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Extra-European Theatres of War

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The extra-European theatres of World War I have received far less scholarly attention than the war in Europe. This state of affairs is hardly surprising given the sheer magnitude of the Western Front experience. Still, the violence of 1914-1918 also had profound consequences outside of Europe as well. This essay explores the relationship between extra-European theatres of war and Europe's battlefields, with the primary goal of showing how peoples from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have been rendered largely invisible in popular understandings of the war's course and outcomes. Second, this essay argues for understanding campaigns fought in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East on their own terms, and not simply as "sideshows" to the war in Europe.

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Introduction

Extra-European theatres of World War I have indisputably received far less attention in scholarship on the war than have the European theatres. European experiences on the Western Front tend to dominate scholarly coverage of the war. Given the centrality of the war in the development of Europe's political, social, and cultural history in the first half of the 20th century, it is not hard to understand why this is the case. Still, though we commonly refer to the events of 1914-1918 as "World War I" and the "First World War", we rarely account for the "world" part of these labels. As Hew Strachan has argued, "the title 'the world war' was a statement about its importance, not a statement about its geographical scale."[1] Yet the violence of those years also profoundly affected the many non-European peoples who participated in and experienced the war in Europe, as well as those who experienced it in their homelands, well outside of European theatres.

This article takes up two major themes. First, it explores the relationship of extra-European theatres of war to Europe's battlefields, with a primary goal of showing how peoples from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have been rendered largely invisible in popular understandings of the war's course and outcomes. This invisibility is indicative of a larger methodological problem. That is, representations of the war on the Western Front emphasise its character as a war between nations, and less so as one between empires. These powerful empires could mobilise resources, especially manpower, on an unprecedented scale. Most narratives of the war also tend to depict theatres outside of Europe as ancillary to the war in Europe. In other words,

in the larger narrative, they appear as sites that sapped Allied abilities to channel resources to the Western Front.[2] Yet the Allies benefited in innumerable ways from the deployment of soldiers and workers to western Europe, making their roles anything but ancillary. The first part of this article thus focuses on the experiences and contributions to the war effort on the Western Front of soldiers and labourers drawn from outside of Europe.

Second, this article argues for understanding campaigns fought in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East on their own terms. These campaigns might be thought of as intense phases that reshaped local and regional politics, societies, and cultures, sometimes profoundly. A select few examples of campaigns fought outside of Europe emphasise local and regional histories of the war that have not received their due in either scholarly or popular understandings of the war. By keeping this local focus in tension with general narratives about the war, this article argues that accounts emphasising Europe's situation have impeded the production of more inclusive assessments of what occurred between 1914 and 1918, as well as the war's aftermaths around the world.

Extra-European Theatres of War and the Western Front: The Human Dimension

Campaigns in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East nearly always appear as "sideshows" to the war in Europe in general histories of the war. Cursory coverage of these campaigns are the norm, despite the existence of rich secondary literature, typically authored by regional specialists, within World War I's wider historiography. However, the construction of these theatres as sideshows fails to address the fundamentally imperial character of the war's prosecution. Most notably, Europeans recruited or conscripted millions of non-European soldiers and labourers to bolster their combat and logistical manpower needs within Europe. While it is impossible to capture the wide variety of experiences involved in this massive mobilisation of each empire's human resources here, this essay nonetheless seeks to highlight the remarkable range and diversity of these mobilisations, the costs incurred by those sent to Europe to fight or work, and the impact of these mobilisations on post-war outcomes. Soldiers and workers were deployed to Europe from all over the British and French colonial empires. The first part of this essay focuses only on those drawn from Africa and Asia.

European imperial powers in Africa approached the question of how African soldiers and workers should be involved in the war in Europe in a range of ways. The Germans never intended to deploy Africans in Europe, and the course of the war in Germany's African colonies ensured that they would never have opportunity to do so even if they had wanted to. The British mobilised "indigenous" (i.e. black) African labourers, the South African Native Labour Contingent, to fight in Europe, but not soldiers. They also sent workers from the Egyptian Labour Corps and the Fijian Labour Corps to the Western Front. The South African Overseas Expeditionary Force, composed of some 5,800 white South Africans, fought alongside the British in numerous offensives on the Western Front between 1916 and 1918, including the Somme and Flanders. The Cape Coloured Labour Battalion also supplied a small number of labourers. By contrast, as early as 1910 the French had begun discussing raising an army of African troops from its territories in West and North Africa, as well as Madagascar, to supplement its ranks at home. French conscription methods in North and West Africa caused significant upheaval among the communities most intensely targeted by recruiters, and sometimes provoked resistance. Still, France eventually recruited and deployed hundreds of thousands of African men to fight on the Western Front and in the Middle East.

European military and labour recruitment practices that brought Asian soldiers and workers to the Western Front were complex.[3] As in Africa, British and French efforts to mobilise soldiers and workers from their far-flung imperial holdings to fight in Europe reached far and wide. The British conscripted troops from India, as well as "indigenous" recruits from the British Dominions, including Australia and New Zealand. India, China, and Fiji also supplied workers for the British effort on the Western Front. For their part, the French deployed soldiers and workers from Vietnam and China. Of all the Asian manpower contingents, India supplied by far the most (1.3 million men) troops and labourers to the imperial war effort, including the Western Front, Africa, Mesopotamia, and the Middle East.[4]

Soldiers and workers deployed to the Western Front from these diverse settings shared many common experiences with the millions of soldiers drawn from within Europe itself. The dangers and stresses of combat, the abominable conditions of life in the trenches, the frustration of poor leadership and lack of accurate information, and the longing for loved ones and the comforts of home all shaped the everyday experiences of those drawn from extra-European locales. Soldiers and workers from extra-European recruitment zones also sometimes shared similar motivations for agreeing to go to Europe – a desire for adventure, to prove one's manhood, or the hope of economic or other substantive benefits.

