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War and Veterans: An Introduction

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War and Veterans:

An Introduction[1]

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> We, your neighbors, speaking through the Red Cross,
> welcome your return. You have served us and your country well
> in the greatest war in history. […] [W]e are proud of you.
> […] Our greatest opportunity to be of service may come
> while you and your family are getting back to everyday life.[2]

The Home Service of the American Red Cross in 1918 published a booklet called *When You Get Home — Take This Book With You* in and by which, as the above quote highlights, veterans were welcomed back to a peaceful society, whose members, through their dedication within the little booklet, declared their willingness to help the war veterans to reintegrate into a life they had defended for all on the battlefields of Europe. Regardless of such declarations, the reality of many soldiers who returned would be different from the easy transformation process that is implied in the neighborly promise of support. In fact, veterans are people societies tend to ignore, as they represent violence and wars and remind post-war societies of a past that is rather preferred to be forgotten. Although the number has recently dropped,[3] many veterans in the US, as well as other countries, do still struggle on their way back home. Very often, as German-Austrian scholars Michael Daxner and Hannah Neumann emphasized, self-proclaimed peaceful societies tend to ignore the human consequences of foreign military engagements, i.e. the invalids, the veterans, and the fallen.[4] The heroic moments are rather limited for the veterans, who are

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[2] Home Service of the American Red Cross, *When You Get Home — Take This Book With You* (n.p. 1918), dedication page.

[3] Leo Shane III, "Fewer Veterans Were Homeless in 2018, After a Worrisome Rise Last Year," *Military Times*, November 1, 2018. Accessed November 1, 2019. https://www.militarytimes.com/news/2018/11/01/after-a-worrisome-rise-last-year-the-number-of-homeless-veterans-dropped-in-2018/

[4] Michael Daxner and Hannah Neumann, "Wie der Einsatz in Afghanistan Deutschland verändert — Einleitung," in *Heimatdiskurs: Wie die Auslandseinsätze der Bundeswehr Deutschland verändern*, eds. Michael Daxner and Hannah Neumann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), 7.

celebrated for an instant when the war is over[5] but are then left alone on their "way back" after their return.[6]

Historical developments and a different perception of violent conflicts between nation states changed the perspective on veterans, who are now rather seen as victims of war. Many veterans, as American historian Michael D. Gambone emphasized, "remain living victims of their wars. The wounded, disabled or otherwise, are a continuing testament to the cost of conflict."[7] The daily suffering of veterans, however, challenges the myth and the peaceful narrative of societies that claim that the world has been living in peace since the end of the Second World War. Veterans consequently often do not match the preferred way of commemoration, which should focus on honor, bravery, and self-sacrifice rather than on suffering and neglect. The veteran, in contrast to the popular image of the war hero, "is a reality that no amount of pomp and circumstance can mitigate and a constant reminder of the human costs of war."[8] There are consequently discrepancies between the way in which wars, and especially the acts and roles of the veterans, are remembered and what it actually meant and means to have served in a violent conflict and to live with the consequences once these are over.[9] Post-war society constantly has to deal with the psychological problems of the soldiers who returned alive, but physcially and/or mentally wounded from the battlefield.[10] Especially those affected by the latter wounds often had to fight for the acceptance of their problems. It is now accepted that each war might cause its own symptoms and mental illnesses,[11] and more attention is being paid to the returning soldiers and their possible issues.

It was the experiences of the First and Second World Wars that increased the psychological pressures on soldiers, because these industrialized conflicts, with more and

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[5] Michael D. Gambone, *Long Journeys Home: American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2017), 1.

[6] On the efforts necessary to re-integrate US veterans after the Second World War see: Mark D. Van Ells, *"To Hear Only Thunder Again": America's World War II Veterans Come Home* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2001).

[7] Gambone, *Long Journeys Home*, 2.

[8] Ibid.

[9] On the commemoration of wars see: Frank Jacob and Kenneth Pearl, "Introduction: War Memorials and Critical Insights into the Human Past," in *War and Memorials: The Age of Nationalism and the Great War*, eds. Frank Jacob and Kenneth Pearl (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2019), 1-22.

