

Imagined War

By [David Morgan-Owen](#)

Summary

How war was imagined before the outbreak of conflict in 1914 has been an ongoing source of interest to historians. Ideas about future war have been explored as a potential explanation for the willingness of societies to go to war and in terms of “war enthusiasm.” They have also underpinned a perception that military-political elites believed in a “short war illusion” that encouraged them to risk conflict. In both cases recent historiography has overturned these long-standing myths, opening the way for a more creative approach of using ‘imagination’ as a means of re-examining the First World War.

Table of contents

- [1 Introduction](#)
- [2 Historians and Imagined War](#)
 - [2.1 Imaginaries and Changing Political Culture](#)
 - [2.2 Re-Interpreting the Salience of “Future War”](#)
- [3 Chronologies & Geographies](#)
 - [3.1 Public Awareness of Contemporary War](#)
 - [3.2 Which War to Imagine?](#)
- [4 Public Attitudes and the “Spirit of 1914”](#)
 - [4.1 Re-Interpreting “War Enthusiasm”](#)
 - [4.2 Resisting War](#)
- [5 Military and Political Imaginaries](#)
 - [5.1 A Short War Assumption?](#)
 - [5.2 Military Authority and Civil-Military Relations](#)
- [6 Conclusion](#)
- [Notes](#)
- [Selected Bibliography](#)
- [Citation](#)

Introduction

Imagining a future war was surprisingly popular before 1914. Across Europe and the [United States](#), stories about invading armies – and even aliens – attracted widespread interest and considerable readerships. The genre was popular enough to provoke satire; [P.G. Wodehouse \(1881-1975\)](#) wrote mischievously in 1909 that:

not only had the Germans effected a landing in Essex, but, in addition, no fewer than eight other hostile armies had, by some remarkable coincidence, hit on that identical moment for launching their long-prepared blow. England was not merely beneath the heel of the invader. It was beneath the heel of nine invaders. There was barely standing room.¹

His humor reads as juxtaposed to the bleak forecasts of future war issued by military leaders and theorists such as [Ivan Bloch \(1836-1902\)](#), who anticipated “a catastrophe which would destroy all existing political organisations.”² This paradox has left historians with a range of questions regarding the cultural salience of “future war” imaginings and what they can tell us about contemporary European culture, and responses to the [outbreak of war](#). This entry explores how and why war was “imagined,” and what conclusions historians can draw from studying these imaginaries.

Historians and Imagined War

The salience of war in contemporary European culture has provided a rich corpus of evidence, which historians have used to explore anticipations of war and the impact those expectations had upon the decision-makers of 1914.³ The growing significance of social attitudes and sentiments to political decision-making has been at the heart of this scholarship. As Wolfgang Mommsen argued, a “fundamental presupposition” with which all explanations of the outbreak of the war must grapple was the “structural-functional” problem that “traditional ruling elites harboured increasing doubts as to their ability to govern effectively under the conditions of mass politics.”⁴

Imaginaries and Changing Political Culture

Imaginings of future war have acted as a prism through which the influence of “popular sentiment” and elite decision-making can be understood. The refractions thus generated developed through several phases. Spurred by the fact that contemporaries often remarked upon the “public mood” and its relation to the war, post-war accounts and memoirs re-enforced the idea that a stirring of social sentiment propelled politicians on all sides over the brink to war in 1914. In this reading, war was either understood in naïve terms that allowed publics to consider them with patriotic enthusiasm, or a combination of [nationalism](#), [imperialism](#), and [militarism](#) interacted to produce a bellicose “spirit” of 1914. Via either route, the notion that war was a central feature of international life and perhaps even an inevitable one, and that this belief offered an important part of any explanation for the willingness of societies to go to war, became one of the “unspoken assumptions” that defined

contemporary Europe.⁵ Accounts of the outbreak of war focused upon domestic politics have added credence to this impression, and the oft-cited public displays of enthusiasm for the war that were common in many capitols during the [July Crisis](#) appeared to offer clear proof of the essential soundness of this thesis.⁶

Re-Interpreting the Salience of “Future War”

Yet even exponents of this argument conceded that the evidence points in a complex variety of directions, and that it remained “extraordinarily difficult” to assess any impact that war enthusiasm may have had on decision-makers.⁷ A fresh wave of scholarship has departed from generalized accounts of “public mood,” often challenging dominant narratives on the basis of fresh research on particular localities or social groups largely excluded from the “war enthusiasm” paradigm – particularly [women](#), workers, and non-urban populations. In their place, more focused accounts of how specific bodies of decision-makers understood “the public,” gauged its attitudes, and perceived its relevance to their own interests and choices have become more prevalent.⁸

Nonetheless, the significance of how populations and decision-making elites anticipated the character of a future conflict remains of enduring significance and interest.⁹ As Becker, whose own research on France played an important role in challenging ideas of “war enthusiasm” has argued:

the future belligerents’ plans all envisaged a rapid conflict whose outcome would be decided by one or two decisive battles...It is therefore important to realise that when the threat of war loomed in 1914, the populations of Europe thus did not react in response to what was going to happen – rather, they responded to what they imagined.¹⁰

Chronologies & Geographies

For all of the interest and energy attached to cultural expression of war imaginaries, it is important to stress that in many contexts war did not need to be imagined in the years before 1914. Numerous soldiers in European armies had extensive experience of so-called “small wars” in imperial contexts, or as [observers](#) of recent conflicts. The United States military, too, had significant experience of colonial campaigning in the [Philippines](#), and the border with Mexico was a focus of ongoing tensions. [Japan and Russia](#) had both fought a [major war](#) less than a decade earlier, the experience of which informed projects of [military](#)

[modernization](#) in both states and in many of the other Great Powers who sent observers to report on the character of hostilities. Above all, the [Ottoman Empire](#) and [Balkan](#) states had extensive direct experience of the demands and violent nature of recent conflict, and few reasons to doubt the all-consuming potential of wars fuelled by emergent nationalisms.

