



**Thomas W. Zeiler, David K. Ekbladh and Benjamin C. Montoya, eds.- *Beyond 1917: The United States and the Global Legacies of the Great War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 336p.**

Hundreds of books about the legacy of the Great War have been published in recent years to mark the centenary of one of humanity's most destructive and transformative conflicts. The publications have ranged from standard history books to broader takes and tales in different disciplines on the multifaceted and far-reaching legacies of the First World War (WWI). The Great War as a publishing sensation over the last few years has affected all parts of the world and appeared in most modern languages. Political, social, economic, military, legal, imperial and cultural historians have seized this timely period (2014-18) to reflect on the multiple and profound ways in which the Great War has altered modern societies and international relations. Despite the fact that the war mostly broke among European countries and its most dramatic episodes unfolded on the old continent, it affected the rest of the world directly or indirectly. Russia, Japan, the Ottoman empire, and the United States of America were directly involved in the war at one point or another. The remaining countries and regions of the world were also involved in that most of the globe was under European colonial occupation. This meant that various countries outside the borders of Europe became the stage of the devastating war between Western powers. The colonised territories also supplied soldiers to war fronts in Europe and in the colonies. France, for example, enlisted natives as soldiers in colonial Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. The *goums* played a major role in different battles side by side with French soldiers although history books have often focused on the latter and overlooked the former. This is one aspect or legacy of the Great War that still needs more scholarly attention and scrutiny by historians. This also goes to show that we have not yet exhausted the legacies of World War I a hundred years later.

Edited by three seasoned historians, *Beyond 1917: The United States and the Global Legacies of the Great War* (2017) is a collection of fifteen essays on the deep ways WWI has affected the USA, on the one hand, and how the United States has shaped the war's legacies since 1917, on the other. The book

was published last year by Oxford University Press to mark the centennial of the US entry into the Great War. It opens with an introduction by David K. Ekbladh followed by a timeline of World War I and its legacies by Benjamin C. Montoya. *Beyond 1917* also comes with an extensive bibliography compiled by Montoya. The well edited essays are by established and upcoming US and international historians. They cover a wide range of historical periods extending from the Great War era to the present day. The authors deploy a plethora of perspectives from imperial, transnational, economic, military, cultural and legal history. This rich array of voices and methodological approaches does not occlude the book's purpose and coherence.

The Introduction by Ekbladh sets the stage for the centennial essays, some of which had already appeared in *Diplomatic History* (September 2014). Ekbladh explains the premise of the edited collection by stating that its "overall goal is to demonstrate the reach of the legacies of the First World War, both in and on history (5)." *Beyond 1917* is thus both about the impact of the Great War in US history and beyond. As he points out, "our understanding of the world today rests on the legacies of World War I (1)." What started as a European war in Europe soon expanded to and affected most parts of the world. Initially determined to remain neutral in this war, the United States finally decided to intervene in 1917. The reasons for this intervention were justified on both national security and moral grounds, as Michael S. Neiberg explains in Chapter 4, "Blinking Eyes Began to Open: Legacies from America's Road to the Great War, 1914-1917." The end of the neutrality period (1914-1917) effectively made the Great War part of US history and America part of the war's global story.

The essays in this book can be divided into three categories: historiographical, national, and global. The historiographical contributions, which constitute Part 1 of the book, dwell on how historians have written about the context and multiple legacies of the entry of the United States into WWI in 1917. In this vein, Akira Iriye in his "The Historiographic Impact of the Great War" provocatively calls both world wars "ancient history (34)." What he means is that historians have embraced new perspectives and methodological lenses since the 1970s. "During the 1980s and especially in the 1990s," Iriye explains, "historians began conceptualizing international history, and indeed world history, by incorporating a number of nongeopolitical themes, such as globalization, human rights, environmental issues, cultural exchange, and migrations. Thanks to their work and that of those who came after them, it is now possible to throw much fresh light on World War I and on subsequent developments (27)." The focus on human rights, migration, gender, postcolonialism, ethnicity, migration,

among other perspectives, has overshadowed nation-state historiography and its typical focus on power, war, and diplomacy from a Eurocentric point of view. In “The War as History,” Katharina Rietzler deals with the forgotten and little studied Carnegie Endowment’s *Economic and Social History of the World War* research project led by John Bates Clark and James T. Shotwell in the 1920s and 1930s. Unfortunately, according to Rietzler, historians have not turned enough attention to this massive archive of first-hand accounts and information about the social and economic history of the war.

