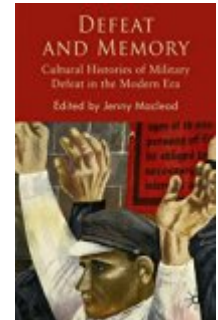


Jenny Macleod, ed.. *Defeat and Memory: Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. ix + 259 pp. \$74.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-230-51740-0.



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Recent concerns that the ongoing Iraq War will become America's new Vietnam show that memories of previous military defeats can influence how current wars are interpreted and judged. Thus, the subject of the edited volume *Defeat and Memory: Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era*, also bears importance for present debates. Derived from a conference that was hosted by the School of History and Classics at the University of Edinburgh in 2005, the book comprises twelve case studies. The aim of this collection is to shed light on the ways in which societies and other groups have understood individual defeats in the era of modern warfare. With this objective, the authors seek to contribute to a cultural history of defeat.

The twelve case studies are preceded by two introductory articles that set forth methodological and theoretical questions. In particular, John Horne's contribution, "Defeat and Memory in Modern History," functions as a signpost for the subsequent pages, since he critically assesses the major concepts. Mainly based on the extent to

which the vanquished had to forfeit their political and/or territorial integrity, John Horne distinguishes five types of military defeat: the "temporary defeat" in a battle that is reversed by the outcome of the war, the "definite defeat" as the final verdict of war that shapes the subsequent peace, the "total defeat" in which case the defeated lose their sovereignty and are remade in the image of the victor, the "internal defeat" in civil wars, and the "partial defeat" during which the vanquished suffer military setbacks without losing their territorial or political integrity. Horn argues that recognizing the terms and conditions of individual defeats is important because the ways in which a "defeat is remembered, and also forgotten, is partly determined by the kind of defeat it is" (p. 11). This statement holds true especially with regard to the ways memory figures within this volume. During and beyond the process of defeat—which Horne distinguishes from the event of defeat—memories' most important functions are to help deal with, come to terms with, and possibly make sense of the suffered loss; its history, nature, and

consequences. At this point, the temporal boundaries of *Defeat and Memory* are of special importance: the underlying assumption of the volume is that since the French Revolution, important developments have taken place--the dominance of people's armies, the emergence of nation states and bureaucratic systems, changing linguistic schemes--that have influenced the ways in which societies and groups process defeats.

The five types of military defeat that Horne delineates are used to organize the rest of the volume. The initial chapter, "Temporary Defeat," includes Vanda Wilcox's discussion of the myth surrounding the Italian setback at Caporetto and Christian Koller's analysis of how Germans remembered the Napoleonic era. The two analyses show in particular how subsequent wars and victories can change the perception and memory of already suffered defeats. These contributions are followed by only one article on "Definite Defeat." In her discussion of the remembrance of France's military setback in the Franco-Prussian War, Karine Varley argues that the post-1871 period did not witness a homogenized public memory. Most of the case studies (five out of twelve) are, however, grouped under the subsequent rubric of "Total Defeat." They mainly discuss the memory of Germany and Japan's defeat in World War II. Two contributions--articles by Donald Bloxham and Madoka Futamura--pay special attention to the German and Japanese war crime trials, arguing that trials can factor into the creation of post-defeat memories. M. G. Sheftall, moreover, discusses the contested memorialization of Japanese Kamikaze pilots, while Patrick Finney analyzes the writings of historians who focus on international relations as one form of post-1945 memory. Furthermore, Kevin Kramer discusses how the memory of the Thirty Years' War affected German warfare in the twentieth century and, by doing so, expands the temporal boundaries of *Defeat and Memory*. The penultimate section, "Internal Defeat," includes Anatol Shmelev's discussion of how the internment of Russia's White Army on Gal-

lipoli is remembered and Karen L. Cox's analysis of the Confederates' defeat suffered at the hand of the Federal troops. The volume concludes with the topic of "Partial Defeat," which comprises Stephen Tyre's discussion of how France's military setback at Dien Bien Phu affected the French war in Algeria. Finally, Jeffrey Kimball argues for the existence of an American stab-in-the-back myth produced after the Vietnam War.

This collection of case studies provides several insights. First, they reveal recurring tropes that served various groups of actors and emerged seemingly independent from the kind of defeat they referred to. The different themes that Jenny Macleod also highlights in her introduction include procedures that depict a military defeat as either an humiliating or honorable event, interpretations that present a defeat as a process of sacrifice and renewal, the construction of a stab-in-the-back myth, the idea of the Lost Cause, as well as the dominance of collective amnesia or taboos. For instance, Koller's analysis of the ways in which the Prussian defeat at Jena and Auerstedt and the subsequent success in 1813 were remembered throughout the twentieth century shows how different political groups understood the events as a process of national rebirth. In addition, Anatol Shmelev reveals that both Russian soldiers and veterans came to understand their defeat as a moment of renewal. The case studies comprised in *Defeat and Memory*, moreover, provide interesting examples that one strain of memory can change its shape and content over time, and that different memories can compete for the authority of interpretation.

Still, despite the insights that the edited volume offers, occasionally the reader is dangerously close to getting lost in history, or at least in the memory of it. Since--to use Alan Confino's words--"memory is everywhere," it is at times difficult to grasp.^[1] This aspect must be considered, especially given the multitude of sources available and the numerous actors involved in the con-

struction and usage of memory. While the shape and nature of defeats are critically discussed in full in the introductory contributions and used to structure the book, a more thorough methodological assessment of the concept of memory would have been helpful. Here, an examination is lacking as to why the different memories treated by the authors and their changing contexts seem to be of the same, if not greater, importance for the individual case studies and for the structure of the entire volume. Thus, for instance, "collective," "national," and "cultural" memories appear as interchangeable concepts in this volume. Nonetheless, *Defeat and Memory* sheds new light on how different groups and societies as well as individuals have understood specific military defeats as part of their collective memory.

Note

[1]. Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 1386-1403.

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