Public Awareness of Contemporary War

These conflicts were reported upon in a level of detail never previously known, including extensive [photography](#) and [film](#). Aspects of these productions undoubtedly glamorized war, however reporting also offered the public access to the realities of war in new ways. Photography of British casualties at Spion Kop and Ladysmith during the Boer War reached large audiences. Reporting on the British Army's treatment of Boer civilians and of mass death in concentration camps fuelled the anti-war movement.¹¹ The [atrocities](#) committed during the Balkan Wars reached audiences across Europe, prompting outcry and a report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.¹² Public interest in the [Hague peace conferences](#) of 1899 and 1907 was intense as newspaper sales demonstrated, suggesting at minimum significant and widespread interest in conflict and measures intended to control and limit the [conduct](#) of future wars.¹³ As Holger Afflerbach has observed, there appears just as much evidence pointing towards the idea that the frequent war scares of the pre-1914 era produced a general expectation that war could be avoided by negotiation and restraint than that conflict was inexorable.¹⁴ The extent to which these examples meaningfully informed common understandings of conflict across Europe is difficult to judge, however it can hardly be said that publics had limited access to information about contemporary wars.

Which War to Imagine?

When the July Crisis began in 1914, war imaginaries remained diffuse and focused upon a variety of differing potential conflicts depending on context. For many in Britain, the most immediate prospect of war remained a civil conflict in [Ireland](#), upon which the cabinet's attention remained concentrated throughout most of July. The situation in Ireland produced intense popular mobilization on both sides. The Ulster Volunteer Force numbered some 100,000 men in 1913 and was of sufficient military value that it was reported upon by foreign military attachés.¹⁵ The [British press](#), including publications based away from the metropole, were far more focused upon events in Ireland during July. The Welsh press devoted significantly more attention to Ireland than to Europe.¹⁶ In Russia, industrial unrest had reached such proportions that some observers anticipated a [revolution](#). Between January and July 1914 some 1.3 million workers had participated in 3,400 [strikes](#), and draft orders were

met with violence and rioting in multiple provinces.¹⁷

Even observers in those European states directly affected by the July Crisis imagined a range of potential ways in which conflict might manifest. The [assassination](#) of [Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand \(1863-1914\)](#) prompted anti-Serb riots in Zagreb, Sarajevo, and other cities within the [Austro-Hungarian Empire](#).¹⁸ The extensive Serb populations in Bosnia and southern Hungary prompted suspicions of an insurrection against the Dual Monarchy, concerns that waxed particularly large in the reports of [General Oskar Potiorek \(1853-1933\)](#), the Governor General of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Combined with a sense of concern about potential Russian-sponsored agitation in Galicia, this exacerbated anxieties over domestic security as a factor in Habsburg decision-making.¹⁹ Sections of society favoured a punitive limited war of retaliation against Serbia, however such feelings were far from uniform, often concentrated in urban centers and dissipating after the authorities restored order. For the Serbian part, the nationalist [press](#) indulged in outbursts of enthusiasm at the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. Such agitation was fuelled by pan-Serb elements of the [administration](#) and some military officers. However, Prime Minister [Nikola Pašić \(1845-1926\)](#) struck a more cautious tone, influenced in part by the apparent unwillingness of Russia and [France](#) to offer support.²⁰ Neither the Serbian government nor the General Staff were prepared for war with the Dual Monarchy, with attention focused on [Albanian](#) incursions into Kosovo and [Bulgarian](#) rebels in Macedonia.²¹ Both parties could thus imagine war in local terms. This sentiment defined German policy for much of the July Crisis, and even proved acceptable to the British foreign secretary for a brief period in mid-July. Had Austria-Hungary acted with greater alacrity on this basis, alternative outcomes remained possible.²²

Even the outbreak of war did little to clarify impressions of its likely course and character; the British “rush to the colours” was delayed by almost a month after the official declaration of war as few perceived the conflict in terms of an immediate and mortal danger to the British Isles.²³ Measured in terms of voluntary enlistment, German “war enthusiasm” also “followed the war’s outbreak rather than preceded it.”²⁴

Those with claims to professional expertise about war were no less encumbered in their own imaginings as to the conflict’s character and potential course. Indeed, in many respects patterns of professional military thought made adaptations to the conflict particularly challenging, especially when it failed to conform to dominant paradigms of pre-war expectation. Years into the conflict military elites continued to imagine the war in terms that differed from empirical reality in ways that were perhaps not as fantastic as pre-war invasion literature, but which reflected the existential challenge of understanding that the war presented. Imagining did not stop in 1914, or in 1918, but rather drew out on a continuum with wide variations.

Public Attitudes and the “Spirit of 1914”

The historiography on the “spirit of 1914” has largely moved away from descriptions of how monolithic social groupings responded to the threat of impending war. This shift towards an emphasis on the diverse reactions the war engendered has permitted a more comparative approach, whereby the notion of a common experience of war enthusiasm has been replaced by a consensus view that the entire notion of “war enthusiasm” has been substantially overstated. Indeed, a succession of leading scholars have now suggested that the entire terms of the debate require revision, on the basis that they are too firmly grounded in ideas of contemporary crowd psychology, and in the mythology that grew up amongst [German commentators](#) during the war itself.²⁵ In their view, historians would be better served pursuing other ways of framing experiences of the outbreak of war, and in articulating the place of “public opinion” within particular contexts and political systems.

Re-Interpreting “War Enthusiasm”

In some respects, shifts in these directions are already underway. An emphasis upon “experiences” of the July Crisis, informed by careful attention to individual accounts and the history of [emotions](#), has been at play in accounts challenging the “war enthusiasm” narrative for some time. While arguments to the effect that “in most cities the crowds of panicking people were as large as the enthusiastic crowds” are necessarily indeterminate, existing accounts have done a great deal to highlight new directions in understanding the war’s outbreak. Both Jeffrey Verhey and Joshua Sanborn have seized upon the significance of “silent public opinion” or the “stunned silence...as families quietly grieved.”²⁶ William Rosenberg’s recent study of revolution-era Russia has similarly offered the framings of anxiety, loss, and scarcity and a focus upon “emotional mindsets” as a means of overcoming a focus on “collective feelings: those that are thought reductively to be experienced as if the collective were an organic emotional whole.” His account of the opening of the war in Russia highlights new ways of aligning the complexities of responses and the emotions they reflected, particularly the distinction between “image and actuality.” As he observed:

what was historically most important about the massive wave of patriotism apparently so clear to observers at the beginning of the war...was not simply the feelings it seemed to reflect but the assumptions and beliefs it encouraged in high places about popular support for the Tsarist regime and the “holy war” it had just declared.²⁷

