamericanos* 25, no. 71 (2011): 273–92; Tato, “Germanófilos versus aliadófilos. La colonia española de Buenos Aires frente a las polarizaciones de la Gran Guerra,” in *Las grandes guerras del siglo XX y la comunidad española de Buenos Aires*, ed. Nadia Andrea de Cristóforis and María Inés Tato (Buenos Aires: Facultad de filosofía y letras de la universidad de Buenos Aires, 2015), 15–43.

31. Olivier Compagnon, “1914–18: The Death Throes of Civilization. The Elites of Latin America Face the Great War,” in *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. Jenny Macleod and Pierre Purseigle (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 279–95; María Inés Tato, “The Latin American Intellectual Field in the Face of the First World War: An Initial Approach,” in *A Civil War of Words: The Cultural Impact of the Great War in Catalonia, Spain, Europe and a Glimpse at Latin America*, ed. Xavier Pla, Maximiliano Fuentes, and Francesc Montero (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015).

32. Freddy Vivas Gallardo, “Venezuela y la Primera Guerra Mundial. De la neutralidad al compromiso (octubre 1914–marzo 1919),” *Revista de la Facultad de ciencias jurídicas y políticas* 61 (1981): 113–33; Jane M. Rausch, *Colombia and World War I: The Experience of a Neutral Latin American Nation during the Great War and Its Aftermath, 1914–1921* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014); Rausch, “Venezuela’s Neutrality during the Great War: The Consolidation of the Gómez Dictatorship between 1914 and 1918,” *The Latin*

In fact, current historiography is determined by a series of implicit geographies, undermining most efforts to write genuinely European or global histories of the conflict. In the English-language literature, the western front thus remains the absolute center of a discussion that cannot even be described as Eurocentric: the eastern front has only recently attracted the attention of social and military historians, while just a handful of scholars have shown an interest in the Italian and Balkan fronts.<sup>33</sup> In Britain, the Gallipoli campaign against the Ottoman Empire is often regarded as a sort of sideshow—a secondary front at the periphery of what Carl von Clausewitz would have called the fighting’s “center of gravity” (*Schwerpunkt*). These observations must not be taken for denying, in the service of a radical desire to “provincialize” the war,<sup>34</sup> the value of the hierarchy of fronts established by the traditional geography of the conflict or the patently obvious fact that northwestern Europe was the conflict’s nerve center. Rather, the main goal is to recognize that insofar as the Great War constituted a moment of profound transformation in the conduct of military affairs, and since its industrial dimension required a total mobilization of human, material, and political resources, the geography of the war cannot be limited to the front lines alone.

One of the most persistent images of the First World War is that of a strategic quagmire embodied by the millions of soldiers bogged down on the western front, frozen in place in the trenches. Amply recorded by photography and the artistic production of the era, this representation continues to this day to inform the historiography of the conflict and masks the fact that the space of belligerence was defined as much by mobility to and from the zones of combat as by the static appearance of the trenches. The first phases of military mobilization saw millions of soldiers flood the train stations of the belligerent world. While many reached their units on foot, colonial troops had to cross considerable distances to carry out their duty. At the front, soldiers rarely remained very long in a given sector. Due to the French Army’s rotation policy, most of the soldiers serving in 1916 fought at Verdun—a large number of men could thus lay claim to a share in the victory and the battle thereby acquired a national significance. Curiously, little is known about the frequency of movements on the front lines or transfers between the various theaters of operations. Yet the issue of mobility raises crucial questions touching, among other things, on the combatants’ identity, the cohesion and morale of units, and the relationship between the front and the rear. The volunteers who left their countries to join the belligerent armies on both sides of the conflict shared a particular experience of wartime mobility. This population of transnational volunteers partly reflected the existence of nationalist movements

*Americanist* 59, no. 1 (2015): 61–76; Adriana Ortega Orozco and Romain Robinet, “Nous les Latino-Américains, nous qui n’avons ni canons ni cuirassés.” Les élites du Mexique révolutionnaire face à la Grande Guerre,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire* 125, no. 1 (2015): 105–20.

33. Jörn Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora: Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2014).

34. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

that saw the war as an opportunity to redraw Europe's borders. In the United States, migrant communities—especially Poles, Lithuanians, and Czechs—broadly mobilized along both political and military lines. Inspired by the memory of General Giuseppe Garibaldi and the Risorgimento, many Italians enlisted in the French Army, just like the 1,500 to 2,000 Latin Americans mentioned above. The majority were convinced that the defense of French civilization—the crucible of modern liberties and mother of all arts—merited spilling their blood. Armenians formed their own “legion” within the British Expeditionary Force and, later, the French Army. While new work is necessary to understand their motivations and trace their itineraries during and after the conflict, these groups nevertheless constituted the transnational go-betweens of the war experience.<sup>35</sup>