But it is also of critical importance to note the major differences between these experiences. First, vast numbers of those who

left their homes to deploy to Europe had little choice in the matter. In some areas, recruiters conscripted soldiers and workers by force, thus continuing well-established colonial labour practices. In other cases, poor economic conditions at home made deployment to Europe appear a good opportunity to earn money or improve one's social standing. Men who became soldiers or workers under these circumstances cannot be considered true volunteers for the cause.

Second, non-European soldiers and workers endured long and treacherous passages to Europe by ship, the conditions of which were often miserable, disorienting, and fraught with fears of the unknown. For instance, many West Africans associated ship crossings with the historical memory of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, in which "precedents for their kinsmen ever returning were virtually nonexistent".[5] Moreover, hundreds of men lost their lives when ships carrying them to France came under attack by German submarines.[6] Chinese labourers endured particularly long trips to France, with most travelling by ship first to Vancouver, then by rail across Canada to Halifax, and finally across the Atlantic to France.[7]

Third, arrival in France often meant a continuation of the disorientation that began on the ships, in which men were assembled in camps where conditions and treatment varied considerably from one to the next. French officers sometimes mixed soldiers from different units, disrupting discipline and routines. New foods, social isolation from other populations, linguistic differences, and spiritual anxieties also affected their well-being in ways distinct from the kinds of stresses European recruits faced.[8] French civilian reception of soldiers who lived in proximity to French villages and towns varied greatly, with some Indian soldiers reporting "warmth, kindness and hospitality" from their French hosts, while francophone West African colonial soldiers generally experienced a much more restricted social mobility, though this varied widely depending on language abilities, citizenship status (*tirailleurs* or *originaires*), and the spaces in which encounters took place.[9]

Regardless of soldiers' origins, combat experiences on the Western Front were disorienting, dangerous, and traumatic for the vast majority of those sent to fight there. Nonetheless, soldiers who came from outside of Europe almost certainly bore the hardships of trench warfare and the physical and psychological stresses of combat differently from their European counterparts.[10] Senegalese troops' (*tirailleurs sénégalais*) memories of combat, for example, tended to emphasise the unfamiliarity of the environment, as well as the overwhelming presence of forms of military technology and "agents of death" they had never seen before. Cold and wet conditions, the constant presence of dead bodies, and the poor quality of food also featured centrally in soldiers' recollections of the misery of trench life. And as Joe Lunn put it for the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, "[m]iserable though the soldiers' experience usually was in the trenches, it paled in comparison with the horrors they were subjected to during combat".[11] Nevertheless, evidence suggests that African soldiers' combat performance on the Western Front and elsewhere was on the whole no different from that of others. Acts of cowardice and bravery could be found among non-European soldiers in the same ways they were found among Europeans. The soldiers' methods for coping with the horrors they witnessed varied as widely as their social and geographical origins. *Tirailleurs sénégalais*, most of whom were Muslim, refused the commonly distributed alcohol rations intended to numb their senses before battle. Nor were West African soldiers necessarily rallied by French martial music or patriotic platitudes. Instead, they "[drew] on a fund of cultural assumptions and beliefs" from their local African contexts to help manage their fears and anxieties about battle.[12] Such worldviews and spiritual practices often differed significantly from those of their European counterparts. While rank-and-file soldiers on the Western Front almost certainly shared many experiences and memories of being on the Western Front, one should resist the urge to homogenise these battlefield encounters.

Fourth, contemporary racial thought and practice directly affected non-European – or more aptly, "non-white" – soldiers' and workers' experiences on the Western Front during the war.[13] These experiences cannot in any way be characterised as monolithic, since different European powers mobilised race according to contextual specificities and their own historically contingent ways of imagining and reinforcing difference among their colonial subjects.[14] French officers thus constructed soldiers from French Indochina (*tirailleurs indochines*) as lacking in martial abilities. On the other hand, they viewed the *tirailleurs sénégalais* as "martial races" imbued with natural warlike qualities.[15] The British also had complex, if arbitrary, views regarding the suitability of different colonial subjects for combat and labour.[16] Yet certain patterns in the ways that contemporary racial paradigms affected non-white soldiers' and workers' experiences in the war become clear if one compares the experiences of the numerous contingents deployed to the Western Front.

A few examples suffice to illustrate this point. As mentioned above, officers viewed certain soldiers such as the *tirailleurs*

sénégalais as possessing inherently martial spirits and warlike skills. Evidence suggests that such racial "preconceptions" had concrete and deadly effects on African soldiers' deployment on the Western Front, especially in the last two and a half years of the war. As Joe Lunn has persuasively argued, "soldiers designated as belonging to one of the (West African) warrior races were over-represented in those formations where the loss of life was the greatest, and, hence, … the proportion of their fatalities was significantly higher than among other West African groups." Moreover, they were "about three times as likely to die in combat as [their] French counterpart[s]".[17] Such preconceptions also informed decisions about soldiers' allotments of equipment, weapons, and food, which in turn directly affected morale and mortality rates.[18]

In addition, stereotypes and rumours circulating among German soldiers about the excessively brutal war-fighting techniques and harrowing battlefield behaviours of non-white troops shaped the treatment of captured enemy combatants. *Tirailleurs sénégalais'* use of long knives, known as *coupes-coupes*, in hand-to-hand combat, for example, fuelled rumours that these troops behaved with exceptional brutality on the battlefield, and that they mutilated dead soldiers. There is no evidence to suggest that West African soldiers' battlefield behaviour was any more or less brutal than their French counterparts or their German enemies, and the "mutilations" German soldiers attributed to them were likely battlefield wounds caused by knives, instead of bullets or shrapnel. Still, Heather Jones argues that "this atrocity discourse against colonial troops may have led German units to give no quarter to black soldiers".[19] In other cases, Muslim prisoners of war (POWs) may have received better treatment than others because they figured in German propaganda directed at Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere, designed to encourage a sympathetic view of Germany's war aims and potential role in a post-war international political order.[20] Germany's use of its alliance with the Ottoman Empire as "the land bridge by which Germany escaped its encirclement within Europe" forced the Entente to deal with "an extra theater of war", but it also opened up new avenues for the use of racist discourses in promoting German war aims.[21] Evidence on the subject of how soldiers were treated as a result of such discourses and practices is uneven, to say the least. Still the particular ways that racial preconceptions may have shaped everyday decisions about soldiers' treatment in different contexts warrants attention in any attempt to narrate more inclusive histories of the Great War.[22] Indeed, some of these rumours about the extreme brutishness of West African soldiers, in particular, resurfaced in German military behaviours in France during World War II. African troops captured during Germany's invasion of France in 1940 were massacred following a Nazi propaganda campaign that "educated" German soldiers about the supposed savagery of African soldiers during World War I.[23]