[10] Philipp Rauh and Livia Prüll, "Krank durch den Krieg? Der Umgang mit psychisch kranken Veteranen in Deutschland in der Zeit der Weltkriege," *Portal Militärgeschichte* (2015). Accessed November 2, 2019. http://portal-militaergeschichte.de/rauh_pruell_krank.pdf, 1.

[11] Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, "War Syndromes: The Impact of Culture on Medically Unexplained Symptoms," *Medical History* 49:1 (2005), 55-78.

more de-individualized forms of mass destruction, took control away from them and confronted them with a steady menace to their own existence.[12] In the First World War, the experience of passivity in the trenches day to day played an important role. The possibility of dying existed at every single moment, but the soldiers could do nothing about it but wait for the next assault into no man's land. This steady pressure on the mind of the soldiers was also responsible for new psychological illnesses.[13] The destructive impact of the war could also be recognized through the changes to landscapes that the soldiers witnessed, especially since their building of the trenches was part of this process. The landscape, due to the steady bombardments, in the end became strange and surreal, adding to the melancholic mood of those waiting for another battle without a clear result, but for the corpses assembled in no man's land, with shattered bones and bodies full of projectiles from the enemy's machine guns.[14] Since this experience of the first industrialized and totally modern war,[15] each war has supposedly produced its own kind of psychological or psychosomatic symptoms that would be shown by mentally wounded soldiers in the aftermath.[16] Since the First World War, these symptoms have been discussed more

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[12] Gundula Gahlen, Wencke Meteling and Christoph Nübel, "Psychische Versehrungen im Zeitalter der Weltkriege: Zur Einführung," *Portal Militärgeschichte* (2015). Accessed November 2, 2019. http://portal-militaergeschichte.de/psychische_versehrungen, 6.

[13] Rauh and Prüll, "Krank durch den Krieg?" 2.

[14] Christoph Nübel, "Fremde Welten: Kriegslandschaften und die Anthropologie des Soldaten, 1914–1933," *Historische Anthropologie: Kultur – Gesellschaft – Alltag* 24:1 (2016), 51-52; Jens Warburg, *Das Militär und seine Subjekte: Zur Soziologie des Krieges* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2008), 227.

[15] Studies on Germany and Austria include, among others, Thomas Becker, et al., eds. *Psychiatrie im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Konstanz: KUP, 2018); Jason Crouthamel, *The Great War and German Memory: Society, Politics and Psychological Trauma, 1914-1945* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009), esp. ch. 1 and 2; Maria Hermes, *Krankheit — Krieg: Psychiatrische Deutungen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Essen: Klartext, 2012); Hans-Georg Hofer, *Nervenschwäche und Krieg: Modernitätskritik und Krisenbewältigung in der österreichischen Psychiatrie, 1880-1920* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2004); Julia Barbara Köhne, *Kriegshysteriker: Strategische Bilder und mediale Techniken militärpsychiatrischen Wissens (1914-1920)* (Husum: Matthiesen, 2009); Hannes Leidinger and Verena Moritz, "Nervenschlacht: 'Hysterie', 'Trauma' und 'Neurosen' am Beispiel der Ostfront 1914-1918," in *Jenseits des Schützengrabens: Der Erste Weltkrieg im Osten: Erfahrung - Wahrnehmung - Kontext*, eds. Bernhard Bachinger and Wolfram Dornik (Innsbruck et al.: Studienverlag, 2013), 157-178; Paul Frederick Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

[16] Studies on the psychological impact of war on soldiers and veterans include, among others, the following titles: Hans Binneveld, *From Shell Shock to Combat Stress: A Comparative History of Military Psychiatry*, Paperback edition (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997); Livia Prüll and Philipp Rauh, eds. *Krieg und medikale Kultur: Patientenschicksale und ärztliches Handeln in der Zeit der Weltkriege 1914-1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014); Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century*, Revised edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). For the developments after the Second World War, see: Niels Birbaumer and Dieter Langewiesche, "Neuropsychologie und Historie: Versuch einer empirischen Annäherung — Posttraumatische Belastungsstörung (PTSD) und Soziopathie in Österreich nach 1945," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32:2 (2006), 153-175; Alice Förster and Birgit Beck, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and World War II: Can a Psychiatric Concept Help Us Understand Postwar Society?" in *Life after Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s*, eds. Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15-38.