The mobility of soldiers also contributed to structuring noncombatant experience behind the lines. Their movements acted as vectors of belligerence and prompted societies to construct the experience of the war. Private journals, letters, official communiqués, the omnipresent “war atlas,” and, of course, the local and national press provide countless illustrations of how this space of war was produced. When an official French communiqué announced without further explanation in November 1914 that the front extended “from Flanders to the Vosges,” the population realized that statements originating in the capital or military command centers were in contradiction with the situation at the front and that there was no longer any hope for the short war touted by official propaganda. A simple half sentence thus sufficed to stamp the geography of the western front on the minds of most French people. Throughout the world at war, families and local communities developed an intimate geographical expertise marked by specific projections onto certain combat zones. The central role played by the battle of Gallipoli in the construction of national identity in Australia and New Zealand testifies to the major importance and resilience of these cultural cartographies of war. Mass violence and the reality of combat deeply permeated imaginaries, sometimes at a remove of several thousand kilometers from northwestern Europe: in 1915 a surprisingly realistic drawing—featuring French soldiers in madder-red trousers and zeppelins crisscrossing the sky—could be made by the ten-year-old Carlos Manuel Holguín Dávila, a child of the Columbian elite who remained in Bogotá throughout the conflict, his imagination fed by his mother's regular letters

35. Nir Arielli and Bruce Collins, eds., *Transnational Soldiers: Foreign Military Enlistment in the Modern Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Stéfanie Prezioso, “Les Italiens en France au prisme de l'engagement volontaire. Les raisons de l'enrôlement dans la Grande Guerre (1914–1915),” *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 81 (2010): 147–63; Andrekos Varnava, “The Politics and Imperialism of Colonial and Foreign Volunteer Legions during the Great War: Comparing Proposals for Cypriot, Armenian, and Jewish Legions,” *War in History* 22, no. 3 (2015): 344–63. Alongside the volunteers, the role of other transnational agents also merits reevaluation. One example would be the case of war correspondents like the Argentine Roberto Payró (1867–1928), who spent the better part of the conflict in Brussels for the *La Nación* daily. See Roberto J. Payró, *Corresponsal de guerra. Cartas, diarios, relatos (1907–1922)*, ed. Martha Vanbiesem de Burbridge (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2009).

from Paris.<sup>36</sup> These various considerations argue for reevaluating the importance of the war's "sideshows" and broadening the discussion to encompass the spread of specific imaginaries of combat to nonbelligerent zones.

Moreover, in what formed yet another obstacle to the emergence of a global history of the First World War, the experience of neutral countries was long neglected by historians of the conflict. Over the course of the past ten years, however, comparative history and the revival of interest in international law has shifted attention onto what were formerly seen as marginal situations.<sup>37</sup> In fact, any attempt to locate neutrality on a historical map of the Great War instantly raises a number of questions, for, as the political scientist Lawrence Preuss noted at the start of the Second World War, this status "in no way represents an insurance against war."<sup>38</sup> While one immediately thinks of direct violations of neutrality such as that of Belgium by the German Army in August 1914, modern war may impinge upon neutral countries even when there has been no military infraction of their neutrality. Such was the case in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro in the first half of 1917, after the German navy sunk a series of boats sailing under the Argentine and Brazilian flags. In this context, the political, economic, cultural, and even military reactions of neutral countries—in Europe, Latin America, or elsewhere—raise the question of their capacity to preserve forms of autonomy and truly remain out of the war. For neutral countries were not just witnesses to the "seminal catastrophe" of the twentieth century; they were among its actors and their experience can no longer be ignored by historiography. In general, the experience of neutral countries like Italy,

36. Exhibition catalogue, *La Gran Guerra. Narrativas y vivencias colombianas en el fin de una era* (Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 2014), 106–7.

37. Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914–1918* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012); Claes Ahlund, ed., *Scandinavia in the First World War: Studies in the War Experience of the Northern Neutrals* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2012); Willem H. van Boom, "The Great War and Dutch Contract Law: Resistance, Responsiveness and Neutrality," *Comparative Legal History* 2, no. 2 (2014): 303–24; Johan den Hertog and Samuël Kruizinga, eds., *Caught in the Middle: Neutrals, Neutrality, and the First World War* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2011); Wim Klinkert, *Defending Neutrality: The Netherlands Prepares for War, 1900–1925* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Rebecka Lettevall, Geert Somsen, and Sven Widmalm, eds., *Neutrality in Twentieth-Century Europe: Intersections of Science, Culture and Politics after the First World War* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Carlo Moos, "Neutralité(s) suisse(s) à l'époque de la Première Guerre mondiale. La mise en œuvre difficile d'un concept controversé," in *14/18, la Suisse et la Grande Guerre*, ed. Roman Rossfeld, Thomas Buomberger, and Patrick Kury (Baden: Hier und Jetzt, 2014), 214–39; María Inés Tato, "Neutralismos transatlánticos. España en el imaginario de los neutralistas argentinos durante la Primera Guerra Mundial," in *Entre Europa y América. Circulación de ideas y debates entre las dos guerras mundiales*, ed. Ángeles Castro Montero and Nadia de Cristóforis (Buenos Aires: Fundación Ortega y Gasset Argentina, 2014), 41–48.

