

Introducción

As I write this piece, the governments of Turkey and Australia are on the eve of the centenary of the Gallipoli landings. Both nations are going to mark the event in a remarkably lavish way. Indeed, according to James Brown, author of *Anzac's Long Shadow*, the Australian state will spend \$AUS300 million on the centenary outstripping Britain's budget by 200 per cent. Such a sum reveals not only the perceived significance of the Great War's centenary, but also the extent to which some nation states are determined to shape its contemporary meaning. All of the fascinating and insightful essays in this volume explore the role and limitations of the state when it comes to setting and controlling the agenda for the centenary period. Very few of the papers reveal national governments totally indifferent to the event: the events of 1914-1918 still demand attention.

Determining ownership of the centenary is a vexed issue. When it comes to the United Kingdom, as Edward Spiers shows, the government was caught with its "eye off the ball" and joined the planning process somewhat later than many other states, and has arguably produced the strangest hybrid. Determined to ensure that "ordinary people" were given the ability to participate actively in the centenary, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was given a large sum of money to distribute for community projects. At the other end of the scale, impressive, centrally organised remembrance ceremonies were planned. However, as Spiers shows, there is nothing to link them. Shying away from a robust engagement with the controversial aspects of the conflict, the British government has sought neutrality of a kind in supporting respectful remembrance tinged with elements of reconciliation. With the UK more than ever aware that it is a composite state, this has also meant allowing its different voices a say, which means in the case of Northern Ireland an emphasis on seeing the war as part of the legacy and inheritance of all Irishmen regardless of religion and political allegiance. Similar strands can be detected in Patrick Brennan's exploration of Canada. It is a nation with two narratives that have been competing since the war itself – the Anglophone and Francophone versions. Now, it also has the relatively recent addition of Newfoundland to draw into the national conception, as well as the need to acknowledge the voice of First Nation peoples. Giving a platform to once marginalised voices may be an effective way for contemporary states to advertise their inclusive values. Through this process they reveal their determination to rectify the mistakes of the past by celebrating the contributions of those unfairly overlooked in the war's immediate aftermath. For the UK this has meant encouragement of migrants from the former colonies to tell their stories through the HLF programme; in Australia, Canada and New Zealand it has meant a willingness to engage with the roles of "Black Diggers", to use the title of Tom Wright's play, and First Nation peoples. The positive effect of ensuring a more inclusive account also reveals the elasticity of history when applied to a remembrance and commemorative setting. By the same token, it also reveals just how much more politicised it can become as the potential for manipulation in order to meet contemporary concerns becomes apparent. Carolyn Holbrook illustrates just how potent current political and social agendas have become in conceptions of Anzac. Over the years it has slowly shifted from a cult of hyper-masculinity and nationalism towards constructions the western world now finds peculiarly compelling – trauma, victimhood and suffering – and with it the appeal to empathise with such traits. As she shows, the centenary in Australia will probably unfold within a binary vision consisting of the older, nationalistic, masculine paradigm and the newer one emphasising loss and pain.

Triumphalist national visions of the war, so different to the dominant vision in the UK since the 1960s, can also be detected in France and Italy. For both nations, defeat and its dark consequences in the Second World War mean that by contrast the First World War provides a reassuring alternative even when the appalling human cost is factored in. Despite the politicisation of Italian historiography, as explored by Paolo Ferrari, contemporary Italy largely views the Great War in a way that does not spark national disquiet. Fascinatingly, he also demonstrates that the war is perhaps a much

stronger focal point regionally being a phenomenon more associated with the north and the zone of the actual fighting. By contrast, for France, the war is still perceived as the ultimate test of nationhood. Revealing the ultimate victory of this concept, Karine Varley shows that France flirted with the idea of the soldier as victim, but unlike the UK, it never anchored in the national consciousness, which is reflected in the French state's decision to reject a blanket amnesty for its execution cases. With France wedded to the concept of glory achieved through suffering, perhaps revealing the strength of Catholic thinking in the nation, an interesting test will come next year when the centenary of Verdun is marked. Will it be used once again as an opportunity to emphasise Franco-German solidarity and an affirmation that the lessons of history have been learnt, and how will this sit with the concept of France triumphant? What has to be factored into such questioning is the remarkable pliability of well-stage-managed international acts of commemoration which often deliver seemingly contradictory messages, but in perfect harmony. This was seen in 2014's D-Day commemorations in which politicians appealed directly to their domestic audiences by reminding them of the contributions their respective nations made to the victory whilst also making conciliatory remarks about the rehabilitated Germany.