frequently, as they were occurring as a mass phenomenon.[17] The actual experience of the war had destroyed the heroic ideas and images about war and left instead the horrors of the battlefield, mainly those of the Western Front, where large "battles for annihilation," like the Battle of Verdun[18] or the Battles of the Isonzo,[19] had turned into an endless "blood pump" or "bone mill" that the soldiers were unable to escape. These experiences led to personality changes and other psychosomatic reactions in the soldiers, who, as veterans, could consequently not simply return to a society that existed without war and violence.[20]

As such, these impacts were nothing new and could have been observed in the past and in relation to other wars, but during and after the First World War the sheer number of those who were suffering from shell shock and other psychological or psychosomatic disorders was more than had ever been seen before. The mentally damaged veteran was no longer an individual, but a mass phenomenon that societies could no longer neglect. It is hard to predict which consequences an actual engagement in a violent conflict will have for an individual, but the four-year-long experience of hunger and thirst, waiting and fighting, injury and death was obviously too much for many of the men sent to the fronts of the Great War.[21] It is also not surprising that many soldiers could not simply get rid of behavioral patterns they had got used to during the war years and which would be an essential part of their personality at the end of the war. The soldiers were not only wounded psychologically but also psycho-physiologically, and many men were therefore unable to adjust to their previous lives again. They were sometimes unable to control their memories about the war, and overreacted due to traumatic experiences; in short, they would never be the men who had left their homes again.[22]

The development of the Second World War was different and in a way more diffuse, as diagnoses and therapies tended to be much more heterogeneous than the ones related to

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[17] Warburg, *Das Militär und seine Subjekte*, 226.

[18] Olaf Jessen, *Verdun 1916: Urschlacht des Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2014).

[19] Marija Jurić Pahor, *Das Gedächtnis des Krieges: Die Isonzofront in der Erinnerungsliteratur von Soldaten und Zivilisten* (Klagenfurt: Mohorjeva Hermagoras, 2017); Rok Stergar, "L'expérience des soldats austro-hongrois sur le front austro-italien: le problème du ravitaillement en vivres," in *Soldati e quotidianità della guerra*, eds. Giovanni L. Fontana and Marco Mondini (Pisa: Pacini editore, 2019), 13-30.

[20] Warburg, *Das Militär und seine Subjekte*, 235-252.

[21] Ibid., 235.

[22] Ibid., 238. George Mosse even argued that these experiences stimulated a higher level of political violence during the interwar years. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Paperback Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). On the debate about this "brutalization thesis" see: Ángel Alcalde, "La tesis de la brutalización (George L. Mosse) y sus críticos: un debate historiográfico," *Pasado y Memoria* 15 (2016), 17-42.

the First World War.[23] Yet the destruction related to the Second World War, and especially the experience of the Holocaust, provided new levels of psychological damage that already needed to be dealt with during the war itself.[24] The 1930s and 1940s changed the lives of so many people, and "[t]he world that emerged from the global confrontation […] was, in a sense, a world of war veterans."[25] The millions of soldiers that had been sent to the battlefields—the Soviet Union had mobilized 34 million soldiers, Germany 17 million, the US 16 million, Great Britain and its Empire 4.6 million, Japan 5.5 million[26]—had to be reintegrated into their societies in the aftermath of the conflict. But the age of the veterans continued, as the Cold War also stimulated further conflicts around the globe, in which soldiers needed to do the "dirty work" for their respective societies, i.e. to keep the actual violence of war as far away from home as possible.

In the 1970s, a trauma concept that related to Vietnam War veterans was established, and the new diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was introduced to a broader public when the American Psychiatric Association named it in the third edition of its *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980.[27] Since then, it has rather been seen as common sense that "the experiences of war often cause emotional distress."[28] In addition, as scholars Zahava Solomon, Shimrit Debby-Aharon, Gadi Zerach, and Danny Horesh remarked, "[s]ome pathological reactions to war are acute and occur on the battlefield or in the immediate aftermath of combat. The most common of these reactions is combat stress reaction (CSR), which is characterized by various symptoms such as paralyzing fear of death, emotional and physical numbness, and severe depression."[29] CSR, according to research by Estee Cohen, Zahava Solomon, and Gadi Zerach, is the "most common of these acute stress reactions," and with regard to its definition, it

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[23] Gahlen, Meteling and Nübel, "Psychische Versehrungen," 3.