Non-European workers also experienced racist judgments about their work ethic, the legitimacy of their presence on the Western Front, and their social behaviours, especially regarding contact with local women.[24] Vietnamese workers, for example, became the target of French insults and violence because French citizens perceived them as "competitors not only for women but also for jobs" – a situation that undermined the white masculine prestige that underwrote colonial and imperial power relations.[25] Local communities differentiated between groups of workers, placing them along a spectrum that spanned a range of racist stereotypes, attributing "positive" qualities to some, and "negative" ones to others.[26] Such tensions resulted in outright confrontation, especially towards the end of the war. For instance, in 1917 and 1918 Chinese workers in France protested against inadequate pay, poor nourishment and care, inappropriate work demands, and racism. In some cases, the French state responded with violent repression of these protests.[27] Many of these labour units were organised into "semimilitary formations", making them "legally subject to military discipline". In short, workers may not have faced the same combat hazards as troops, but their day-to-day existences may have been just as laden with hardship and arbitrariness as their soldiering counterparts.

Soldiers and workers from outside of Europe also often experienced unfair treatment in matters of pay, leave, pensions, demobilisation, and repatriation. Some of this can be attributed to the practical realities of having travelled great distances to reach the Western Front. This alone would have placed considerable strain on the bureaucratic procedures necessary to ensure that soldiers and workers received their due in a timely manner.[28] In addition however, their status as colonial or semi-colonial subjects underwrote differential treatment from white, European soldiers. In many cases, repatriated non-European soldiers and workers shared common experiences of alienation borne in part of perceptions in their home societies that these men had returned with a "haughtiness and sense of entitlement" that put them at odds with old political, labour, and social hierarchies.[29] Moreover, many returned with debilitating physical and psychological injuries, necessitating long-term care that often placed heavy burdens on their families and communities. Coupled with the widespread effects of the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919, many returnees experienced homecoming as quite traumatic.[30]

Soldiers and workers often used these hardships as rallying points around which to build mutual aid societies, veterans' organisations, or informal networks designed to protect and further their interests within the colonial state and society. In Africa, most of these organisations had rather narrow and conservative goals of emphasizing the veterans' wartime sacrifices and the corresponding responsibilities of the imperial powers to provide for them and to expand their opportunities for making a living within colonial economies. Instances of radical opposition to the colonial order occurred only infrequently among African veterans. David Omissi contends that many Indian veterans also expressed "grievances – about land and jobs – which were quite independent of any cultural encounter overseas".[31]

In other imperial contexts, such as India, China, and Indochina, veterans' energies and past experiences fed into wider nationalist efforts, some of which effectively chipped away at imperial structures and overrule. Veteran soldiers and workers in these places played roles especially in claiming political autonomy, asserting labour rights, and opposing the continuation of racist principles such as the martial race paradigms that had so powerfully affected recruitment and promotion practices before and during the war.[32] However, in other contexts, such as the British Dominions, "[t]he social standing of indigenous peoples within the dominant British-based Dominion societies remained one of exclusion and subjugation."[33] Summarizing the post-war political experiences of such a wide range of conscripts obscures their variegated responses and the effects of these responses on wider developments. Yet it also makes clear the need for more comparative and synthetic research on the Western Front's reverberations in local politics outside of Europe.

Extra-European Campaigns: The Significance of "Sideshows"

The primacy of the Western Front in World War I historiography makes sense given the sheer magnitude of the losses incurred there and its profound importance in the making of post-war political orders and modern memory. Yet understanding international politics in the 20th and 21st centuries necessitates looking beyond the Western Front and European politics, and towards more textured understandings of the extra-European campaigns that are frequently referred to as "sideshows" to the war in Europe. This is not merely an exercise in inclusion, although there are certainly good reasons to "globalise" the study of the war in order to keep its imperial character at the forefront of consideration. Rather, by evaluating such campaigns on their own terms one gains a clearer understanding of how different parts of the world experienced the war, as well as how these campaigns shaped post-war political, economic, and social histories.[34]

Africa

Campaigns fought in Africa during World War I brought about significant changes in the colonial arrangements affecting administration of territories that had formerly belonged to Germany's African empire, namely Togo, Cameroon, German Southwest Africa (Namibia), and German East Africa (Tanzania). Allied military conquests of each colony between 1914 and 1918, followed by the post-war Versailles settlement, ensured that each of these former German territories came under new administration after 1918 as League of Nations "mandates". Under the mandate system, Togo and Cameroon both fell under divided British and French mandate authorities. German Southwest Africa came to be administered as a South African mandate, while German East Africa was incorporated into British East Africa as Tanganyika, also a mandate. Rwanda and Burundi, formerly part of German East Africa, became Belgian mandates. Thus Germany's former colonial possessions underwent considerable changes, even if their subordinate statuses within European empires (or in the case of South Africa, sub-empires) remained largely the same.

Certainly this political history of Germany's former colonies, including the transformations they underwent between 1914 and the imposition of the mandates during the 1920s, warrants attention. The events of these years shaped how each one moved through the remainder of the colonial era to independence. For example, German Southwest Africa's experience of becoming a South African mandate after World War I led directly to its late independence date (1990), which followed a long and bloody war fought between the Namibian and South African armies. The particular characteristics of the different European colonisers who had mandate authority over Togo, Cameroon, Tanganyika, Rwanda, and Burundi until after World War II also irrevocably stamped the political development of each territory after they became independent nation-states in the 1960s.