38. Lawrence Preuss, "The Concepts of Neutrality and Nonbelligerency," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 218 (1941): 97–109. In this text, Preuss offers a canonical definition of neutrality, which "as a status of international law can therefore be defined as the condition of a state that abstains from any participation in a war and maintains an attitude of impartiality in its relations with the belligerent countries" (p. 100).

Portugal, the United States, and Brazil has only been considered in light of their subsequent entry into the war.<sup>39</sup> What matters from this perspective is therefore not so much neutrality as the path leading toward the state of war, despite the fact that the initial state of non-participation in the conflict and the motivations underpinning it deserve to be examined in their own right. From this point of view, countries that maintained their neutrality throughout the conflict—countries like Spain and Argentina, where the very conception of neutrality varied considerably over the course of the war—obviously constitute a fascinating object of study.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, writing a global history of the war implies making a critical distinction between *belligerency* and *belligerence*. While the first term designates a status defined by international law as the state of being at war, the second describes a process of adaptation or organization in the context of war and seems particularly significant in the case of neutral countries. In this sense Scandinavian and Latin American societies were most certainly belligerent, since they mobilized themselves in various ways and were traversed by multiple tensions directly relating to the conflict. Once this is established, the map of the belligerent world appears very different from that of countries at war and includes zones that have until now been seen as “peripheral,” “marginal” or “external to the war.”

## Mobilizations

The experience of neutral countries rightly reminds us that, insofar as the nation constituted the main frame of reference and identity for the immense majority of the period’s actors, one cannot write a global history of the First World War *against* national histories. To the contrary, what is most interesting about global approaches is the interplay among scales of analysis and the way they can help historians rethink the manner in which the rhythm and intensity of national mobilizations shaped the chronology and geography of a global conflict.

Once again, it is worth underscoring the distance between the state of war (belligerency) and the social experience of the conflict (belligerence). For the declaration of war is frequently and erroneously confounded with the mobilization of armed forces: in France, war was declared on August 1, 1914, but the mobilization did not get under way until two days later.<sup>41</sup> Even today, the start of the First World

39. On the case of Brazil, which entered the war on October 26, 1917, and had been a traditional ally of Washington in Latin America since the start of the twentieth century, see Francisco Luiz Teixeira Vinhosa, *O Brasil e a Primeira Guerra Mundial. A diplomacia e as grandes potências* (Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 1990).

40. For Spain, see Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Spain, 1914–1918: Between War and Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1999); and Maximiliano Fuentes Codera, *España en la Primera Guerra Mundial. Una movilización cultural* (Madrid: Akal, 2014). For Argentina, see Ricardo Weinmann, *Argentina en la Primera Guerra Mundial. Neutralidad, transición política y continuismo económico* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos/Fundación Simón Rodríguez, 1994).

41. Philippe Boulanger, *La France devant la conscription. Géographie historique d'une institution républicaine, 1914–1922* (Paris: Economica/Institut de stratégie comparée, 2001).



War is associated more with the mobilization than with its official declaration, for it was only with mobilization that the reality of the conflict was finally brought home to French society, once and for all shattering the hopes of pacifists. Leaving western Europe for the less well-traveled paths of central Asia, however, gives an even better sense of the significance of the dynamics of mobilization. From the perspective of the “peripheries,” the war’s chronology and geography is often best defined by the mobilization of resources and labor. The populations of central Asia did not enter into war along with the Russian Empire on August 1, 1914, but rather in 1916 and in response to the conflict’s intensification and globalization. On June 25 of that year, the imperial authorities revoked all existing exemptions and proceeded to conscript Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek men for service in labor battalions, provoking a series of anticolonial revolts.<sup>42</sup> According to Joshua Sanborn, it was moreover at this moment that the crisis of imperial Russia was transformed into a truly revolutionary situation.<sup>43</sup> While Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela have clearly shown the need to take a “Greater War” into account,<sup>44</sup> there are also cases in which the war can seem “smaller” than traditional discussions would suggest.

The attention given to the intensity and dynamics of mobilization also argues for revisiting the geography of war experiences. In both material and cultural terms, these were never confined to a single spatial unit, whether that of the nation-state, the local community, or the empire. The history of the African campaigns, for example, demonstrates the degree to which it is essential to integrate several scales of analysis, from the local to the imperial. Michelle Moyd has thus examined German operations in East Africa in light of the dual context of imperialism and the Great War, while simultaneously situating the conflict in the long social history of the communities directly affected by mobilization and military operations.<sup>45</sup> In fact, the issues raised by mobilization for imperial and industrialized nations had appeared well before the outbreak of the conflict in 1914: while pacifists advanced economic and financial arguments to underscore the impossibility of a long war, the course of the conflict’s first months brushed aside these claims and demonstrated that the empires were prepared for the possibility of a lasting conflict. Mobilization nevertheless remained a challenge that was not only spatial but also logistical. Wealth was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the rapid and profound—albeit temporary—transformation of national economies; this transformation also required political will, buttressed by scientific and technical

42. Cloé Drieu, “L’impact de la Première Guerre mondiale en Asie centrale. Des révoltes de 1916 aux enjeux politiques et scientifiques de leur historiographie,” *Histoire@Politique* 22, no. 1 (2014): <https://www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-politique-2014-1-page-175.htm>.