[24] Georg Berger, *Die beratenden Psychiater des deutschen Heeres 1939 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998); Klaus Blaßneck, *Militärpsychiatrie im Nationalsozialismus: Kriegsneurotiker im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, (Baden-Baden: DWV, 2000); Babette Quinkert, Philipp Rauh, and Ulrike Winkler, eds. *Krieg und Psychiatrie 1914-1950* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

[25] Ángel Alcalde and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, "Introduction: A World of Veterans," in *War Veterans and the World After 1945: Cold War Politics, Decolonization, Memory*, eds. Ángel Alcalde and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas (New York: Routledge, 2018), 1.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Gahlen, Meteling and Nübel, "Psychische Versehrungen," 1. On PTSD see Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, *From Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War* (Hove/New York, Psychology Press, 2005), 147-163.

[28] Zahava Solomon, Shimrit Debby-Aharon, Gadi Zerach, and Danny Horesh, "Marital Adjustment, Parental Functioning, and Emotional Sharing in War Veterans," *Journal of Family Issues* 32:1 (2011), 128.

[29] Ibid.

results from psychological breakdown on the battlefield when a soldier feels unable to marshal effective coping mechanisms to deal with both internal and external pressures and is flooded with anxiety. CSR symptoms are not uniform, but include labile polymorphic manifestations such as restlessness, psychomotor retardation, withdrawal, startle reactions, confusion, and paranoid reactions. Despite the extreme variability of this phenomenon, militaries the world over have identified a common denominator: severe functional impairment.[30]

PTSD, in contrast, is not only related to actual combat experience, but "is a mental health problem that can occur after witnessing or directly experiencing life-threatening events such as natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or combat. People who suffer from PTSD often experience symptoms such as difficulty in sleeping, nightmares, uncontrollable thoughts, and depression."[31] Of course, veterans throughout history have shown high rates of PTSD,[32] and in around one third of the cases of patients suffering from it, it turns into a chronic issue.[33]

The disease, then, affects not only the lives of the veterans but also their direct environment, i.e. their families.[34] The loss of close friends during combat especially seems to dissociate veterans from their closer social environments due to psychological maladjustment in the aftermath.[35] At the same time, it seems to be ironic that "[w]hile combat survivability is at an all-time high, vets return home to private struggles with depression, PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and substance abuse."[36] Those who survive life-threatening combat situations are very often returning into a society that has neither an idea nor a sense of these experiences, because a majority of people, at least in the

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[30] Estee Cohen, Zahava Solomon, and Gadi Zerach, "The Implication of Combat-Induced Stress Reaction, PTSD, and Attachment in Parenting Among War Veterans," *Journal of Family Psychology* 25:5 (2011), 688.

[31] Seyyed A. Vagharseyyedin, "Experiences of Wives of Iranian War Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Regarding Social Relationships," *Public Health Nursing* 32:2 (2014), 122.

[32] Arieh Y. Shalev, "Acute Stress Reactions in Adults," *Biological Psychiatry* 51:7 (2002), 532-543.

[33] Kenneth Blum, John Giordano, Marlene Oscar-Berman, Abdalla Bowirrat, Thomas Simpatico, and Debmalya Barh, "Diagnosis and Healing in Veterans Suspected of Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Using Reward Gene Testing and Reward Circuitry Natural Dopaminergic Activation," *Genetic Syndromes and Genes* 3:3 (2012), 1000116.

[34] Vagharseyyedin, "Experiences of Wives," 122.

[35] Joseph M. Currier and Jason M. Holland, "Examining the Role of Combat Loss Among Vietnam War Veterans," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 25 (2012), 102.

[36] Shawn F. Kane, Adam K. Saperstein, Christopher W. Bunt and Mark B. Stephens, "When War Follows Combat Veterans Home," *The Journal of Fa mily Practice* 62:8 (2013), 399.