This disjuncture between image and reality highlights a further theme through which the events of July and August can be interpreted: that of the role of narrative, fiction, and rumor as a means of sense-making, and of coming to terms with the enormity of the events unfolding. The large crowds gathered in many cities and towns across Europe were often there for practical purposes of seeking news about the latest diplomatic or military developments. In this heightened atmosphere, imaginaries ran wild, fuelled by the impulse to sell newspapers which drove a spate of speculative reporting.²⁸ The spread of rumor and speculation further complicated the picture, as wild ideas swirled and were circulated.²⁹ These processes of mediating information and navigating the heightened emotional state the crisis engendered offer, as Catriona Pennell has shown, a useful subject in their own right.³⁰

Resisting War

Attention to organized measures of opposition to a potential war offers balance to the basic “war enthusiasm” mythology. It also highlights the limits of the “spirit of 1914” frame insofar as public displays did or did not influence policy-makers, and the reasons why those with doubts about the war were incorporated into the patriotic consensus that developed after hostilities commenced. The most ambitious form of anti-war organization was the [socialist international](#), which since the 1890s had discussed the idea of an organized strike with a view to precluding a great power conflict. These debates were animated by a common view that future war would be a disaster for the working classes, even if socialists from different countries struggled to reach consensus on the practicality of a general strike as a means to resist conflict. As the July Crisis wore on, mass meetings to protest against the war reflected the prevalence of these pacifist convictions. In the last days of July some 750,000 members and supporters of the [German Social Democratic Party](#) gathered in anti-war protests.³¹ British socialists held a similar rally in Trafalgar Square on 2 August.³² These rallies and the efforts to organise against the war have rightly been seen as evidence against the myth of widespread and uniform war enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the solidarity between organised labor and the international socialist movement remained limited. Many trade union leaders and socialist politicians were quick to rally behind the needs of national defence and to support [recruiting](#) campaigns. Much as war was anticipated with horror, it proved a leap of imagination too far to conceive of it within a framework of class struggle and international solidarity. In part this stemmed from the weight of social expectation. While historians have moved away from generalized explanations of public mood favoring war, more subtle accounts have offered the insight that many observers themselves remarked upon the outbreak of a strong sense of social pressure to conform to established patterns of behavior and outlook that were defined in terms of patriotism and duty. The pervasive effect of this pressure, which was

entirely compatible with feelings of dread and concern for what was to come, was remarked upon by observers who were surprised at the willingness of men to conform.³³ Such pressure only grew during the summer and autumn of 1914, and the notion of the war “being over by Christmas” emerged in this context precisely as a critique of those who had yet to enlist.³⁴ Just as perceptions of honor and prestige operated to shape decision-makers’ attitudes during the July Crisis, they also served to guide the majority to submit to the requirements of mobilization and military service – regardless of doubts, fears, and concerns about what was to come.³⁵ These dynamics continued long after the realities of the conflict had been laid bare. Italian authorities conducted an investigation of public attitudes about the conflict in February 1915. Their work revealed an “overwhelming lack of enthusiasm for the prospect of war.” Yet such sentiments were increasingly absent from popular discourse, where opposition to the conflict was rewritten as unpatriotic or cowardly.³⁶ There were, of course, those whose enthusiasm for the war appeared real enough, particularly among the urban middle classes. This enthusiasm was often imbued with notions of patriotism, masculinity, and chivalry. Some newly enlisted soldiers feared that the conflict would be over before they completed training and could be deployed to see action. Reconciling this sentiment with the experience of the conflict was a profound challenge, one which in part gave rise to anticipations of a short war as a form of coping strategy.³⁷ Authorities widely perceived public attitudes to be relevant to the conduct of a future war, less in terms of an influence that had to be responded to, but as a factor that required control and solidification behind the war effort. All sides worked to depict their war efforts as defensive and as a necessary response to foreign aggression. Policies, laws, and measures were therefore promulgated to control the availability of information and to limit certain freedoms in order to preclude uncontrolled outbursts of public agitation from impinging upon the conduct of the war. Wartime imaginaries became an object of control, even if such control often encouraged the spread of rumor and speculation due to the absence of other information.

Military and Political Imaginaries

Whereas the myth of “war enthusiasm” has received sustained interrogation, the notion that many military leaders persisted in anticipating a short war, or a localized conflict, remains a common one.³⁸ With notable exceptions, commonly [Earl Kitchener \(1850-1916\)](#) in Britain and [Erich Georg Anton von Falkenhayn \(1861-1922\)](#) in Germany, soldiers and politicians are seen as clinging to a sense that war could be short and decisive. This impression has been based upon evidence from senior military figures who propounded the importance of rapid offensive operations and retained a faith in the decisive quality of battles to decide a future war.

A Short War Assumption?

The idea of a commonly held “short war” assumption amongst military elites has a long lineage. [Bernadotte Everly Schmitt \(1886-1969\)](#) observed in 1958 that “the expectation was widespread that the struggle would be brief...Lord Kitchener, the famous British soldier...was not taken too seriously when he said that the war would last at least three years.”³⁹ However the “short war illusion” became established as a consensus view during the 1970s and 1980s, alongside the idea that a “cult of the offensive” defined contemporary military thought.⁴⁰ In both cases, the presumptions of military doctrine were seen as key ingredients underpinning expectations about future conflict, and thus decisions for war. These arguments stressed that the presumptions of military doctrine and threat assessment, rather than the pressure of public opinion or domestic politics, offered more convincing explanations for the outbreak of war. [Lancelot Farrar \(1932-2010\)](#), whose research on the German case led him to popularize the idea of a general “short war” illusion, made this association explicit. In a review of literature emphasizing domestic drivers for war, he concluded in favor of the “traditional view that foreign considerations prevailed over domestic policy during the July crisis.”⁴¹ The “short war illusion” thus competed with “war enthusiasm” as an explanation for the outbreak of war. Yet just as historians have dismantled many of the assumptions of the latter, the idea of a common presumption that a future war would be short is open to serious question.