Although all contributors refer to the academic historiography, what seems remarkably clear is how marginal it is to overall national perceptions. The only variant appears to be Germany where William Mulligan indicates that Christopher Clark's overview of the July Crisis, *The Sleepwalkers*, has gained widespread recognition and debate. Germany is also, perhaps, a bit further in front of other nations when it comes to embracing a broader, multi-national perspective on the conflict. This phenomenon seems intimately connected with the impact of the Second World War on German understandings of the twentieth century. Nowhere is this sensation stronger than in the former components of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as shown in Christopher Brennan's overview of no fewer than five states. As he demonstrates, for Austria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, the Great War is a palimpsest which contains the heavy traces of not only the Second World War, but also the legacy of Communism, too. These experiences have created not only an extraordinarily complex academic historiography, but also highly distinctive popular conceptions. Like all nations, he shows that there is just as much strategic forgetting as remembering, and he reveals a particular problem for all those formerly part of an empire: namely, how to manage the fact that many were prepared to serve the supposedly alien and unwanted colonial power with great loyalty until the very end.

Many of the pieces pick up on the importance of the second great total conflict as the inescapable prism through which the First World War is perceived, tending either to magnify or distort it. For David Kaufman, Russian understandings of the Great War are inevitably linked to 1917, the Revolution and, as a consequence, the Soviet Union's great patriotic war for national survival between 1941 and 1945. However, as he also shows, Putin's desire to play the nationalist card means the First World War as a symbol of Russian status and global influence in the twentieth century is extremely useful. S. P. Mackenzie provides a variant in his examination of the USA. For Americans the wars of the twentieth century essentially mean the Second World War and Vietnam. The First World War is a thing of almost antiquarian interest; a quaint anachronism engaging to some, but largely irrelevant to the population as a whole. A similar strain can be detected in Emilio Sáenz-Francés San Baldomero's exploration of Spain. As with so many other nations examined in this volume, for Spain, the First World War was important for what it led to or set in train rather than for what it was in itself. As such, the civil war and its legacy is the dominant experience of the twentieth century with the First World War the supporting act for the main event.

With much of the western world seeking to commemorate an inclusive national discourse about the conflict which allows space for subaltern voices to be heard, particularly those with populations shaped by its colonial inheritance, a fascinating variant can be seen in Turkey. As Yücel Yankda shows, the founding Turkish myth of the war was built around emasculating it of Ottoman associations in favour of Turkish nationalism and identity. This long dominant version is now being significantly challenged by a genuinely pan-national vision in the form of an Islamic revival keen to recast the

war as a conflict between Western infidels and the Muslim faithful. As such, it revives aspects of the actual Ottoman imperial situation between 1914 and 1918 more accurately than the post-1918 narrow Turkish interpretation. At the same time, the Turkish state is anxious to avoid another long-subordinated voice, that of the Armenians who suffered so appallingly during the conflict, to gain any kind of public, particularly international, platform through the centenary. The centenary certainly raises a series of fascinating issues and questions based around the seeming need to remember and commemorate. During the course of the centenary we are all given the chance to reflect on what is being commemorated, how and by whom. Further, we are also faced with the schism between what might be termed “hard History” and the softer, more malleable terms of remembrance and commemoration. From this springs the further refinement and reflection required on those freely used terms “remembrance” and “memory”. Defining the subtle differences and remaining aware of them throughout this period will be necessary when it comes to assessing the totality of the period on its conclusion in 2018-2019. Of course, this immediately throws up issues of periodisation and how it affects understandings of the past. For example, the island of Ireland entered what many perceived to be a decade of interlocking centenaries in 2012 marking as it did the loss of Belfast’s great product, RMS *Titanic*, and a significant increase in temperature over the Home Rule issue. This will run all the way through to 2021-2022, and possibly beyond, as the partition of Ireland and civil war reach their centenaries. We will also be left with the question of “so what?” about it all. Given just how wedded many states are to the modern obsession with “legacy” – another term flung around with profligate abandon – an important issue is the degree of public engagement with the impressive range of public activities and events fostered by each state. To what extent will the centenary genuinely engage people beyond the already interested and committed? And, given the rather limited role assigned to professional academics and educators by all states in the overall shape and direction of their programmes, to what extent will there be any wider public understanding of the huge complexity of that terrible global event? This collection of papers addresses implicitly and explicitly all of these issues and provide us with an excellent series of snapshots at the start of a long process. Without wishing to commit them, perhaps all involved should all be asked to repeat the process in about four years’ time!

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