Western world, have never had to live through a violent conflict. Veterans are therefore even more threatened with being left alone and "at high risk for a host of other medical conditions, which commonly include traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, suicide, and substance abuse."[37] A problem that comes along with these issues, however, is the fact "that only 23% to 40% of those with mental illness seek care. Among the reasons veterans have offered for avoiding behavioral health care are a fear of the stigma associated with mental illness, concern that treatment will negatively affect their career, [or the] lack of comfort with mental health professionals."[38] Regardless of the number of cases, veterans as such need to deal with two situations: 1) they have to return to their individual environment and "readjust" to family life, and 2) they have to find their way back into societies that very often neglect the existence of veterans per se or the fact that they need special attention or treatment. Very often, societies tend to exploit soldiers when it comes to the necessities to send them somewhere else to fight, only to forget them once the war is over, and it is rather more easy to remember and redefine the glory of the fallen than to address the special needs of those who survived.

On the individual level, veterans are often less capable of financially managing their post-war lives because they are injured, whether it be mentally or physically.[39] Of course, it is hard to generalize the personal experiences related to war and conflict, as there are usually differences, as historians Ángel Alcalde and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas highlighted, "determined by a multiplicity of factors, such as social background, race, gender, religion, military rank, type of military force (army, navy, air force, logistical support units, intelligence, etc.), technological level of warfare and so on."[40] Nevertheless, studies have shown that war veterans with psychological post-combat disorders tend to be more aggressive or violent within their family, e.g. against their partners.[41] The return of a veteran usually changes the family structure, because PTSD has an impact on the social activities of the former soldiers, who now tend to be more isolated due to their trauma. The traditional family roles need to be redefined, and not only with regard to financial support.[42]

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 401.

[39] Saul Schwartz, "The Relative Earnings of Vietnam and Korean-Era Veterans," *ILR Review* 39:4 (1986), 564-572, provides a detailed analysis of the earnings of Vietnam veterans in comparison with those who returned from the Korean War.

[40] Ángel Alcalde and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, "Introduction," 2.

[41] Claudia Catani, "War at Home: A Review of the Relationship between War Trauma and Family Violence," *Verhaltenstherapie* 20 (2010), 19-27.

[42] Vagharseyyedin, "Experiences of Wives," 127.

Dealing with "numerous impairments in everyday functioning,"[43] veterans suffering from PTSD are stressed by anxieties that might cause more aggressive behavior in situations that tended to be rather unproblematic in the past, e.g. the definition of private space boundaries. Consequently, it is not only the veteran, who is traumatized by war, but the whole family that suffers due to the war experience of one of its members.[44] Research has also shown problems related to intimacy and communication with one's partner in the aftermath of a traumatic war experience.[45] In the family, however, it is not only the partner of a veteran who might be impacted by the latter's problems but also the children, because their parental duties can probably no longer be fulfilled. The personal environment of the veterans consequently needs to be refined and readjusted, depending on the severity of the former's PTSD or other psychological and psychosomatic issues. Regardless of this fact, the large number of war veterans also form a critical mass within society, and the latter has to find ways to reintegrate the former, who are seldom remembered once the war is over.

Within post-war societies, veterans represent what US historian Harold Marcuse called "memory groups." According to Marcuse, "[s]uch groups usually share common experiences and goals, as well as images of the past."[46] Veterans very often begin to organize without creating official structures, but due to their number, they are able to establish pressure on the government to not only take care of their needs but also commemorate their existence and role in the victories of the past.[47] There was not only their shared identity as soldiers and veterans that made them organize, but also the realization that, as an organized group, they could put pressure on the state to really take note of their interests. In 1786, veterans of the Prussian Army established the *Militärische*

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[43] Anamarija Bogovic, Mate Mihanovic, Natasa Jokic-Begic, and Ana Svagelj, "Personal Space of Male War Veterans With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder," *Environment and Behavior* 46:8 (2014), 932.

[44] Charles S. Milliken, Jennifer L. Auchterlonie, Charles W. Hoge, "Longitudinal Assessment of Mental Health Problems Among Active and Reserve Component Soldiers Returning from the Iraq War," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 298 (2007), 2141-2148; Steven L. Sayers, Victoria A. Farrow, Jennifer Ross and David W. Oslin, "Family Problems Among Recently Returned Military Veterans Referred for a Mental Health Evaluation," *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 70 (2009), 163-170.