Few soldiers or sailors would have disagreed with the premise that seizing the initiative was crucial in war, and that passivity was unlikely to result in positive results. Yet even the most noted proponents of offensive action did not necessarily believe that seizing the initiative would result in a short war. This tension was spelled out in the pre-war writings of [Ferdinand Foch \(1851-1929\)](#). Foch was heavily critical of the idea that prolonged schemes of maneuver and the seizure of territory were legitimate approaches to war. He decried them as “false methods” of an earlier epoch, extolling the centrality of battle and of offensive action.⁴² Yet at the same time he was clear-sighted that [Napoleon \(1769-1821\)](#) had ushered in a new era:

that of national wars which were to absorb into the struggle all the resources of the nation which were to be aimed not at dynastic interests, not at the conquest or possession of a province, but at the defense or spread of philosophic ideas.⁴³

Modern war, he argued, “embodies the only argument of blows, of battle, and the unlimited use to that end of human material.”⁴⁴

Foch’s opportunity to test his theories on a grand scale was not to arrive in 1914. The man

who was to command the [French army](#), [Joseph Joffre \(1852-1931\)](#), has frequently been criticised for his ill-fated offensive actions into [Alsace-Lorraine](#) and [Belgium](#) in August 1914. However, Joffre's planning did not amount to a simplistic offensive à outrance. The much-criticised Plan XVII in fact permitted multiple potential contingencies, and offered Joffre considerable flexibility. Joffre shared Foch's attachment to offensive action. However, this did not imply a belief that the war could be won quickly or as the result of initial engagements. Offensive action was necessary to pin down [German forces](#) and to allow a [Russian offensive](#) in the east. Moreover, Joffre refused to propound his strategic intentions, partially to defend the extensive powers of responsibility he had accrued for the conduct of the war. Whatever the wider doctrinal beliefs of the French officer corps, it was ultimately Joffre's views that mattered. The choices he made in 1914 were criticised by some contemporaries at the time and by many historians since. Yet they were fundamentally based upon the logic of France's [alliance](#) commitments and by the necessity of tying down German troops in the west in order to expose east Prussia to a Russian offensive.⁴⁵ Joffre's offensives were not intended to be decisive, but were rather a series of limited offensive movements, the cumulative effect of which would be to convince German leaders of the need for a negotiated peace rather than a single battle.⁴⁶ The emphasis was upon resisting an initial attack and setting the conditions for a subsequent struggle.

This reflected a wider awareness among military elites in all of the major belligerent countries that a protracted conflict was feasible, perhaps even likely. As we shall see, historians increasingly consider that this specter haunted [German military thinking](#). For the Entente powers, the specter of a long war underpinned a variety of hopes for the apparently decisive impact other allies might have upon the conflict. British observers were impressed by the progress of Russian military modernization and anticipated the Russian "steam-roller" acting as a powerful agent in any potential conflict. With such a force on Germany's eastern frontier, the war in the west could prioritize fixing German forces while the Russians dealt the decisive blow.⁴⁷ Pre-war coordination between France and Russia was predicated upon the need for each army to adopt the offensive in order to tie down opposing troops and thereby to preclude an overwhelming concentration of force against them, thereby enabling victories that might otherwise have proven elusive. As [General Alekseev \(1857-1918\)](#) apprehended: "for Germany it was both dangerous and disadvantageous to be drawn into a protracted struggle on the eastern front."⁴⁸ Both Russia and France attached exaggerated importance to the action of British economic and [maritime](#) pressure, with some anticipating that British belligerence would finish the war within four months by cutting Germany off from overseas trade.⁴⁹

Yet this picture was complicated by the multidimensional nature of the strategic calculations at play, and the ambiguities this created. [Russian military planning](#) came to favor the

offensive in part due to the indefensibility of its position in [Poland](#), which was vulnerable to attack on multiple axes. Earlier Russian war planning had anticipated a strategic withdrawal to trade space for time and to complete mobilization behind fortresses to the east, whose modernization had been completed.⁵⁰ This began to shift after 1911-12. However, aspects of the military hierarchy harbored doubts about the feasibility of a push into East Prussia due to the lack of [railway](#) infrastructure to secure extended supply lines. Yet the imperative to secure Russian interests in the Balkans and intelligence assessments of Austro-Hungarian intentions resulted in a complex deployment intended to facilitate operations against both Germany and the Dual Monarchy.⁵¹ Russia thus sought to play its role in precluding a rapid German victory over France, while simultaneously seeking a swift success of its own against Austria-Hungary.⁵² The emphasis placed upon speed of military action was undoubtedly premised upon the conviction that time was of the essence and that mobilization had to be sped up. Yet these pre-war debates were characterized by a degree of fatalism, and a persistent tendency to view both Russia and Germany as possessing the capacity for a long war – even if military planning should aim to seek a swift decision.

Of all the Entente powers, British strategy can be understood as being most directly oriented towards avoiding a short war. The [British Expeditionary Force](#) was a minor contingent in the military balance. Before 1914, the [General Staff](#) had been concerned to speed the rate at which forces from [India](#) and the [Dominions](#) could be concentrated into the European theatre. However, their arrival was still anticipated to take months and they lacked the [artillery](#) considered necessary for a major conflict.⁵³ In the meantime, the logic guiding the deployment of the British Expeditionary Force was to forestall a repeat of France's defeat in 1870. Credit for embarking upon the process of raising a mass army is often attributed to Kitchener's foresight. However, one of the most remarkable features of this choice was the lack of political debate and opposition that accompanied it. British statesmen may not have thought with much clarity about the strategy (or strategies) they pursued, however it was predicated upon a basic assumption that the military struggle would be prolonged for long enough that new armies could be raised, trained, and equipped in time to make a difference – tasks that would not be accomplished before well into 1915 if not beyond.

The maritime dimensions of the conflict were viewed in similar terms. Despite recent arguments to the contrary, few expected the action of [seapower](#) to be rapid or decisive.⁵⁴ The British state's most extensive [economic](#) measures were not intended to deliver a knock-out blow against Germany, but rather to safeguard the foundations of a long war strategy. Stabilizing the stock market, extending war risks insurance to shipping, and purchasing foodstuffs like sugar to preclude shortages were all intended to sustain trade, stabilize prices, and protect employment in export industries. The Admiralty's most dramatic intervention into the global economy was not to paralyze German trade (although this was important), but

rather to requisition millions of tons of commercial shipping to serve military and naval purposes, and to begin using that tonnage to serve the supply needs of the Entente. This was a project of mobilization intended to support a conflict lasting years, not months.