Equally important however, are the effects of these campaigns on the lives of the thousands of African soldiers, workers, and civilians involved; they deserve more attention than they have typically received in World War I historiography.[35] After all, as

Akurang-Parry explained, "Africans had no option for neutrality; they were irrevocably drawn into the war by the European colonial powers."[36] Indeed, the commander of German East Africa's colonial army during the war, General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck (1870-1964), made it quite clear from the beginning of the war that his objective was to force the Allies to commit resources in East Africa so that they could not be used in Europe. He thus also made it clear that he saw no harm in ruthlessly exploiting East Africa in the service of wholly European objectives – a position that was opposed by the last colonial governor of German East Africa, Heinrich von Schnee (1871-1949). Lettow-Vorbeck's position should come as no surprise given the exploitative nature of colonial projects more generally. However, it is an observation that calls into question the utility of classifying such campaigns as "sideshows". Such characterisations deny the deprivations and sufferings of many thousands of Africans who had minimal possibilities to affect European planning and execution of the campaigns, despite the fact that they bore the brunt of its considerable ill effects.

Some Africans involved in the campaign can be described legitimately as volunteers. Most notably, the majority of African soldiers (*askari*) who fought for the German *Schutztruppe* in East Africa through 1916, when German fortunes began to change dramatically, likely felt strong attachment to the organisation. In the last two years of the campaign however, the *Schutztruppe* experienced numerous *askari* desertions, and evidence suggests that increasing numbers of soldiers were conscripted against their will. In addition, the dearth of mechanised transport options and the general inability to use pack animals because of their vulnerability to sleeping sickness, drove armies operating in East Africa to recruit or conscript thousands of porters to carry their equipment and supplies across the great distances involved in prosecuting the war. Porters typically suffered from poor nutrition, high rates of disease, and high death rates.[37] Many of them likely looked back on their wartime work as "symbolizing the worst features" of European colonialism, which of course offered many examples from which to choose.[38]

Although most fighting occurred in the former German colonies, the war's effects reached well beyond these locations, ultimately embroiling colonial subjects from across and outside of Africa. European efforts to recruit adequate numbers of African soldiers and porters, usually involving coercive methods, met with a range of responses from targeted populations, including compliance, evasion, armed resistance, and millenarianism.[39] Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and porters died during combat operations, especially in the East Africa campaign. For British operations in East Africa alone, the death toll reached 100,000, including imperial troops and workers drawn from British East Africa, but also India and other British colonies in Africa such as the Gold Coast and Nigeria.[40] German, British, South African, and Belgian military requisitioning practices in East Africa devastated civilian livestock and food supplies, leading to famine conditions in some places, and setting the stage for the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic to exact a horrible toll.[41] Demographic disaster followed, especially in the southern highlands region of Tanzania where operations concentrated beginning in 1916, as well as in the Kikuyu reserves of British East Africa, which had been treated "as a reservoir for black labour".[42] As Killingray pointedly observes, "The massive mobilisation of labour in East and Central Africa in 1916-18 virtually decimated large areas and brought in its wake food shortages, famine and disease. The removal of men in large numbers from family life and rural production had a marked effect on African society."[43]

Rathbone noted in 1978 that on the subject of the war's impact in Africa, the "key question of cause and effect, of whether what we observe after the war came because of the war, remains hazy in the minds of historians".[44] Although strides have been made towards addressing this research lacuna, much more remains to be done.[45] What seems clear is that in the aftermath of war, and in light of the consolidation of former German colonies into French, British, Belgian and South African colonial territories, efforts to systematise and intensify colonial authority and extractive power accelerated. In Kenya, for example, this resulted in new forms of coercion, such as communal labour schemes that secured low-cost workforces for settler and state economic interests.[46] Land alienation, pass laws, and taxation also signalled the arrival of more insidious, trenchant methods of forcing Africans into relationships with the colonial state that did not benefit most of them. Research also indicates that the war had severe effects on African economies, with the influenza epidemic and famine conditions leading to "short term demographic disaster", which in turn hindered the ability of local economies to recover.[47] The inability of colonial governments to mount effective responses to these crises added to African frustrations that the colonisers had no intention of treating them as anything more than a disposable labour pool.[48]

Ex-soldiers and ex-labourers, whether returning from the war in Europe or from African campaigns, expected the colonisers to recognise and honour their sacrifices with jobs, land, privileges, and fair treatment. However, their aspirations were almost

always disappointed. Their post-war political activities do not fit neatly into one category.[49] Some ex-labourers became involved in trade unions, such as the Industrial and Commerce Union (ICU) in South Africa.[50] Some ex-soldiers, especially in the British West African colonies, became active in organisations that promoted "principles of self-determination, race consciousness, and pan-Africanism" and sought to bring about "radical changes in the colonial system".[51] But as an identifiable group, their impact tended to be felt mostly at the community level, where soldiers' annuities and newfound boldness in asserting their masculinities, maturity, and overseas experiences compelled them to challenge the old order, especially regarding local chiefly privileges as the arbiters of marriage and labour practices, for example.[52] New forms of expressive culture that celebrated and fostered military masculinities emerged or expanded during the war, and these often performed anti-colonial themes.[53] Veterans' associations and mutual aid societies emerged as venues for promoting their interests and building community around shared experiences.

Those who had fought for the Germans found themselves largely abandoned after the war, although General Lettow-Vorbeck continued to act as an advocate for his troops, lobbying the German government to disburse back pay and pensions to those who could prove they had been in the *Schutztruppe*. They lived together in enclaves near former *Schutztruppe* bases and in major urban areas, and many seem to have lived out their lives in destitution, although German charitable organisations sometimes sent support. Thus the history of ex-soldiers and ex-labourers in the post-war period has many threads, and their fates depended very much on the colonial contexts within which they found themselves after the war. And these contexts warrant consideration on their own terms as exemplars of the ways that Africans themselves had to make meaning out of a war that privileged European imperial objectives over African ones. A small shift in perspective towards the imperial character of World War I makes it impossible to view these campaigns merely as "sideshows" to the war in Europe. Instead, it makes clear how the war further entrenched colonial economic, political, and social patterns across the continent.