43. Joshua A. Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

44. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, “The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911–1923,” *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 4 (2014): 786–800.

45. Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).

know-how and a strong organizational capacity. As Eric Hobsbawm showed, “total war was the largest enterprise hitherto known to man, which had to be consciously organized and managed.”<sup>46</sup> States and empires made full use of their bureaucratic and logistical expertise to extract, transport, and allocate human and material resources to their armies on the battlefield. In this respect, the conflict’s resolution largely depended on the belligerents’ capacity to control the space between supply sites and combat zones, with maritime empires—and Britain in particular—holding a decisive advantage from this point of view.<sup>47</sup> Curiously, however, the historiography of the Great War has not given any particular attention to these logistical dimensions.<sup>48</sup>

Both within and outside belligerent nations, the war thus profoundly transformed the nature and density of infrastructural networks. It required large-scale development that affected not just the territory of warring countries, but also that of colonies and neutral countries. Evidence of this can be found in the profound transformations experienced by most of the world’s major port cities, from Osaka and Buenos Aires to Santos, Lagos, and Dakar.<sup>49</sup> In *Europe and the Maritime World*, Michael Miller thus rightly insists on the important role played by the maritime war and naval transport at the global scale. Miller shows that the war was not synonymous with deglobalization, although it undeniably disrupted commercial and migratory flows—rather, globalization continued by other means and at a different pace.<sup>50</sup> His argument does not completely overturn the traditional interpretation of the war as a stumbling block in the process of global market integration observed during the nineteenth century,<sup>51</sup> but it does encourage us to rethink the conflict in the context of the longer-term history of globalization. For the economic and the environmental history of the war both underscore the

46. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), 45.

47. Paul G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994); Nicholas A. Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea: A Naval History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

48. Allain Bernède, “Verdun 1916: un choix stratégique, une équation logistique,” *Revue historique des armées* 242 (2006): 48–59; Ian Malcolm Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914–1919* (Westport: Praeger, 1998); Kaushik Roy, “From Defeat to Victory: Logistics of the Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914–1918,” *First World War Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 35–55; Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The Logistics and Politics of the British Campaigns in the Middle East, 1914–22* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

49. Albert and Henderson, *South America and the First World War*; Miguel Suárez Bosa, *Atlantic Ports and the First Globalisation, c. 1850–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Arndt Graf and Beng Huat Chua, eds., *Port Cities in Asia and Europe* (London: Routledge, 2009); Ayodeji Olukoju, *The “Liverpool” of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900–1950* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004).

50. Michael B. Miller, *Europe and the Maritime World: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

51. Suzanne Berger, *Notre première mondialisation. Leçons d’un échec oublié*, trans. R. Robert (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2003); Paul Scheffer, *Immigrant Nations*, trans. Liz Waters (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

crucial role played by global flows of resources and energy and the manner in which they were reconfigured as a result of the conflict. In the warring empires, the armies' needs transformed—at least temporarily—the relationship between center and periphery. In this context of imperial emergency, resource extraction was thus not merely the result of a quest for power or an expression of colonial domination; it also illustrated the dependence of “centers” on their “peripheries.” As Keller underscores, the extraction of tin, which was necessary for the weapons industry and in the production of canned foods for the soldiers, transformed the landscape of the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch East Indies. In so doing, it profoundly exposed local populations to the impact of what was an otherwise distant war. The repercussions of the armies' needs were also felt in Chile's Atacama Desert, where sodium nitrate deposits were extensively mined to supply European farmers with nitrogenous fertilizer and for the production of explosives. Further illustration of the armies' dependence on these “peripheries” can be found in the massive use of Argentine and Uruguayan meat, which supplied most of the protein consumed by Entente troops over the course of the war (particularly during its second half). Beyond revealing the European powers' dependence on territories lying outside the formal sphere of colonial domination, these facts show that the local, the imperial, and the global are not simple scales of analysis to be combined at will for the purposes of an economic or environmental history of the conflict. Rather, they correspond to closely intertwined degrees of the experience of war.