Writing to his cabinet colleagues, [Winston Churchill \(1874-1965\)](#) submitted a new program of wartime naval construction in mid-August. He intended to persist with long-term projects for major ships already underway and to order fresh destroyers and submarines, noting that “the whole position must be reviewed after the first six months of war.”⁵⁵ The Admiralty framed its arguments in terms that anticipated a war of some duration:

losses...must be anticipated, and as the war progresses and the larger ships of the respective fleets receive damage it is expected that the part played by torpedo craft will become increasingly important. There can be little doubt that, recognizing these facts, Germany will make efforts to provide additional torpedo craft.⁵⁶

Orders were placed for ships that could not even be laid down until September-December, entering service by mid-1915 at the earliest. The Admiralty assumed control of Britain’s large private warship yards to help expedite construction and repair, placing orders for more munitions and warships as the autumn progressed. All of these measures pointed to a foundational assumption that underpinned all of the various ways in which British military and political elites viewed the war: that it would be prolonged, and that this was likely to be in Britain’s interests.

German military elites had grappled with these problems for over three decades by 1914. They were clear in their assessment that a long war was entirely possible, indeed perhaps likely. This realization was the entire basis of their efforts to pursue a strategy defined by rapid, decisive campaigns that could be concluded before the Entente’s superior economic and demographic weight could manifest itself into battlefield strength.⁵⁷ In this respect, military imaginaries were shaped by a pervasive desire to avoid grappling with the social and political consequences of the alternative; accepting that the force of arms may no longer offer Germany a route out of the diplomatic predicament it had entered into through its hostile maneuvering since the first [Moroccan Crisis](#). Yet even the execution of operational envelopment contained within the [Schlieffen Plan](#) reflected this ambiguity between short and long war. As Annika Mombauer has argued, [Moltke the Younger \(1848-1916\)](#) refrained from infringing [Dutch neutrality](#) in order to preserve a “wind pipe” through which Germany could continue to draw supplies from overseas in the event of a sustained conflict.⁵⁸

It therefore seems hard to sustain the idea that a consensus over the likelihood of a short war

existed amongst military or political leaders on any side.⁵⁹ Rather, the evidence points to pessimistic appreciations that a major war would be costly and of indeterminate duration. Military planners aspired to overcome these anticipations through a focus upon vigorous offensive action, improved organisation, and complex mobilisation arrangements. These measures were intended precisely to militate against a prolonged war, even if their authors were concerned that failure would result in such a conflict. The burden for historians, then, is not to explain how political and military elites could be so misguided in their expectations of the war to come, but rather how they could each take decisions for war despite their awareness of what such a conflict might mean.

The epicenter of this debate remains focused upon Germany, where the greatest degree of scrutiny has been applied to the willingness of military elites to contemplate war in spite of their privately held reservations about its potential consequences. As Stig Förster has argued, German military elites were prepared to risk war in part due to the imperative to maintain “their elevated position in German society,” which depended upon their claim to be able to deliver military victories.⁶⁰ Holger Herwig has reached similar conclusions, noting that they imply a “much darker side to Berlin’s decision for war.”⁶¹ Yet concerns regarding the position of the military within society, or of a regime’s legitimacy linked to the use of force, were far from unique to Germany. A desire to avoid the impression of weakness through inaction underpinned both Austro-Hungarian and Russian decision-making in 1914. Key figures within the Russian military still contemplated the possibility of war with fatalism, but saw little option but to pursue what might become a costly and indeterminate conflict. Moreover, for the powers that chose to enter the conflict after its destructive character had been laid bare – the Ottoman Empire, Italy, [Romania](#), and Bulgaria – assessments were made that necessity and opportunity outweighed the potential difficulties. Decisions for war and peace were dark by their very nature.

Military Authority and Civil-Military Relations

An important part of any general explanation must be to account for the division of [civil and military authority](#), and the limitations of any individual or institution’s capacity to imagine the war in terms free from the habits of mind defined by professional training or necessity.

Civilian politicians made the decisions for war in Germany, Britain, and France. Degrees of military authority differed in each context, however any “illusions” which General Staffs may have harbored were not decisive in decision-making. The pessimism, despair, and regret that beset many leading politicians suggests that few of them viewed war with equanimity, or in expectation of swift victories.

When it came to the military professionals, the cognitive processes encouraged by military life focused upon practically attainable forms of organization and action. As Eugenia Kiesling

has observed, these processes “often lead to the [k]ind [sic] of results...[we] might confuse with the products of sheer incompetence.”⁶² While the actions of military commanders remain open to critique, they are explicable in their own terms as the product of coping strategies and professional necessity within the context of civil-military authority. The aspiration to shorten war did not end in 1914, nor did the military logics underpinning it. British and French commanders’ continued insistence on the possibility of a breakthrough during 1914-17, and the willingness of German elites to place their faith in [unrestricted submarine warfare](#) or the [Spring Offensives of 1918](#) betrayed similar cognitive patterns.⁶³ Politicians were either prepared to adopt this logic on the basis of the authority claimed by military professionals, or unable to challenge it for the same reason. In some respects, we can thus understand the formation of wartime strategy in terms of an ongoing process of reconciling imaginaries with experience. Britain and France were able to develop structures to collect, interpret, and share empirical assessments of the war and to promote civil-military debate over the formation of strategy. As the war wore on, they were able to make strategy linked to a clarified view of the war’s character. The Central Powers proved unable to travel this path.⁶⁴ Particularly in Germany, military elites continued to imagine new ways in which force could allow them to escape from the conflict on acceptable terms. They were hemmed into this approach by the desire of German politicians and the public to imagine a route to victory predicated upon submarine warfare. This failure to reconcile imagination with reality had fateful consequences.

Conclusion

Imaginations of future war have occupied a prominent and multifaceted place in the historiography of the conflict. Debates over “war enthusiasm” and the “short-war illusion” have been methodologically innovative and conceptually informed. Yet in both cases the framings imposed by the terms of the debate have become more of a hindrance than an aid. “Imagined war” may offer a productive new outlet for future scholarship, as it offers means of integrating the socio-cultural and politico-military histories of the conflict in new ways.