The national essays form Part 2 and focus on the Great War in American society. Michael S. Neiberg sets the stage with his chapter on the context in which the US finally decided to enter the war in 1917. He surveys the arguments both for and against this intervention. Three years into the conflict, the political establishment in Washington DC finally decided that it was in the country’s national interest to intervene to put an end to the war in its favour. Others used an ethical argument to spare humanity more bloodshed even though the bloody Nazi dictatorship would soon rise out of the ashes of the unsettled Great War questions. In Chapter 5, Michael Adas foregrounds the crucial role of the US navy as well as the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) in the conflict. Christopher Capozzola devotes his essay to the impact of WWI on American citizenship both during and after the war. The latter led to a drop in immigration to the United States. Post-war legislation turned this new fact into a permanent state for a while. The Great War also led to the migration of African Americans from the South to the North to meet the labour demands of the thriving armaments industry. Finally, Capozzola accounts for the act of granting US citizenship without consultation with the concerned populations to all Native Americans and the residents of the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as an outcome of the Great War. This involuntary citizenship was part of the American government’s “coercive inclusion into US polity” of marginalised groups by making citizenship “territorially inclusive without being egalitarian (118).”

Julia Irwin and Andrew Preston then respectively highlight the role of American humanitarianism and religious groups in Part 2’s last two chapters. In “Taming Total War,” Irwin records how Americans generously donated money to humanitarian causes even before the end of the neutrality period in 1917. The donations targeted relief agencies active in warring Europe, including the American Red Cross, the Committee for Relief in Belgium, the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, and the American Relief Administration. The legacy of this American humanitarianism lives on in US society and beyond. As Irwin puts it, “American aid workers may

have departed Europe and the Near East by 1923, but the legacies of their Great War-era humanitarian intervention endured, reverberating throughout the years that followed (136).” In the following chapter, “To Make the World Saved,” Preston explains how in a society where religion played and still plays a major role in how people see the world and their place in it, some minority ethnic groups centred around religious culture such the Catholics and Jews seized WWI as an occasion to further and cement their integration in American society. “For Protestants, modernist and fundamentalist alike, as well as Catholics and Jews,” Preston asserts, “World War I was a transformative event even if they never set foot on a muddy battlefield in France or Belgium (142).”

Occupying the book’s Part 3, the global history pieces deal with the international legacy and impact of American participation in the First World War. Entitled “America in the World Empire, Revolution, and Power,” this section is the largest in the book by size. It explores the war’s global legacy and America’s place in it. The main themes in this section are empire, revolution, the Great Depression and, notably, the Middle East. Opening the section, Lloyd C. Gardner in “The Geopolitics of Revolution” accounts for the role of America in the figure of President Woodrow Wilson in trying to counter radical revolutions worldwide. As Gardener notes, “One could say that he was the most revolutionary leader, pre-World War I, in the sense of disturber-in-chief of the old order, whether the scene was China, Mexico, or Europe (162).” Wilson’s opposition to radical revolutions from Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic to Russia and beyond is the main legacy of Wilsonianism.

In his notable essay on the Middle East as a long ignored region by WWI historians, Matthew F. Jacobs argues that the region was quite important in and to this global war. For Jacobs, the region was actually just as important as Europe. “One could make a reasonable case,” he claims, “that World War I had as great an –if not greater– impact on the Ottoman Empire and Middle East as it had on Europe (182).” He goes to argue that the conflict between Britain and France over the post-Ottoman Middle East after WWI led to a state of permanent chaos which can still be observed today. “The greatest legacy of the Great War in the Middle East” he concludes, “is undoubtedly turmoil (194).” In his chapter on WWI and Nazi Germany, Klaus Schwabe points out another negative legacy of the war, namely the rise of Adolf Hitler. This was also aided by the Great Depression of 1929. However, as Schwabe concludes, “World War I was a necessary, but not a sufficient, cause for the advent of Hitler to power and the collapse of the Weimar Republic (261).” In other words, it was not inevitable that Nazi Germany would become

the legacy of WWI. It was rather the bitter fruit of a combination of many domestic and international factors, including what many regard as the unfair Versailles Treaty.

Erez Manela and Robert Gerwarth in “The Great War as a Global War” place WWI in the context of imperial conflict and the cycle of global violence between 1911 and 1923. The authors note that the Great War was not just a conflict between nation-states in Europe, but was actually “a war among global empires (198).” The scramble for Morocco and its ultimate occupation by France and Spain in 1912 is a case in point although Manela and Gerwarth do not dwell on this illustrative example in the presence of a multiplicity of similar cases. The war inevitably changed world order in the process through “the realignment of global patterns of power and legitimacy (201).” As they write, “One of the supreme ironies of the war, of course, was that a war fought for the protection and expansion of empire in fact led to the dissolution of empires (200).” The war ushered the end of many empires (Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German) and their global ambitions for survival and expansion.

*Beyond 1917* is a timely and valuable contribution to the location of the Great War in US and global history. The book is unique by giving voice not only to established historians such as Lloyd Gardner, Akira Iriye, Emily Rosenberg and Klaus Schwabe, but also by allowing young historians to speak in the same tune and volume. Another of the book’s many strengths is its combination of multiple perspectives and methodologies. It will be a useful reference for students of history and scholars from a plethora of other disciplines. Its essays can also be assigned as required or secondary readings for a diversity of undergraduate and graduate classes in American and world history.

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