A global history of the Great War that privileges a discussion of the geography of belligerence must therefore not be seen as an effort to discard Europe or the nation-state as analytical categories. The objective here is not to replace one paradigm with another, but rather to combine historiographical perspectives that have in the past almost always been isolated from one another. This is evident in the case of the economic mobilization of Latin American states during the conflict, the focus of a number of valuable studies that have nevertheless remained confined by the notion that Latin America was on the margins of the war. And yet the economic consequences of the conflict—from the spectacular increase in the cost of living witnessed right across the region to the transformation of forms of production in accordance with European needs and the difficulties of transatlantic trade—produced major shifts within these societies. The intensification of social movements and their frequent repression by governments, the rural exodus created by the crisis in certain kinds of agricultural production (such as coffee in Brazil), and shortages in the manufactured goods that had been imported from Europe before the outbreak of war<sup>52</sup> were all locally lived experiences of the conflict. These phenomena generated specific systems of representation and should be considered not just from the perspective of economic history, but also from that of social, political, and cultural history. Along the same lines, the recent revival of the urban history of the war stems in part from a growing awareness that the rigid frontiers established between the local, national, imperial, and global scales are not capable

of doing justice to the conflict's social history.<sup>53</sup> For in all of the world's metropolises and cities, soldiers and civilians responded to the conflict in a variety of ways, invalidating the notion of a unanimously shared enthusiasm for the war or a unified "war culture."<sup>54</sup>

Patriotism was nevertheless a crucial aspect of the dynamics of mobilization, and wartime loyalty was not the exclusive privilege of Western nation-states. A multinational political community such as the Habsburg Empire was thus based on loyalties that were often more deeply anchored than has been traditionally recognized by national historiographies.<sup>55</sup> Elsewhere, the experience of war contributed to the process of nationalizing the masses. This was true not just of Italy and Russia—countries in the thrall of profound military and political crises<sup>56</sup>—but also of Argentina and Brazil, where the years 1914–1918 witnessed a consolidation

53. Jay M. Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds., *Capital Cities at War*, vol. 1, *Paris, London, Berlin, 1914–1919*, and vol. 2, *A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 and 2007); Belinda J. Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Élise Julien, *Paris, Berlin. La mémoire de la guerre, 1914–1933* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009); Emmanuelle Cronier, *Permissionnaires dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Belin, 2013).

54. Jean-Jacques Becker, *1914. Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre. Contribution à l'étude de l'opinion publique, printemps-été 1914* (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1977); Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). It should be recalled that the "war culture" paradigm was first formulated in Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, "Vers une histoire culturelle de la Première Guerre mondiale," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 41, no. 1 (1994): 5–8; and above all in Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *14–18, retrouver la guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

55. Mark Cornwall, "The Experience of Yugoslav Agitation in Austria-Hungary, 1917–18," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (1996; repr. London: Pen and Sword Books, 1999), 656–76; Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle, *The Undermining of Austria-Hungary: The Battle for Hearts and Minds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Mark Cornwall, ed., *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary: Essays in Political and Military History, 1908–1918* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990); István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); John Deak, "The Great War and the Forgotten Realm: The Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War," *Journal of Modern History* 86, no. 2 (2014): 336–80.

56. Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Melissa K. Stockdale, "My Death for the Motherland Is Happiness: Women, Patriotism, and Soldiering in Russia's Great War, 1914–1917," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 1 (2004): 78–116; Vanda Wilcox, "'Weeping Tears of Blood': Exploring Italian Soldiers' Emotions in the First World War," *Modern Italy* 17, no. 2 (2012): 171–84.

of the national paradigm. In these cases, the period thus needs to be set in the context of the longer-term process of the construction of national identities in Latin America, beginning with the independence movements of the early nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

Patriotism counted for a great deal during the conflict, but the discourses and practices that expressed it often diverged from the ideal and abstract language that characterized the vocabulary of nationalism.<sup>58</sup> National defense was generally expressed in communitarian terms and, depending on the case and context, could draw upon the language of class-based, urban, religious, or imperial solidarities.<sup>59</sup> Expressed in everyday language and habits, wartime patriotism was nevertheless not the same thing as the “banal nationalism” ruthlessly deconstructed by Michael Billig. Indeed, the term “nationalism,” which suggests ideological coherence and the systematic and absolute primacy of the nation, very poorly captures the characteristics of patriotism. Important though it may be, Billig’s work moreover ignores the capacity of patriotism to launch and support social movements directed against the state.<sup>60</sup> As the history of cities in wartime shows, urban social movements do not always oppose national mobilization, even when they directly challenge state authorities. In wartime, resistance and open conflict define relations between the central authority and the urban periphery as much as collaboration and integration. Patriotism must be understood in a simultaneously anthropological and politico-legal sense as a show of solidarity toward family and friends and an expression of loyalty toward an imaginary community of fellow citizens. As a political project or as a category of analysis, by contrast, nationalism is intimately related to what the state can require of its citizens.<sup>61</sup>

The success of the wartime mobilizations was therefore not based on an unlikely national consensus but rather on the capacity of patriots of all hues to reconcile their divergent visions of the nation for the purpose of defending its existence. In this context, social movements played an essential role, allowing social groups to define and assert the conditions of their participation in the war effort. As in other areas of research, the urban history of the First World War underscores the

57. Olivier Compagnon, *L’adieu à l’Europe. L’Amérique latine et la Grande Guerre, Argentine et Brésil, 1914–1939* (Paris: Fayard, 2013).