David Morgan-Owen, University of St Andrews

Notes

1. Wodehouse, Pelham: *The Swoop! Or How Clarence Saved England: A Tale of the Great Invasion 1909*, ch. 3, Project Gutenberg, online: 1909, ch. 3, Project Gutenberg, online: <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7050/pg7050-images.html#link2HCH0003> (retrieved: 21 July 2025). ↑

2. Bloch, Ivan: *Is War Now Impossible? Being an Abridgement of 'The war of the future in its technical, economic and political relations'*. London 1899, p. xi. [↑](#)
3. See, for instance, Clarke, I.F.W.: *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763-3749*, Oxford 1992; Winter, Jay: *Nationalism, the visual arts, and the myth of war enthusiasm in 1914*, in: *History of European Ideas* 15/1-3 (1992), pp. 357-62. [↑](#)
4. Mommsen, Wolfgang: *The Topos of Inevitable War in Germany in the Decade before 1914*. In: Berghan, Volker / Kitchen, Martin (eds.): *Germany in the Age of Total War*. London 1981, p. 23. [↑](#)
5. For summaries in differing national contexts see Gregory, Adrian: *British 'War Enthusiasm' in 1914: A Reassessment*, in: Braydon, Gail (ed.): *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-1918*, New York 2003, especially pp. 67-71; Verhey, Jeffrey: *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 134-35, 206-38. [↑](#)
6. Summarised in Williamson Jr., Samuel R. / May, Ernest R.: *An Identity of Opinion: Historians and July 1914*, in: *Journal of Modern History* 79 (2007), pp. 336-42 and Steinberg, Jonathan: *Old Knowledge and New Research: A Summary of the Conference on the Fischer Controversy 50 years on*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 48/2 (2013), pp. 248-50. [↑](#)
7. Mommsen, *The Topos of Inevitable War* 1981, pp. 23-24. [↑](#)
8. See Melby, Christian: *Empire and Nation in British Future-War and Invasion-Scare Fiction, 1871-1914*, in: *The Historical Journal* 63/2 (2020), pp. 389-410. [↑](#)
9. Ringmar, Erik: *'The spirit of 1914': A redefinition and a defence*, in: *War in History* 25/1 (2018), pp. 26-47. [↑](#)
10. Becker, Jean-Jacques: *Willingly to war: Public response to the outbreak of war*, in: Daniel, Ute et al. (eds.): *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2025-06-11: Freie Universität Berlin. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10656 (retrieved: 21 July 2025). [↑](#)
11. Morgan, Kenneth O.: *The Boer War and the Media*. In: *Twentieth Century British History* 13/1 (2002), pp. 9-10, 11-12. [↑](#)
12. Kramer, Alan: *Dynamics of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*, Oxford 2007, pp. 136-39. [↑](#)
13. Abbenhuis, Maartje: *The Hague Conferences and International Politics, 1898-1915*, London 2020, pp. 3-8, 78-82, 90-96. [↑](#)
14. Afflerbach, Holger: *The Topos of Improbable War in Europe before 1914*. In: Afflerbach, Holger / Stevenson, David (eds.): *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914*, New York 2012, pp. 161-82. [↑](#)
15. aan de Wiel, Jérôme: *1914: What will the British do? The Irish Home Rule Crisis in the July Crisis*, in: *The International History Review* 37/4 (2015), p. 662. [↑](#)

16. Powel, Meilyr: The Welsh Press and the July Crisis of 1914. In: *First World War Studies* 8/2-3 (2017), pp. 133-52. [↑](#)
17. Sanborn, Josh: The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation: A Re-examination, in: *Slavic Review* 59/2 (2000), pp. 276-77; Rosenberg, William G.: *States of Anxiety: Scarcity and Loss in Revolutionary Russia*, Oxford 2023, p. 33. [↑](#)
18. Lyon, James: *Serbia and the Balkan Front, 1914: The Outbreak of the Great War*, London 2015, pp. 20-22. [↑](#)
19. Williamson Jr., Samuel: Aggressive and Defensive Aims of Political Elites? Austro-Hungarian Policy in 1914, in: Afflerbach / Stevenson (eds.), *An Improbable War?* 2012, pp. 69, 72. [↑](#)
20. Becker, Jean-Jacques / Krumeich, Gerd: 1914: Outbreak, in: Winter, Jay (ed.): *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Volume I: Global War*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 43-44. [↑](#)
21. Bataković, Dušan T.: Serbian War Aims and Military Strategy, 1914-1918. In: Afflerbach, Holger (ed.): *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies*, Berlin 2015, p. 79. [↑](#)
22. Becker / Krumeich, 1914: Outbreak 2014, pp. 49-51. [↑](#)
23. Gregory, British 'War Enthusiasm in 1914: A Reassessment 2003, pp. 79-80. [↑](#)
24. Strachan, Hew: *The First World War, Volume I: To Arms*, Oxford 2001, p. 153. [↑](#)
25. Williamson Jr. / May, *An Identity of Opinion: Historians and July 1914* 2007, pp. 336-42; Chickering, Roger: 'War Enthusiasm?' Public Opinion and the Outbreak of War in 1914, in: Afflerbach / Stevenson (eds.), *An Improbable War?* 2012, p. 203. [↑](#)
26. Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914* 2000, pp. 47-48, 50; Sanborn, *The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation* 2000, p. 272. [↑](#)
27. Rosenberg, *States of Anxiety* 2023, pp. 21, 36, 38. [↑](#)
28. Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914* 2000, p. 75. [↑](#)
29. Cornwall, Mark: News, Rumour and the Control of Information in Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918. In: *History* 77/249 (1992), pp. 50-64. [↑](#)
30. Pennell, Catriona: Believing the Unbelievable: The Myth of the Russians with 'Snow on their Boots' in the United Kingdom, 1914, in: *Cultural and Social History* 11/1 (2014), pp. 69-87. [↑](#)
31. Ziemann, Benjamin: Germany 1914-1918. Total War as a Catalyst of Change, in: Smith, Helmut Walser (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, Oxford 2011, pp. 381-82. [↑](#)
32. Morris, Marcus: The general strike as a weapon of peace: British socialists, the labour movement and debating the means to avoid war before 1914, in: *Labour History Review* 83/1 (2018), pp. 29-53. [↑](#)
33. Senft, Gerhard: Resistance against the War of 1914-1918. In: Bischof, Günter /

