

Manfred F. Boemeke, Roger Chickering, Stig Forster, eds.. *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 473 pp. \$64.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-62294-3.



Reviewed by Mark A. Weitz

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Is There in Truth No Total War?

In the second of what will eventually be five installments, Boemeke, Chickering and Forster expand on their first comparative volume, going beyond the American Civil War and nineteenth-century German wars of unification, to examine the sixty-year period leading up to World War I. The book's title is in fact its theme: did Germany or America, either intentionally, or perhaps inadvertently, prepare for the disaster that became the First World War? Inherent in this question is a much larger issue that runs throughout the twenty essays comprising the collection: What is total war?

Divided into four sections, the volume first seeks to define total war. While this section is the shortest in the book, it may be the most important because the remainder of the volume flows from this definition. Roger Chickering's introductory essay traces what he refers to as the "master narrative of total war." The model begins in 1792 with the French republican armies and ends with the twentieth-century era of total war. Modern war represents a natural progression from earlier

wars, with warfare becoming more intense and more extensive. Industrialization, technology and weapons innovation culminate in Hiroshima.

Chickering argues that the narrative seriously misrepresents the history of war over the past two centuries, ignoring how earlier wars were in many ways similar to more recent warfare in terms of mass mobilization, destructiveness and national goals. However, he concedes that despite the linguistic traps which accompany the term, "total war" as a concept has utility. The key lies in the elements that constitute total war: intensification and broader expanse of warfare. He concludes that the latter element is the most useful tool. Total war is thus loosely defined in terms of the increasing size of armies, broadened scope of operations, the growing comprehensiveness of the support effort, and the systematic and calculated incorporation of civilians into the realm of participants (pp. 13-26).

Armed with this definition, the next two sections, which comprise the majority of the volume, look at specific aspects of German and American society to see if either nation anticipated the de-

mands and realities of World War I. In Section Two, "War and Society," seven essays look at the presence or absence of preparation among economic sectors, the effect of war on ethnic minorities, religion as a tool for military nationalism, the role of German women on the road to war and the preparation of youth in both nations for war. In Section Three, "Memory and Anticipation: War and Culture," six essays explore the importance of memory in preparing for war. It also addresses the military and political mind-set in the years leading up to the war and questions to what degree leaders anticipated the results of a modern war. Part of this discussion delves into the use of war preparation in Germany to foster a sense of national identity during a period when the concept of nation was still in its embryonic stages. These two sections demonstrate the difficulty inherent in comparative history. Just as we discovered in the first volume, the German and American experiences leading up to World War I do not smoothly overlap. Germany found itself immersed in the escalating political tensions of the region, while the United States remained grounded in an isolationist mind-set that dictated how it viewed the potential conflict across the Atlantic and the nature of the war it might bring. At the same time, however, some similarities afford an intriguing basis for comparison. Germany found itself attempting to integrate ethnic minorities into a concept of Germanness, while America, in the midst of its most intense period of immigration, struggled to assimilate people into a society that shared few, if any, of the Anglo cultural characteristics of previous immigrants. However, even where the comparative attempt of the volume breaks down, the essays nevertheless offer useful insight into particular aspects of one nation or the other. Gilded Age and Progressive Era historians will find useful material in the essays on ethnicity in America and war preparation, American political economy, preparing youth for war and the debate in America on total war.

What these essays clearly show is that neither nation actually prepared itself for the reality of total war. While developments in each country may have fostered a sense of preparedness, there was little intentional preparation, and a surprising lack of foresight as to what modern war would bring. Those who foresaw the devastating effect of total societal commitment and new technological weapons nevertheless drew the wrong conclusions, assuming the potential for wide-scale devastation would deter war.

Perhaps the most useful section of the book is the last. Section Four, "The Experience of War," looks at four specific instances where Germany and America went to war against colonial populations or native Americans, and inquires as to what extent these limited conflicts were total war. In the process we see some of the difficulties in calling anything "total war." In all four instances, civilian populations are decimated, yet the conflict or action does not always rise to the level of total war in the mind of the author because some aspect of Chickering's broader, expanding nature is missing. The American Indian fell victim not to total war, but to white cultural and economic forces (pp. 412-414). In the German wars of pacification in Southern Africa, the violence alone was insufficient to deem the conflicts "total." What distinguished these actions from total war was Germany's less than total mobilization of national resources and its limited use of technologically superior weapons (pp. 430-435).

In contrast, the American suppression of the Philippine guerillas and the German punitive efforts following the Boxer Rebellion, while limited in scope, seem to display aspects of total war, even if neither possessed the expansive quality inherent in the concept. Although not "total," these conflicts at least served as military actions that anticipated total war in the future (pp. 455-56 and 474-475). Perhaps indicative of how hard it is to define total war, it is possible to take the analysis of each of these essays and apply it to the facts of

the others, yielding a conclusion that the war was or was not total.

The book will find its greatest audience among academics. Readers will find the essays well supported with a wide range of sources, as might be expected in a work that is itself somewhat broad. Although the comparative model breaks down at times, the project itself seems worthwhile. Even in isolation the essays all contribute worthwhile scholarship to the period, and implicitly beg the question as to whether any war, where the vanquished actually survive, can be deemed "total."

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