It is worth noting here that World War I did not ignite widespread decolonisation initiatives in Africa. This circumstance might be explained in several ways. First, as noted above, returning soldiers and labourers generally adopted rather conservative stances and pursued limited goals having to do with care and economic well-being for themselves and their families. Second, educated elites had access and exposure to ideas of self-determination that circulated in the post-war period, but such currents likely had little impact outside of elite circles, inhibiting the development of large-scale decolonisation movements. Third, the sheer magnitude of devastation resulting from the war (especially in eastern Africa) inhibited mass political organisation, as did the imposition of new colonial political arrangements by Allied victors. Precursors to nationalist organisations that shaped decolonisation politics after World War II came into being in the late 1920s and 1930s. But it is overly simplistic to assert a direct line of causation from World War I to the formation of these organisations.

Asia

As in Africa, significant changes in political control over Germany's colonial holdings occurred during and after the war. Within the first few months of the war, Allied Powers took over most of Germany's Pacific colonies. Japan took Qingdao on the Chinese mainland, as well as the Marshall, Mariana, and Caroline Islands (collectively referred to as Micronesia). New Zealand occupied Western Samoa, while the Australians took Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the Bismarck Islands. In the course of occupying these territories, the Allies also effectively neutralised Germany's naval presence in the Pacific for the duration of the war. China successfully negotiated for the return of Qingdao in 1922 at the Washington Naval Conference. The Marshalls, Marianas, and Carolines became League of Nations Class C Mandates under Japanese purview. After the war, New Zealand and Australia retained mandate authority over these locations.

Thus the Allied Powers (and the British Dominions) benefited from the territorial and prestige gains that seizure of former German colonies signified. Moreover, Japan's relatively late decision to join the war effort as a British ally proved quite useful to the Allies and Japan. Japanese naval vessels helped escort troop transports from British Pacific Dominions to Europe in 1917, for example. In exchange, Japan demanded that Britain support "permanent claims" to its wartime gains in Micronesia after the war.[54] As a result, Japan "approached [Versailles] acutely conscious of her new power" in the world, and especially in the Pacific.[55] Indeed, the Versailles settlement also seemed to secure Japan's long-term position in Qingdao, until US intervention at the 1922 Washington Naval Conference helped restore the former German holding to China.[56] Japan's case illustrates at least one concrete way in which Asian campaigns tied into the war in Europe.

The Asian campaigns also should be understood on their own terms, and not simply as ancillary to the war in Europe. As Strachan notes, a number of "later entrants to the war pursued...regional ambitions, which...piggybacked onto the original war but did not share its motivations".[57] Such was the case with neutral China, which responded to Japan's November 1914 defeat of German forces at Qingdao not by engaging in a futile military confrontation with the Japanese, with their stronger forces and British backing. Rather, they set about trying to find a way to ensure that they would be invited to post-war peace negotiations, which they thought represented their best opportunity for securing Qingdao's return. After much "political wrangling", Chinese officials decided to declare war on Germany and Austria-Hungary in August 1917 in the hope that declaring themselves "co-belligerents" with the Allies would be more likely to win them a place at peace negotiations than would maintaining their status as neutrals.[58] In the end, of course, although they secured a seat at Versailles, they were disappointed in their goal of getting Qingdao back. As noted above, the Allies held to their wartime guarantees and allowed Japan to retain Qingdao.

Although historians have construed this moment as a "total defeat" for China, Guoqi Xu disagrees, arguing that "[e]ven by simply presenting its position at the conference, China had already partly succeeded in projecting a new image to the world and injecting its own voice into discussions of the new world order."[59] Still, the perception that China had failed at Versailles played a direct role in the emergence of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, a nationalist, anti-imperialist, and proto-socialist movement which sought "a third way...between Western ideas and Chinese traditional culture".[60] Many of China's important 20th-century political leaders participated in this and other movements that opened up questions of Chinese national identity and its future direction.[61] In this way, World War I played a substantial role in shaping China's 20th-century trajectory and its quest for autonomy.

Similarly, in Western Samoa, New Guinea, and Micronesia, the mandate powers (New Zealand, Australia, and Japan, respectively) perpetuated colonial structures, including racist social policies, forced labour regimes, and military rule. The New Zealand administration in Western Samoa came under particular scrutiny during the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic, when it failed to respond adequately to news of the disease's spread. 22 percent of the island's population died from the disease in a few weeks.[62] According to one historian, this failing "instilled a deep-seated and ongoing mistrust of the New Zealand administration" among Western Samoans.[63] This mistrust may also have contributed to a long-standing anti-colonial movement in Western Samoa. In December 1929, a peaceful protest against colonial rule by a non-violent resistance movement known as Mau ended in bloodshed when New Zealand police fired into the crowd, killing at least ten people, including the movement's leader, and wounding many others. Protest activities continued until Western Samoa became independent in 1962. The extent to which each mandate power affected the development of the former German territories' politics remains an area in need of further research. Nonetheless, the transitions that occurred as a result of World War I shaped Asian and Pacific histories well after 1918.

Middle East and Mesopotamia

Campaigns fought in the Middle East and Mesopotamia typically have also been regarded as "sideshows" to the Western Front. Here again, such characterisations ignore the place of empire in understanding how and why the war was fought. Britain's ability to mobilise hundreds of thousands of soldiers from India and the Dominions (including New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa) enabled protection of its imperial strategic interests, most notably in defending the Suez Canal from an Ottoman attack in 1916, thus keeping its shipping and travel route to India safe. Moreover, Britain's ability to move troops between its European and Middle Eastern theatres made the two theatres more dependent on each other than other extra-European theatres. Nearly 300,000 non-combatant labourers from India also deployed to Mesopotamia between 1916 and 1920.[64]

In addition, these campaigns helped Britain preserve and expand its imperial footholds in the region at Ottoman expense. For example, the capture of Basra in November 1914 by an Indian Army expeditionary force secured access to nearby oil facilities, which were of considerable value to the British naval effort. British military achievements in the Middle East, such as General Edmund Allenby's (1861-1936) December 1917 capture of Jerusalem, boosted morale on European battlefields and at home.[65] On the other hand, a poorly executed attempt to capture Baghdad resulted in humiliating surrender at Kut-el-Amara in 1916. The Indian colonial government, which had planned and organised the operation, received scathing criticism for its failure to provide adequate logistical support to the troops, most notably in the areas of provisioning and medical care. Significant leadership and organisational changes followed, ultimately enabling a reconstituted British and Indian force to capture Baghdad in March