- Karlhofer, Ferdinand (eds.): 1914: Austria-Hungary, the Origins, and the First Year of World War I, New Orleans 2014, pp. 190-91. [↑](#)
34. Halifax, Stuart: 'Over by Christmas': British popular opinion and the short war in 1914, in: *First World War Studies* 1/2 (2010), pp. 105-6. [↑](#)
 35. Offer, Avner: Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor? In: *Politics & Society* 23/2 (1995), pp. 213-41. [↑](#)
 36. Wilcox, Vanda: *The Italian Empire and the Great War*, Oxford 2021, p. 48. [↑](#)
 37. Halifax, Over by Christmas 2010, pp. 106-7. [↑](#)
 38. Becker, Willingly to War 2015; Herwig, Holger H.: Conclusions. In: Hamilton, Richard F. / Herwig, Holger H. (eds.): *War Planning, 1914*, Cambridge 2009, pp. 229-30. [↑](#)
 39. Schmitt, Bernadotte E.: The First World War, 1914-1918. In: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103/3 (1959), p. 324. [↑](#)
 40. The key works being Farrar Jr., Lancelot: *The Short-War Illusion: The Syndrome of German Strategy, August-December, 1914*, in: *Militaergeschichtliche Zeitschrift* 12/2 (1972), pp. 39-52; Van Evera, Stephen: *The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War*. In: *International Security* 9/1 (1984), pp. 55-107; Snyder, Jack: *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*, Ithaca 1984. [↑](#)
 41. Farrar Jr., Lancelot: *The Primary of Foreign Policy: An Evaluation of the Role of Public Opinion during the July Crisis 1914*, in: *International Interactions* 7/4 (1981), p. 420. [↑](#)
 42. Foch, Ferdinand: *The Principles of War*, J. de Morinni (trans.), New York 1918, p. 30. [↑](#)
 43. Ibid., p. 31. [↑](#)
 44. Ibid., p. 40. [↑](#)
 45. Doughty, Robert A.: French Strategy in 1914: Joffre's Own, in: *Journal of Military History* 67/2 (2003), pp. 427-54. [↑](#)
 46. Porch, Douglas: French War Plans, 1914: The 'Balance of Power Paradox,' in: *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29/1 (2006), p. 140. [↑](#)
 47. Neilson, Keith: Watching the 'steamroller': British observers and the Russian army before 1914, in: *Journal of Strategic Studies* 8/2 (1985), pp. 199-217. [↑](#)
 48. Menning, Bruce W.: War Planning and Initial Operations in the Russian Context. In: Hamilton / Herwig (eds.), *War Planning, 1914* 2009, p. 117. [↑](#)
 49. Strachan, Hew: *Heartland vs Rimland, Continental vs Maritime Power: The Geopolitics of the First World War*, issued by Mackinder Forum, online: (retrieved: 31 July 2024); Lieven, Dominic: *Towards the Flame: Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London 2015, p. 154. [↑](#)
 50. Sanborn, Josh: *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War and the Destruction of the Russian Empire*, Oxford 2014, p. 25. [↑](#)
 51. Menning, Bruce W.: *Pieces of the Puzzle: The role of Iu. N. Danilov and M.V. Alekseev in*

- Russian War Planning before 1914, in: *The International History Review* 25/4 (2003), pp. 783-91. ↑
52. Ibid., pp. 795-96. ↑
53. Morton-Jack, George: *The Indian Army on the Western Front, 1914-1915: A Portrait of Collaboration*, in: *War in History* 13/3 (2006), pp. 333-7. ↑
54. For this argument see Lambert, Nicholas A.: *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War*, Cambridge 2012. For a counter see Kramer, Alan: *Naval Blockade (of Germany)*, in: Daniel, Ute et al. (eds.): *1914-1918-Online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 2020. ↑
55. The National Archives (UK), CAB 37/120/97: Minute by Winston Churchill, 15 August 1914. ↑
56. TNA, CAB 37/120/97: Admiralty memo, Emergency War Programme of New Construction in Destroyers and Submarines, 15 August 1914. ↑
57. Förster, Stig: *Dreams and Nightmares: German Military Leadership and the Images of Future Warfare, 1871-1914*, in: Boemeke, Manfred F. / Chickering, Roger / Förster, Stig (eds.): *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871-1914*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 343-76. ↑
58. Mombauer, Annika: *Of war plans and war guilt: The debate surrounding the Schlieffen Plan*, in: *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28/5 (2005), pp. 871-2. ↑
59. Mulligan, William: *Armageddon: Political Elites and their Visions of a General European War before 1914*, in: *War in History* 26/4 (2019), pp. 448-69. ↑
60. Förster, *Dreams and Nightmares* 1999, p. 374. ↑
61. Herwig, Holger H.: *Germany and the 'Short-War' Illusion: Towards a New Interpretation?*, in: *Journal of Military History* 66 (2002), p. 693. ↑
62. Kiesling, Eugenia: *Strategic Thinking: The French Case in 1914 (&1940)*, in: *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 13/1 (2011), p. 104. ↑
63. Offer, Avner: *The German Submarine Campaign, 1915-1918*. In: Gerrard, Bill (ed.): *The Economics of Rationality*, London 1993, pp. 132-45. ↑
64. Strachan, Hew: *Military Operations and National Policies, 1914-1918*. In: Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War* 2015, pp. 7-29. ↑

Selected Bibliography

- Afflerbach, Holger: [The topos of improbable war in Europe before 1914](#), in: Afflerbach, Holger / Stevenson, David (eds.): [An improbable war? : the outbreak of World War I and European political culture before 1914](#), New York 2007: Berghahn Books, pp. 161-181.