58. This point was extensively demonstrated on the occasion of the colloquium “Patriotic Cultures during the First World War,” organized by Boris Kolonitskii and Laura Engelstein and held in 2014 at the European University of Saint Petersburg. See also Dieter Langewiesche, “Gefühlsraum Nation. Eine Emotionsgeschichte der Nation, die Grenzen zwischen öffentlichem und privatem Gefühlsraum nicht einebnet,” *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 15, no. 1 (2012): 195–215.

59. Stefan Goebel, “Forging the Industrial Home Front: Iron-Nail Memorials in the Ruhr,” and Pierre Purseigle, “Beyond and below the Nations: Towards a Comparative History of Local Communities at War,” both in Macleod and Purseigle, *Uncovered Fields*, respectively pp. 159–78 and 95–123.

60. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

61. Pierre Purseigle, *Mobilisation, sacrifice, et citoyenneté. Angleterre-France, 1900–1918* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013).

need to pay particular attention to the geography of belligerence, which in turn invites scholars not only to look beyond and below the nation, but also to think “through the nation” in dialogue with global history.<sup>62</sup>

## The Spatial Legacies of the Great War

This geography of war and belligerence makes it possible to revisit in a new way the history of the First World War’s consequences and the process of reconstruction that characterized the transition from war to peace. Postwar reconstruction was above all experienced as “re-placement.” If mobility had defined the war experience as much as the stalemate of combat, it also characterized the period of reconstruction. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the roads of the belligerent world thus filled with homebound soldiers and refugees seeking a place to live.<sup>63</sup> While specialists of Fascism have paid particular attention to the veterans’ halting process of cultural demobilization, historians have only recently begun to explore the problems raised for new and old states alike by these unprecedented population movements and transfers. While paramilitary violence kept many regions in a state of social and sometimes diplomatic belligerence, the fate of displaced populations threatened the legitimacy and structures of the new national and revolutionary communities of eastern Europe.<sup>64</sup> The social history of these populations—for example, that of French and Belgian repatriates—largely remains to be written in terms of the simultaneously comparative and transnational perspective implied by their interrelated efforts to reestablish and relocate themselves.

Furthermore, the First World War profoundly and durably redrew the political map of Europe and the world. In eastern Europe, military operations took place in a colonized space that today encompasses Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Belorussia, and Ukraine. The campaigning armies—German, Austro-Hungarian, or Czarist—were also armies of occupation. Sanborn has recently emphasized the incompetence of the Russian military administration in these regions: incapable of mastering inflation—the scourge of belligerent societies—the Russian Army failed in its efforts to manage local economies, and nationalization policies relying on the ethnic recruitment of military units were accompanied by anti-Semitic pogroms.<sup>65</sup> In the

62. Antoinette Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

63. On the soldiers’ return and the military and cultural questions raised by demobilization, see “Démobilisations culturelles après la Grande Guerre,” ed. John Horne, special issue, 14–18. *Aujourd’hui, Today, Heute* 5 (2002); Bruno Cabanes, *La victoire endeuillée. La sortie de guerre des soldats français, 1918–1920* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2004); Mark Edele and Robert Gerwarth, “The Limits of Demobilization: Global Perspectives on the Aftermath of the Great War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 1 (2015): 3–14.

64. Nick Baron and Peter Gatrell, eds., *Homelands: War, Population and Statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia, 1918–1924* (London: Anthem Press, 2004).

65. Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse*; Eric Lohr, “The Russian Army and the Jews: Mass Deportation, Hostages and Violence during World War I,” *Russian Review* 60, no. 3

wake of these military administrations, the Russian Empire collapsed and local elites gradually reaffirmed their control over the space, laying the foundations of their future national independence. Even before the February 1917 Revolution, nationalist movements hastened to exploit the political space and opportunities created by the revolt in central Asia. In eastern Europe, at least, the war thus triggered a process of decolonization that would conclude with the creation of the Nazi and Soviet empires.

Though it is better known for the adventures of Gabriele d'Annunzio than for its citizens' extraordinary postwar attempt to redefine sovereignty outside the framework inherited from the nation-state and international law, the case of Fiume (now Rijeka) in Croatia provides a different illustration of the spatial evolution of post-imperial political communities. Here, the transition from war to peace constituted an exceptionally pragmatic attempt to build a political and legal niche between the Habsburgs' imperial political community and the nationalist project of the Italian state.<sup>66</sup> The fate of the Free State of Fiume testifies to the complex impact of the war on imperial political geographies. On the other hand, within empires that emerged victorious and consolidated by the war—such as that of France—colonial subjects tended to seek strategies to renegotiate their position in imperialist structures and imaginaries. Mary Lewis's work on legal pluralism in interwar Tunisia, for example, represents a brilliant demonstration of the need to combine analytical scales in order to fully accommodate the complexity of postwar reconfigurations of sovereignty.<sup>67</sup>