[45] Jill S. Compton, Madhavi K. Reddy, Laura A. Meis, Christopher R. Erbes, and Melissa A. Polusny, "Associations Among Experiential Avoidance, Couple Adjustment, and Interpersonal Aggression in Returning Iraqi War Veterans and Their Partners," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 79:4 (2011), 516; Joan M. Cook, Richard Thompson, David S. Riggs, James C. Coyne, Javaid I. Sheikh, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Current Relationship Functioning Among World War II Ex-Prisoners of War," *Journal of Family Psychology* 18 (2004), 36-45.

[46] Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[47] Joanna Wawrzyniak, *Veterans, Victims, and Memory: The Politics of the Second World War in Communist Poland* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2015), 23 and 27.

Schützenbruderschaft (Military Brotherhood of Defence) to express their demands for funds that would secure the burials of dead soldiers.[48] Polish historian Joanna Wawrzyniak highlights the further steps taken to create more effective organizations by pointing to a later development:

> At the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Deutscher Kriegerbund* (German Warrior League), a federation of veterans' organizations that had over a million members in total, created a unified system of finance that organized welfare payments, set the level of membership fees, and gathered surplus monies from interest on capital as well as from various commercial initiatives, such as fencing schools.[49]

The First World War was therefore also a watershed with regard to the history of veterans' organizations, as an increasing number of mentally or physically injured soldiers needed to organize themselves to demand financial security, proper commemoration, and the emphasis of their historical role.

Ever since, veteran groups, including the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars in the US, have been successfully securing the rights and advocating the interests of war veterans. One should, however, not forget that the 30 million US veterans that are related to the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War are not representing "a monolithic bloc. Their wars separated them, as did race, gender, and a host of other factors."[50] While new diagnoses were introduced with every new war, e.g. "shell shock" in relation to the First World War, "combat exhaustion" in the Second World War, and PTSD since the Vietnam War era, the role of veterans within their societies was also renegotiated.[51] The values of the latter determine the perception of soldiers during a war and of veterans in the post-war order: "Combat by its very definition demands the sacrifice of civilian virtues important to the majority of society. The extent to which a warrior pursues this path defines how far he must depart from social norms. In a similar sense, this journey also determines just how far a veteran must return to reenter the society that produced him."[52] To negotiate the perception of veterans and their acts in post-war societies, the

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[48] Ibid., 28.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Gambone, *Long Journeys Home*, 3.

[51] Ibid., 51-52.

[52] Ibid., 53.

former soldiers began to use their own organizational strength, as expressed by veteran associations and other organizations. A shared "sense of entitlement" is the basis for these groups, whose aim is a representation of veterans' demands and necessities.[53] Thereby, as Alcalde and Núñez Seixas highlighted, "veterans' movements have endangered the stability of states and contributed to provoking political and governmental change."[54] While many works stress the impact of veterans' organizations from a limited, mostly national perspective, "the juxtaposition of national cases seldom provides insights beyond the customary assertions of the shared veteran identity and sentiment across the world. While the nation state framework was perhaps the most important for veterans' themselves, it is not necessarily the one that historians should assume in their analysis."[55] Of course, this should also not lead to an oversimplification within the historical research on veterans. A quick look at the American perspective already shows that there are multiple angles from which a closer look at the history of veterans seems to be promising.

Many veterans in the interwar period in the US struggled with the obstacles that did not allow them to immediately return to their previous physical labor, which meant they were unable, e.g. due to physical or mental disabilities, to continue their pre-war work, something that was essential to their personal image and construction of masculinity.[56] Returning from the battlefields of Europe, the veterans now had to wage paper wars to secure an income. With regard to this struggle, they shared the fate of veterans in Europe, where the "the creation of masses of individually affected war victims—either men, bringing with them some physical handicap, or women, finding themselves deprived of their husbands after the war."[57] In Austria, like in the US, veterans' associations were set up immediately after the First World War to secure the economic interests of war invalids and to negotiate the further status of veterans within their societies.[58]

The struggle between the veterans and their society can also be traced through the communication attempts of those who had fought in both the First and the Second World War. Aaron William Moore, a specialist in Sino-Japanese relations, pointed out that there

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[53] Alcalde and Núñez Seixas, "Introduction," 3.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Michael J. Lansing, "'Salvaging the Man Power of America': Conservation, Manhood, and Disabled Veteransduring World War I," *Environmental History* 14:1 (2009), 33.