- [Becker, Jean-Jacques: **Willingly to war: Public response to the outbreak of war**, in: Daniel, Ute et al. \(eds.\): 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 2025-06-11: Freie Universität Berlin.](#)
- [Chickering, Roger: **War enthusiasm? Public opinion and the outbreak of war in 1914**, in: Afflerbach, Holger / Stevenson, David \(eds.\): An improbable war. The outbreak of World War I and European political culture before 1914, New York 2007 Berghahn Books, pp. 200-212.](#)
- [Cornwall, Mark: **News, rumour and the control of information in Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918**, in: History 77/249, 1992, pp. 50-64.](#)
- [Farrar Jr., Lancelot: **The short-war illusion. The syndrome of German strategy, August-December, 1914**, in: Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift 12/2, 1972, pp. 39-52.](#)
- [Förster, Stig: **Dreams and nightmares. German military leadership and the images of future warfare, 1871-1914**, in: Boemeke, Manfred F. / Chickering, Roger / Förster, Stig \(eds.\): Anticipating total war. The German and American experiences, 1871-1914, Washington, D.C. / Cambridge / New York 1999: German Historical Institute; Cambridge University Press, pp. 343-376.](#)
- [Gregory, Adrian: **British war enthusiasm in 1914: A reassessment**, in: Braydon, Gail \(ed.\): Evidence, history and the Great War: Historians and the impact of 1914-1918, Oxford; New York 2003: Berghahn Books, pp. 67-85.](#)
- [Hallifax, Stuart: **'Over by Christmas': British popular opinion and the short war in 1914**, in: First World War Studies 1/2, 10/2010, pp. 103-121.](#)
- [Hamilton, Richard F. / Herwig, Holger H. \(eds.\): **War planning 1914**, Cambridge; New York, 2010: Cambridge University Press.](#)
- [Herwig, Holger H.: **Germany and the short-war illusion**, in: Journal of Military History 66/3, 2002, pp. 681-683.](#)
- [Mombauer, Annika: **Of war plans and war guilt: The debate surrounding the Schlieffen plan**, in: Journal of Strategic Studies 28/5, 2005, pp. 857-885.](#)
- [Mulligan, William: **Armageddon: Political elites and their visions of a General European War before 1914**, in: War in History 26/4, 2019, pp. 448-469.](#)
- [Offer, Avner: **Going to war in 1914. A matter of honour?**, in: Politics and Society 23/2, 1995, pp. 213-41.](#)

- [Rosenberg, William G.: **States of Anxiety: Scarcity and loss in revolutionary Russia**, Oxford, 2023: Oxford University Press.](#)
- [Sanborn, Joshua A: **The mobilization of 1914 and the question of the Russian nation: A reexamination**, in: Slavic Review 59/2, 2000, pp. 267-342.](#)
- [Strachan, Hew: **The First World War. Volume I: To arms**, vol. 1, Oxford, 2001: Oxford University Press.](#)
- [Verhey, Jeffrey: **The spirit of 1914. Militarism, myth and mobilization in Germany**, Cambridge; New York, 2000: Cambridge University Press.](#)
- [Williamson Jr., Samuel / May, Ernest R.: **An identity of opinion: Historians and July 1914**, in: Journal of Modern History 79, June 2007, pp. 335-387.](#)

Citation

David Morgan-Owen: Imagined War, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer D. Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2025-07-28. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.11642](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.11642)

External Links

- [Bloch, Ivan: The future of war in its technical, economic, and political relations. Is war now impossible?, Toronto 1900 \(Internet Archive\) \(Book\).](#)
- [Jones, Heather / Weinrich, Arndt: The Pre-1914 Period: Imagined Wars, Future Wars. Introduction, in: Francia 40/13 \(2013\) \(Hypotheses\) \(Article\)](#)
- [von Bloch, Johann: Der Krieg. Vol. 1: Beschreibung des Kriegsmechanismus, Berlin 1899 \(Internet Archive\) \(Book\)](#)

Metadata

Regional Section(s)

[Central Europe](#) > [Austria-Hungary](#)

[Central Europe](#) > [Germany](#)

[Eastern Europe](#) > [Russian Empire](#)

[North America](#) > [USA](#)

[Western Europe](#) > [France](#)

[Western Europe](#) > [Great Britain and Ireland](#) > [Great Britain](#)

[Western Europe](#) > [Great Britain and Ireland](#) > [Ireland](#)

Thematic Section(s)

[Pre-war](#)

Subjects

[Culture](#) > [Mobilization, cultural](#) > [Interpretations of war](#)

[Culture](#) > [Mobilization, cultural](#) > [Militarism, culture](#)

[Culture](#) > [Mobilization, cultural](#) > [Nationalism, culture](#)

[Economy](#) > [War economy](#) > [Embargoes](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Domestic policy](#) > [Domestic mobilisation](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Administration, civil service](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Governments](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Ministries and departments](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Parliaments](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Parties, socialist](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [International relations](#) > [July crisis](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [International relations](#) > [Alliances, alliance systems](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [International relations](#) > [Diplomacy](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [International relations](#) > [Entering the war](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [International relations](#) > [Origins of war](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Political ideologies](#) > [Militarism, political](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Political ideologies](#) > [Nationalism, political](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Political ideologies](#) > [Pacifism](#)

[The media](#) > [Press, journalism](#)

[The media](#) > [Propaganda](#) > [Propaganda, domestic](#)

[The media](#) > [Propaganda](#) > [Propaganda, international](#)

[The media](#) > [Public opinion](#)

[Warfare and the military](#) > [Military planning and recruitment](#) > [Mobilisation, military](#)

[Warfare and the military](#) > [Military planning and recruitment](#) > [Tactics, military](#)

[Warfare and the military](#) > [Military planning and recruitment](#) > [Theories, military](#)
[Warfare and the military](#) > [Soldiers, experiences and attitudes](#) > [Emotions](#)

Author Keywords

Future War; Public Opinion; War Enthusiasm

GND Subject Headings

[Erster Weltkrieg](#)

LC Subject Headings

[World War, 1914-1918](#)

Rameau Subject Headings

[Guerre mondiale \(1914-1918\)](#)

Key Person(s)

[Bloch, Jan Gotlib](#); [Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria-Este](#); [Potiorek, Oskar](#); [Pašić, Nikola](#); [Kitchener, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, Earl](#); [Falkenhayn, Erich von](#); [Napoleon I, Emperor of the French](#); [Alekseyev, Mikhail Vasil'evich](#); [Moltke, Helmuth Johannes Ludwig von](#); [Wodehouse, P.G.](#); [Schmitt, Bernadotte Everly](#); [Farrar, Lancelot](#)

Key Location(s)

[Spion Kop](#); [Ladysmith](#); [The Hague \(Den Haag\)](#); [Zagreb \(Agram\)](#); [Sarajevo](#)

Title

Imagined War

Author(s)

[David Morgan-Owen](#)

Article Type

Handbook Article

Classification Group

Survey Article (Thematic)

Articles That Link Here

[Non-European Soldiers](#); [Sweden](#); [Pre-war Military Planning \(Germany\)](#); [Economic Planning before 1914](#); [Wartime Emotions: Honour, Shame, and the Ecstasy of Sacrifice](#); [Literature \(Germany\)](#); [Exile and Migration \(Sweden\)](#) and [Making Sense of the War \(Great Britain and Ireland\)](#)