1917.[66]

The Middle Eastern and Mesopotamian campaigns also did important work in bolstering and creating imperial imaginaries that directly informed colonial practice during and after the war. The widespread representation of these campaigns as occurring in "an oriental land of fantasy" contributed to enduring visions of a post-war period in which technology and "colonial development" would usher in an "imperial economy of progress".[67] Missing from this vision, of course, were the lived realities of colonial subjects who appeared as mere caricatures in imperial imaginations. Yet these subjects endured the numerous changes brought about by the war, including new imperial orders, nationalist imperatives, massive political overhauls, and recovery from the economic devastation caused by the war.[68]

The Middle East and Mesopotamian theatres highlight quite clearly the tight entanglements of the international and the local in the Great War. The many overlapping ethnic and political identities and geographic expanse of the Ottoman Empire ensured that its populations would respond in various ways to the war. At the beginning of the war, many felt loyalty and commitment to the Ottomans, but changed their minds during the war after finding that Turkish officers viewed them as inferiors.[69] Others used the opportunity provided by the international conflict to ally themselves with the British, hoping this alliance would help them secure autonomy in the post-war period. Such was the case in Arabia in 1916, where resentment against "Young Turk attempts to suppress Arab culture and further Turkish control of Arab territories, the latter symbolised by the construction of the Hejaz railroad", led Husayn ibn Ali, King of Hejaz (c.1853-1931) and Sharif of Mecca, to agree to "initiate an Arab revolt" in exchange for a British guarantee of support for an independent Arab state after the war ended.[70] With Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935) ("Lawrence of Arabia") acting as liaison, Husayn's son Faysal I, King of Iraq (1885-1933) led "the Arab revolt", attacking the Hejaz railway and an Ottoman garrison at Medina, and seizing Mecca in 1916. Military successes did not translate into political gains in the post-war period, however. British promises to different actors in the Middle East and Mesopotamian theatres ultimately caused them to "[renege] on the implied guarantees" made to Sharif Husayn. The demise of the Ottoman Empire ushered in a new imperial political order throughout its former domains, and men like Husayn and Faysal who had dreamed of local autonomy, consolidation of Arab lands under their rule, and pan-Arab solidarity, experienced bitter disappointment in the post-war settlements.

Britain's ability to field such a formidable military presence in the Middle East and Mesopotamia engaged and overcame Turkish military resources, leading it to seek armistice in October 1918. Consequently, the Ottoman Empire occupied a very weak position at the Versailles proceedings, losing its territories in the Middle East and Mesopotamia to "new states under French or British control – Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, [and] Transjordan...."[71] In many parts of the region, the new political arrangements led to the continuation of violence into the post-war period. Political protests in Egypt in 1919, for example, met with violent repression by the colonial state. By 1922, however, Egypt had secured independence from British rule, even as Britain retained control over the Suez Canal and Sudan. The "brief British hegemony in the Middle East" that followed World War I thus had major implications for regional post-war politics and economics. Moreover, wartime diplomatic machinations that resulted in the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement irrevocably changed Middle Eastern politics, the effects of which continue to reverberate in the present.[72]

Conclusion

As James Kitchen, Alisa Miller, and Laura Rowe have recently argued, "Both the ideas and the practice of war in 1914-18 placed imperial interaction at the heart of the conflict. This was a war envisaged in transnational terms even if it was being fought for national ends."[73] Yet the extent to which "imperial interaction" characterised the war continues to be an area in need of further synthesis and reflection. The massive movements of soldiers and workers across great distances between theatres constitute one angle of study that highlights the transnational as a potentially fruitful frame of analysis. In addition, more robust consideration of the different levels of interaction between the different theatres, and how governments managed these (or not) through imperial ties might expose new lines of inquiry to help overcome the understandable tendency to view World War I in a piecemeal style, with each theatre containing its own problems, personalities, and narratives. Rather, by thinking about these histories as entanglements between and across empires, we can bring the "global" dimensions of the First World War into starker relief.

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Notes

1. ↑ Strachan, Hew: The First World War as Global War, in: First World War Studies 1/1 (2010), p. 5.

2. ↑ Strachan, First World War 2010, pp. 9f.

3. ↑ See, for example: Singha, Radhika: The Recruiter's Eye on 'the Primitive'. To France – and Back – in the Indiana Labour Corps, 1917-18, in: Kitchen, James E./Miller, Alisa/Rowe, Laura (eds): Other Combatants, Other Fronts. Competing Histories of the First World War, Leiden 2011, pp. 199-223; Singha, Radhika: Finding Labor from India for the War in Iraq. The Jail Porter and Labor Corps, 1916-1920, in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 49/2 (2007), pp. 412-45; Xu, Guoqi: Strangers on the Western Front. Chinese Workers in the Great War, Cambridge, MA 2011, pp. 38-54.

4. ↑ Das, Santanu: Imperialism, Nationalism and the First World War in India, in: Keene, Jennifer D. / Neiberg, Michael S. (eds): Finding Common Ground. New Directions in First World War Studies, Leiden 2011, p. 68.

5. ↑ Lunn, Joe: Memoirs of the Maelstrom. A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War, Portsmouth 1999, p. 100.

6. ↑ Willan, B.P.: The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918, in: The Journal of African History 19/1 (1978), p. 70; Winegard, Timothy C.: Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War, Cambridge 2012, p. 166; Xu, Guoji: China and the Great War. China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization, Cambridge 2005, p. 145.

7. ↑ Xu, Strangers 2011, pp. 55-79.

8. ↑ Lunn, Memoirs 1999, pp. 106-11; Omissi, David: Europe through Indian Eyes. Indian Soldiers Encounter England and France, 1914-1918, in: English Historical Studies 122/498 (2007), p. 386; Xu, Strangers 2011, pp. 62f, 76.