[57] Verena Pawlowsky and Harald Wendelin, "Government Care of War Widows and Disabled Veterans after World War I," in *From Empire to Republic: Post-World War I Austria*, eds. Günter Bischof, Fritz Plasser and Peter Berger (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2010), 171.

[58] Ibid., 172-174.

were "four major categories of veterans' textual remembrances" in relation to the Second World War in East Asia; these can, however, be identified for other conflicts as well. These are

> 'memory writing:' immediate post-war diaries (wherein servicemen and veterans would reflect on the war);
> court depositions, public confessions, and popularly published collections of 'testimonies', which I will refer to as 'testimonial literature;'
> surveys, recorded interviews, oral histories, and commercially published works; [and] self-published memoirs.[59]

In these textual remembrances, veterans tried to describe and explain their experiences to a wider public, but the texts also contained an argument about why the contribution of the veterans to the war effort should not be forgotten. They consequently must be considered an attempt to communicate with the post-war societies and redefine the veterans' position within this new order.

Many veterans therefore also become politically active, sometimes even politically radicalized, although there is no indication that veterans per se present a higher level of radicalism within post-political war orders.[60] Nevertheless, they do respond to social inequalities.

In post-WWII Georgia, to name just one example, African American veterans were dealing with their war experience in a rather hostile environment. US historian Jennifer E. Brooks highlighted that

> southern veterans […] found their sense of manhood and citizenship magnified by meeting the challenges of military service and war. Fulfilling this duty heightened veterans' sense of themselves—of who they were and where they fit into postwar political life. In putting a premium on the role of men as citizens—as soldiers performing the highest of civic duties—the war tended to strengthen the historic connection between male identity and political rights.[61]

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[59] Aaron William Moore, "The Problem of Changing Language Communities: Veterans and Memory Writing in China,Taiwan, and Japan," *Modern Asian Studies* 45:2 (2011), *China in World War II, 1937-1945: Experience, Memory, and Legacy*, 402.

[60] E. M. Schreiber, "Enduring Effects of Military Service? Opinion Differences between U.S. Veterans and Nonveterans," *Social Forces* 57:3 (1979), 824 and 837.

[61] Jennifer E. Brooks, *Defining the Peace: World War II Veterans, Race, and the Remaking of Southern Political Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4.

The war had consequently stimulated the ambitions and political demands of the African American veterans, who returned into a society that was willingly and purposely neglecting the participation of this special group in the US war effort. The war experience, however, "gave them a special claim, they were certain, upon the American democratic conscience, especially in the notoriously undemocratic South. Thus, returning veterans proved to be the most politicized and ubiquitous of organized citizen groups throughout the South and Georgia in the first years after the war."[62] Those who returned from the Second World War would therefore establish the Georgia Veterans League (GVL), in which black veterans would organize themselves. It was "[t]heir experiences with segregation and discrimination within the armed forces [that] heightened their frustration with southern racial practices even as the skills and experience afforded by military training instilled ambitions for a better life after the war."[63] It was therefore the experiences abroad and the confrontation with the realities at home that stimulated a political radicalization of African American veterans in post-WWII America. That the complaints of these veterans were justifiable is shown when one considers the racial limitations with regard to the G.I. Bill of Rights of 1944, which, on closer analysis, reveals "the very limited socioeconomic impact that the war had on the majority of black veterans who returned to the Deep South and remained there during the postwar era."[64]

The lives of the veterans in the decades after the Second World War were then shaped by the international conflict of the superpowers, the Cold War with all its proxy wars on the global periphery that nevertheless had a tremendous impact on the men who would become the veterans of the next generation.[65] While being confronted with new wars to secure US interests abroad, the veterans were also impacted by the ideological struggle for hearts and minds, and the American Legion took a clear anti-communist position within it. There was, however, also the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) organization, which took a stand against US politics and the Vietnam War and whose members "came from working-class backgrounds," and while "[a]lmost none went to Vietnam as radicals, [t]he majority of VVAWers moved to the left as a result of their experiences in Southeast

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[62] Ibid., 5.