Outside Europe, however, the impact of the Great War on Asian and African nationalist movements is still a matter of debate.<sup>68</sup> Satia's article on the British campaigns in the Middle East illustrates what might be described as the cultural reinvestment in imperial geography. The British experience on this front—considered secondary during the war—in fact played a central role in the cultural history of Great Britain and its empire during and after the First World War. The campaigns in Palestine and Mesopotamia gave new life to conventional visions of martial heroism and the faith in technology (and thus “civilization”)—visions that had been left in tatters by the European war and were once and for all buried, it seemed, in the mud of Flanders and the Somme. Airpower was not simply deployed in this region as a tool of imperial control and coercion; it also allowed the British

(2001): 404–19; Eric Lohr and Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Economic Nationalism, Confiscation and Genocide: A Comparison of the Ottoman and Russian Empires during World War I,” *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 4 (2014): 500–522.

66. Dominique Kirchner Reill, “Rebel Law: Fiume/Rijeka and the Dissolution of the Habsburg Empire” (paper presented at Yale University's international history seminar, February 25, 2014).

67. Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *Divided Rule: Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia, 1881–1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Lewis, “Geographies of Power: The Tunisian Civic Order, Jurisdictional Politics, and Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1881–1935,” *Journal of Modern History* 80, no. 4 (2008): 791–830.

68. Richard S. Fogarty and David Killingray, “Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 1 (2015): 100–123.

to revive their modernizing and “civilizing” project. In a context marked by doubt and the fear of national decline, the Middle Eastern campaigns allowed the British nation to relaunch its imperial project.

The case of Japan displays another form of imperial redefinition that took place during the conflict. After entering the war in August 1914, Japan played an important role alongside the Entente powers, rapidly seizing German possessions from China to Micronesia. Its naval fleet protected convoys of troops transiting to Europe from Australia and New Zealand and also hunted submarines in the Mediterranean. But despite this contribution, the Japanese experience of the Great War was clearly distinct from that of its allies. It lost only 2,000 men and the Japanese economy prospered, having been spared the direct impact of fighting.<sup>69</sup> As Frederick Dickinson has shown, however, the war provoked intense public debates, and in many respects represented a turning point in modern Japanese history. Like their Latin American counterparts, Japanese commentators and politicians saw the conflict as the bloody manifestation of a broader civilizational crisis, with Europe and its crumbling pretensions to global cultural and political domination at its epicenter. For a large segment of Japanese society, including its elites, the war underscored the need to engage in profound national revival (*ishin*), reminiscent of the program of radical reforms associated with the late nineteenth-century Meiji era.<sup>70</sup> These debates and the public policies that resulted permitted a series of social and economic transformations that saw Japan shift from agrarianism to an industrial model of society open to the world. Indeed, Japan strove to play a positive role in the construction of a new world order even after the European imperial powers and the United States rejected the racial equality clause at Versailles. Heavily involved in the League of Nations and discussions regarding arbitration and the outlawing of war, the Japan of the young Hirohito was no more condemned to slide into militarism and dictatorship than Weimar Germany.<sup>71</sup> A long campaign of unprecedented political violence was necessary to undo the liberalizing and modernizing effort of national revival.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, in neutral countries the international transformations tied to the war and its immediate aftermath lent new meaning to discussions of national identity and contributed to reconceiving the place of the nation in the new global geography that resulted from the peace treaties. The debate was particularly intense in Sweden, as Lina Sturfelt has shown,<sup>73</sup> but also in Latin America, where it raised a number of overlapping issues. On the one hand, in a country like Brazil the

69. Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999).

70. Frederick R. Dickinson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

71. Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

72. Frederick R. Dickinson, “Toward a Global Perspective of the Great War: Japan and the Foundations of a Twentieth-Century World,” *American Historical Review* 119, no. 4 (2014): 1154–83.

73. Lina Sturfelt, *Eldens återsken: första världskriget i svensk föreställningsvärld* (Lund: Sekel, 2008).



war revived a fear already present in the intellectual production of the “tropical Belle Époque”<sup>74</sup>: that its three southernmost states (Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul), home to some 400,000 inhabitants of German origin, would secede. Following Rio’s entry into the war in October 1917, a series of measures were taken to nationalize these populations, who were often described as “Teuto-Brazilian.” With hindsight, these measures appear to have laid the foundation for the wholesale policies of nationalization pursued by Getúlio Vargas’s *Estado Novo* between 1937 and 1945.<sup>75</sup> In this respect, the First World War may be thought of as a major step in the process of finalizing national territories in a number of Latin American countries. On the other hand, the European civilizational crisis that the war represented in the eyes of many Latin American intellectuals led to the emergence of at least two competing visions of the future of Latin American nations. In the first, still anchored in Europe, Latin American states would achieve representation within the new international order of states—from which they had been almost completely excluded from the Congress of Vienna up to 1914—as members of the League of Nations. The second was turned toward the United States. Between 1890 and 1914, the expansionist policies of that country in Central America and the Caribbean had provoked fear and distrust. Its record during the war, however, presented a threefold advantage: it had remained neutral in 1914, had helped bring an end to the conflict following its entry into the war in 1917, and had offered the world a lasting peace project in the form of President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Yet the Eurocentric manner in which the League of Nations operated and the arrogance displayed by the victorious powers toward countries they continued to see as peripheral despite the resources supplied throughout the conflict quickly put an end to Latin American experiments with the Geneva Assembly.<sup>76</sup> The golden age of Pan-Americanism that ran from 1933 to 1945—the era of the Good Neighbor policy and Washington’s “seductive imperialism”<sup>77</sup> south of the Rio Grande—owed much to the shifts in hegemony that took place during the Great War and the new imaginary geographies in which it resulted.