9. ↑ Lunn, Memoirs 1999, pp. 163-73; Omissi, Europe 2007, p. 385. *Originaires* were French West African soldiers from the Four Communes of Senegal. They acquired French citizenship and thus were perceived as being better suited for interaction with local populations. *Tirailleurs*, on the other hand, were subjects of the French Empire, and as such, they were deemed unfit for mixing with French soldiers and civilians. Lunn, Joe: 'Bons Soldats' and 'sales nègres'. Changing French Perceptions of West African Soldiers during the First World War, in: French Colonial History 1 (2002), p. 5.

10. ↑ Lunn, Memoirs 1999, pp. 128-35. On the construction of the myth of Indian soldiers as inferior combatants, see: Morton Jack, George: The Indian Army on the Western Front, 1914-1915. A Portrait of Collaboration, in: War in History 13/3 (2006), pp. 337-50.

11. ↑ Lunn, Memoirs 1999, p. 130. See also: Das, Imperialism 2011, p. 81.

12. ↑ Lunn, Memoirs 1999, p. 133.

13. ↑ Stovall, Tyler: The Color Line behind the Lines. Racial Violence in France during the Great War, in: American Historical Review 103/3 (1998), p. 737.

14. ↑ Jones, Heather: A Missing Paradigm? Military Captivity and the Prisoner of War, 1914-1918, in: Stibbe, Matthew (ed.): Captivity, Forced Labour and Forced Migration in Europe during the First World War, London 2009, pp. 37-40; Schroer, Timothy L.: 'Racial' Mixing of Prisoners of War in the First World War, in: Kitchen/Miller/Rowe (eds.), Other Combatants, Other Fronts. Competing Histories of the First World War 2011, pp. 180f.

15. ↑ Fogarty, Richard: Race and War in France. Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918, Baltimore 2008, pp. 43ff, 64ff.

16. ↑ Singha, Radhika: Front Lines and Status Lines. Sepoy and 'Menial' in the Great War 1916-1920, in: Liebau, Heike/Bromber, Katrin (eds.): World in World Wars. Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia, Leiden 2010, pp. 57-60.

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18. ↑ Dean, William: Morale Among French Colonial Troops on the Western Front during World War I. 1914-1918, in: Scientia Militaria 38/2 (2010), pp. 44-61.

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20. ↑ Ahuja, Ravi: The Corrosiveness of Comparison. Reverberations of Indian Wartime Experiences in German Prison Camps (195-1919), in: Liebau/Bromber, World in World Wars 2010, pp. 147-53. See also: Lieb, Peter: Konventioneller Krieg oder NS-Weltanschauungskrieg. Kriegführung und Partisanenbekämpfung in Frankreich 1943/44, Munich 2007, pp. 193ff.

21. ↑ Strachan, First World War 2010, p. 10.

22. ↑ For more on German racial views of the "indigenous soldiers" deployed from the British Dominions, see: Winegard, Indigenous Peoples 2012, pp. 189-96. See also: Koller, Christian: Military Colonialism, in: Dendooven, Dominiek/Chielens, P. (eds): World War I, Five Continents in Flanders, Tielt 2008, pp. 11-21.

23. ↑ Scheck, Raffael: The Killing of Black Soldiers from the French Army by the Wehrmacht in 1940. The Question of Authorization, in: German Studies Review 28/3 (2005), pp. 595-606. For further context on which units committed these massacres and what role Nazi ideology may have played in precipitating them, see: Lieb, Konventioneller Krieg 2007, pp. 18f.

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25. ↑ Hill, Kimloan: Sacrifices, Sex, Race. Vietnamese Experiences in the First World War, in: Das, Santanu (ed): Race, Empire, and First World War Writing, Cambridge 2011, p. 60. See also: Xu, Strangers 2011, pp. 145-51. On "white prestige" and colonialism, see: Fogarty, Richard S.: Race and Sex, Fear and Loathing in France during the Great War, in: Historical Reflections 34/1 (2008), pp. 50-72.

26. ↑ Dendooven, Dominiek: Living Apart Together. Non-white Troops and Workers in Wartime Flanders, in: Das, Race 2011, pp. 150-53.

27. ↑ Bailey, Paul J.: 'An Army of Workers'. Chinese Indentured Labour in First World War France, in: Das, Race 2011, pp. 45ff.

28. ↑ Mann, Gregory: Native Sons. West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century, Durham 2006, pp. 74-78, 99-103.

29. ↑ Hill, Sacrifices, Sex, Race 2011, pp. 63f; Lunn, Memoirs 1999, pp. 187-215; Mann, Native Sons 2006, pp. 72-85.

30. ↑ Killingray, David: A New 'Imperial Disease'. The Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 and its Impact on the British Empire, in: Caribbean Quarterly 49/4 (2003), pp. 30-49.

31. ↑ Omissi, Europe 2007, pp. 395f.

32. ↑ Hill, Sacrifices, Sex, Race 2011, pp. 64f; Omissi, David: The Sepoy and the Raj. The Indian Army, 1860-1940, Houndsmills 1994, pp. 160-78, 189ff; Xu, Guoqi: China and the Great War. China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization, Cambridge 2005, pp. 151-54.

33. ↑ Winegard, Indigenous Peoples 2012, pp. 261.

34. ↑ For a similar view, albeit with a focus on European perspectives on the war in Africa, see: Samson, Anne: World War I in Africa. The Forgotten Conflict among the European Powers, London 2013, pp. 3f.

35. ↑ Numbers of Africans who died as a result of the African campaigns of World War I are poorly understood. Akurang-Parry posited that up to 2 million Africans died during the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic alone. See: Akurang-Parry, Kwabena: Africa and World War I, in: Falola, Toyin (ed): Africa, volume 3 (Colonial Africa), Durham 2002, p. 64. Famine and other diseases, such as smallpox, killed untold numbers of East Africans as well. See: Iliffe, John: A Modern History of Tanganyika, Cambridge 1979, pp. 269-72. Page suggested that at least 200,000 African soldiers and porters died in campaigns in Africa, Europe, and Mesopotamia. Page, Melvin: Introduction. Black Men in a White Men's War, in: Page, Melvin (ed): Africa and the First World War, New York 1987, p. 14. For a useful description of the overall human and material costs of the war, see: Paice, Edward: Tip and Run. The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa, London 2007, pp. 1-7.