[63] Ibid., 14.

[64] David H. Onkst, "'First a Negro... Incidentally a Veteran': Black World War Two Veterans and the G. I. Billof Rights in the Deep South, 1944-1948," *Journal of Social History* 31:3 (1998), 517.

[65] Alcalde and Núñez Seixas, "Introduction," 4-5. For a discussion of the Cold War peipheries see: Frank Jacob, ed. *Peripheries of the Cold War* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2015).

Asia and their subsequent politicization at home."[66] The VVAW would eventually become an important part of the anti-war protests in the United States, while the local chapters helped veterans to get back into society after their experiences in Vietnam.[67]

All in all, as has hopefully been shown in this rather short introduction, veterans offer an extremely important subject of historical study. The history of those who returned from war, often harmed and injured physically or psychologically, has to deal with the new social orders that had also changed as a consequence of war. The history of the relationship between veterans and societies offers a better insight into the dynamics that shape both. The present volume will therefore try to highlight some of the approaches towards and some examples for the study of veterans in post-war societies and hopefully stimulate further research in the field.

The Contributions

The chapters of the present volume provide an array of topics and approaches that highlight the veterans' perspectives and those of the societies and politics that have to deal with them as a memory or interest group. The order is simply chronological, but naturally some of the main questions overlap. What are the problems for veterans when it comes to their reintegration into post-war societies? How do these societies react towards the former soldiers? And what are their individual and organizational necessities, and how do the veterans try to achieve them? That the self-organization of veterans is something that relates back to their war experiences, e.g. as prisoners of war (POWs), will be discussed by Anastasiia Ivanova, who provides an analysis of the self-organization of Ukrainian soldiers in the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) Army and the Ukrainian Galician Army (UGA), who were interned in Poland and Czechoslovakia. This case is of special interest, as the self-organization of soldiers in this instance also functions as a representation of national demands, which at the time were not yet backed by an existent nation state. Sally Carlton then discusses how returning soldiers demanded their rights as citizens and provides a critical insight into their "rights and duties," as they were defined and perceived by French veterans in the aftermath of the First World War.

The physical and mental issues presented by war injuries and how post-war societies and states tried to deal with them will be discussed by Evan P. Sullivan and then by Sonja Petersen and Thomas Schuetz for the American and German cases, respectively. Both the

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[66] Andrew Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: NYU Press, 1999), 2.

[67] Ibid., 3.

US and Germany had to deal with a large number of injured veterans. How they did it and which problems arose in relation to their injured bodies and minds will be discussed in detail in these two chapters. Verena Moritz's chapter will deal with the experience of former POWs in interwar Austria and how veterans' associations tried to address the issue. The chapter shows that veterans not only created economic issues but also tended to gain political influence. This political perspective is also described by Robert Niebuhr, who discusses the political awakening of Chaco War veterans in Bolivia since the 1930s.

That POWs and soon to be veterans were often considered a political risk, especially in the early period of the Cold War, is shown in the chapters by Dieter Bacher and Frank Jacob, who deal with Austrian and Japanese POWs in the Soviet Union and their repatriation. While the former were considered a source of information by the British Secret Services, the latter were perceived as a communist menace and a fifth column of the Soviet Union in Japan. Nevertheless, both nation states had to deal with the repatriation of these veterans, who had to be reintegrated into their societies again. The same can be said of Canadian veterans of the Vietnam War, who struggled to be remembered and commemorated within Canada after their return. Their story is told in Sean J. McLaughlin's chapter. Stefan Karner and Harald Knoll then highlight how veterans had to fight for their rights for decades before the Austrian Compensation Laws for POWs finally provided financial compensation for their suffering, which had been officially unrecognized by Austrian society for a very long time.

In the final chapter, Michael Doidge provides a detailed analysis of the development of the Department of Defense's Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury and shows how attempts were made to improve the situation of veterans who returned from war with PTSD and other trauma. As said before, the present volume only provides a glimpse into the larger field of historical studies dealing with war veterans, their individual problems, as well as their reintegration into post-war societies. There is still much research to be done, especially since new generations of veterans will need our societies' attention after the wars of today as well as those still to come.

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