74. Jeffrey D. Needell, *A Tropical Belle Époque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

75. Luebke, *Germans in Brazil*; Compagnon, *L’adieu à l’Europe*.

76. On Latin America and the League of Nations, see Thomas Fischer, *Die Souveränität der Schwachen. Lateinamerika und der Völkerbund, 1920–1936* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012); Alan McPherson and Yannick Wehrli, eds., *Beyond Geopolitics: New Histories of Latin America at the League of Nations* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015); Jorge Rhenán Segura, *La Sociedad de las Naciones y la política centroamericana, 1919–1939* (San José: Euroamericana de Ediciones, 1993); María de Monserrat Llairó and Raimundo Siepe, *Argentina en Europa. Yrigoyen y la Sociedad de las Naciones, 1918–1920* (Buenos Aires: Macchi, 1997); and Eugênio Vargas Garcia, *O Brasil e a Liga das Nações, 1919–1926. Vencer ou não perder* (Porto Alegre: Editora da universidade federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 2000).

77. To borrow the expression of the Brazilian historian Antonio Pedro Tota, *O imperialismo sedutor. A americanização do Brasil na época da Segunda Guerra* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000).

## Rethinking the Spaces of the War

A hundred years after the start of the conflict and despite several pioneering works, the global history of the First World War paradoxically remains a vast, uncultivated terrain. Some of the more obvious reasons for this state of affairs include the complexity of the events in question, the multiple scales at which they took place, the immense mass of documentation to which they gave rise throughout the world, and the fact that any comparative or transnational approach requires a mastery of many foreign languages. At a time when the community of Great War historians embarks on ever more international collaborations and appropriates the tools of the digital humanities, however, one can only insist on the intellectual obstacles to forging this global history. These include the continuing grip exercised by the nation over the historian's imagination, the difficulty of considering the centrality of the national or imperial state alongside the pluralism of belligerent civil societies, and the persistence of more or less implicit Eurocentric premises.

As Strachan has recently shown, transformations of strategy were fundamentally contingent upon transformations in the spatial understanding of the war. Because they imposed themselves as urgent necessities, economic mobilization and the projection of power across oceans and airspaces—in particular via propaganda campaigns—radically expanded the frontiers of the battlefield, drawing noncombatant populations across the world into the conflict. On the basis of these developments, which grafted themselves onto spatial imaginaries specific to the colonial experiences of the nineteenth century, new attention to the conflict's geography and to the transformations of spatial perception in the early twentieth century makes it possible to advance toward this global history of the Great War,<sup>78</sup> clearing the way for a military, economic, social, political, and cultural history of the years 1914–1918 predicated on a consideration of the spaces of the war. At the same time, it allows for a more general consideration of the transformation of forms of belligerence and the mobilization of wartime societies across the twentieth century. In European and non-European societies alike, the conduct and contemporary representations of the Great War had focused on the mastery and comprehension of space. It is thus no accident that the interwar years should have witnessed the emergence of geopolitics as both a field of study and a factor in political decision-making. Nor is it a coincidence that the Nazi regime and the theoreticians of National Socialism put many of these same ideas into the service of their genocidal policy, thereby radically redefining the territories of modern belligerence.<sup>79</sup>

In our own era of consolidated mass cultures, the echoes and images of war-ravaged Syria are transmitted across the world with near absolute immediacy. The war has also pushed hundreds of thousands of migrants to take to the roads

78. Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

79. Thomas Kühne, "Colonialism and the Holocaust: Continuities, Causations and Complexities," *Journal of Genocide Research* 15, no. 3 (2013): 339–62.

across the Mediterranean. Their arrival in Europe has given rise to violent political divisions at the scale of nation-states and has even called into question the future existence of the Schengen Area. Articulating a multiplicity of scales and projecting localized violence into the world-space, the forms of contemporary belligerence seem very much the extension and exacerbation of transformations that initially emerged in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

*Olivier Compagnon*  
*Université Sorbonne Nouvelle–Paris 3*  
*Institut des hautes études de l'Amérique latine|CREDA–UMR 7227*

*Pierre Purseigle*  
*University of Warwick, Department of History*  
*Trinity College Dublin, Centre for War Studies*