36. ↑ Akurang-Parry, Africa 2002, p. 67.

37. ↑ The most thorough study of porters in the East Africa campaign is: Hodges, Geoffrey: Kariakor. The Carrier Corps, Nairobi 1999. However, its focus is only on carriers for the King's African Rifles. See also: Hodges, Geoffrey: African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918, in: The Journal of African History 19/1 (1978), pp. 101-16. For a wider view of the East Africa campaign's porterage needs, see: Paice, Tip and Run 2007, pp. 280-90.

38. ↑ Page, Melvin: The War of Thangata. Nyasaland and the East African Campaign, 1914-1918, in: The Journal of African History 19/1 (1978), p. 87.

39. ↑ Akurang-Parry, Africa 2002, pp. 60f. On acts of resistance in East/Central Africa specifically, see McLaughlin, Peter: Victims as Defenders. African Troops in the Rhodesian Defence System 1890-1980, in: Small Wars and Insurgencies (1991), pp. 250-58; and Page, War of Thangata 1978, pp. 90f.

40. ↑ Paice, Tip and Run 2007, pp. 3, 392f.

41. ↑ Killingray, New 'Imperial Disease' 2003, p. 35; Paice, Tip and Run 2007, pp. 395-98. On famine in Tanganyika, see: Maddox, Gregory: Mtunya. Famine in Central Tanzania, 1917-20, in: The Journal of African History 31/2 (1990), pp. 181-97.

42. ↑ Killingray, David: Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa 1870-1945, in: Journal of Contemporary History 24/3 (1989), pp. 495f.

43. ↑ Killingray, Labour Exploitation 1989, p. 496.

44. ↑ Rathbone, Richard: World War I and Africa. Introduction, in: The Journal of African History 19/1 (1978), p. 1.

45. ↑ See: Lawrance, Benjamin: Locality, Mobility, and 'Nation'. Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland, 1900-1960, Rochester 2007, for an example of recent research that explores the social, cultural, and political history of a transition from German to British/French mandate rule.

46. ↑ See, for example: Okia, Opolot: The Northey Forced Labor Crisis, 1920-1921. A Symptomatic Reading, in: The International Journal of African Historical Studies 41/2 (2008), pp. 263-93.

47. ↑ Patterson, K. David: The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19 in the Gold Coast, in: Journal of African History (1983), p. 502; Akurang-Parry, Kwabena O: 'Untold Difficulties'. The Indigenous Press and the Economic Effects of the First World War on Africans in the Gold Coast, 1914-1918, in: African Economic History 34 (2006), pp. 45-68.

48. ↑ Tomkins, Sandra M.: Colonial Administration in British Africa during the Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19, in: Canadian Journal of African Studies 28/1 (1994), pp. 76-79.

49. ↑ This point is made effectively in: Summers, Anne/Johnson, R.W.: World War I Conscription and Social Change in Guinea, in: The Journal of African History 19/1 (1978), pp. 25-38.

50. ↑ Willan, South African 1978, pp. 82f.

51. ↑ Akurang-Parry, Africa 2002, p. 65.

52. ↑ Akurang-Parry, Africa 2002, p. 65.

53. ↑ McCullers, Molly: 'We do it so that we will be men'. Masculinity Politics in Colonial Namibia, 1915-49, in: Journal of African History 52/1 (2011), pp. 43-54. See also: Ranger, Terence: Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1970, The Beni Ngoma, Berkeley 1975.

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57. ↑ Strachan, First World War 2010, p. 10.

58. ↑ Craft, Stephen G.: Angling for an Invitation to Paris. China's Entry into the First World War, in: International History Review 16/1 (1994), p. 21.

59. ↑ Xu, China 2005, p. 272.

60. ↑ Xu, China 2005, p. 275.

61. ↑ Xu, China 2005, p. 275.

62. ↑ Tomkins, Sandra M.: The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19 in Western Samoa, in: The Journal of Pacific History 27/2 (1992), p. 181.

63. ↑ Tomkins, Influenza Epidemic 1992, p. 194. See also: Killingray, New 'Imperial Disease' 2003, pp. 38-41.

64. ↑ Singha, Finding Labor 2007, pp. 412-45.

65. ↑ Hughes, Matthew: Command, Strategy and the Battle for Palestine, in: Beckett, Ian F.W. (ed.): 1917. Beyond the Western Front, Leiden 2009, pp. 116f.

66. ↑ In April 1916, Turkish forces captured 10,000 Indian and British troops at Kut-el-Amara following a five-month siege. 4,000 of the captives died. Satia, Priya: Developing Iraq. Britain, India, and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War, in: Past and Present 197/1 (2007), pp. 211f. See also: Galbraith, John S.: No Man's Child. The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914-1916, in: The International History Review 6/3 (1984), pp. 358-85.

67. ↑ Satia, Developing Iraq 2007, pp. 217, 255.

68. ↑ See: Jacobson, Abigail: Negotiating Ottomanism in Times of War. Jerusalem during World War I through the Eyes of a Local Muslim Resident, in: International Journal of Middle East Studies 40/1 (2008), pp. 69-88; and Ruiz, Mario M.: Manly Spectacles and Imperial Soldiers in Wartime Egypt, in: Middle Eastern Studies 45/3 (2009), pp. 351-71 for useful perspectives on how local experiences of these campaigns shaped new gender identities, political affinities, and awareness of the everyday impact of empire.

69. ↑ Jacobson, Negotiating Ottomanism 2008, pp. 69f.

70. ↑ Neiberg, Michael: Fighting the Great War. A Global History, Cambridge, MA 2005, pp. 144f.

71. ↑ Howard, Michael: The First World War. A Very Short Introduction, Oxford 2002, p. 117.

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