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Michael Epkenhans

Lessons learnt? The Impact of the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference on the Military – a global Perspective: Introduction

On 18 January 1919, the 48th anniversary of the founding of the former German Empire at Versailles, the leading statesmen of the Allied and Associated Powers, as they would call themselves, convened in the famous Clock Room of the Quai d'Orsay, the French Foreign Ministry, in Paris. Here, in Paris, they wanted to start their negotiations about both the founding of a Covenant of Nations as well as a peace treaty with Germany and her former Allies. While the Covenant of Nations was supposed 'to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security'¹ in the future by the acceptance of new rules and obligations by all member states, the treaty with Germany was to end an era of great power rivalries which had eventually caused a World War in which millions had died either on the battlefields or the home-fronts due to hunger and illnesses.

When the war eventually ended in November 1918, revolutionary turmoil swept away century-old monarchies and established new democratic republics in Germany and Austria. In Bulgaria, Czar Ferdinand had abdicated after the signing of the Armistice with the Allies at the end of September 1918 to save the throne for his son, Boris III. Some of the states which had entered the war in 1914 did not even exist anymore. In the former Dual Monarchy ethnic minorities, already supported by the Allies during the war, had established their own nation-states like Czechoslovakia or, like Croatia, decided to unite with Serbia. The former Ottoman Empire had not only fallen apart but was treated like a colony open to new occupiers like Greece and Italy, although Britain and France had already secured their share in a secret treaty during the war.

After long and difficult inter-allied negotiations, the peace treaty with Germany was signed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles on 28 June 1919. Place and date were both highly symbolic. The Empire had been founded in the Hall of Mirrors in 1871 during the Franco-German War; it was there it was supposed to learn that the Allies wanted to '*keep Germany down*' (Margaret Macmillan) in the future. Moreover, 28 June was the fifth anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand,

¹ Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany signed at Versailles 28 June 1919, <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles> (last retrieved 7.2.2022), Part I.

the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne in Sarajevo. Austria's decision, fully supported by Germany, to take revenge by crushing Serbia had been the decisive event which had triggered the war in 1914.

The Treaty of Versailles has attracted great worldwide attention ever since. For the victors, Germany had been the backbone of the Central Powers. Without its army and its navy, its economic and financial strengths, and its willingness or, better, its stubbornness to fight for final victory, the war would hardly have lasted for more than four years. Most probably, however, without Germany and the blank cheque issued by its leadership to Austria-Hungary, the war would probably not have started in 1914. By and large, the Allies fulfilled the expectations of their people. In the future, Germany would, at best, only be a medium power, with only one-fifth of its former territory, lacking much of its former military strength, economic and financial resources and its colonies.

In the following months, Germany's former allies, Austria² and Hungary³, Bulgaria⁴, and eventually the former Ottoman Empire⁵ had to sign similar treaties. Like the Treaty of Versailles, these treaties also defined the new boundaries of each respective state, dealt with financial and economic questions, aerial navigations, ports, waterways, and railways as well as the protection of ethnic minorities or war graves.

Beginning with the Treaty of Versailles,⁶ all treaties contained military clauses which dealt extensively with the respective armed forces of the Allies' former enemies.⁷ These clauses were a new development in the history of peacemaking. However fiercely states had fought each other before and however severe the respective treaties had been for the defeated, they had never included restrictions for the latter's military. The Paris Treaty system was, thus, the attempt to secure peace by at least partly

² Treaty of Peace between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Austria, signed at St. Germain-en-Laye, 10 September 1919, <www.forost.ungarisches-institut.de/pdf/19190910-1.pdf> (Last updated 7.2.2022). Cf. Part V, articles 118–155.

³ Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary, signed at Trianon, 4 June 1920, <https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Trianon> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Cf. Part V, articles 102–143.

⁴ Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria, signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine, 27 November 1919, <www.gwpda.org/1918p/neuilly.html> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Cf. Part IV, articles 64–100.

⁵ Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey, signed at Sèvres, 10 August 1920, <https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Section_I_Articles_1_-_260> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Cf. Part V, articles 152–207.

⁶ Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany signed at Versailles 28 June 1919, <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Part V, articles 159–213.

⁷ For the respective clauses in the respective peace treaties cf. Treaty of Peace between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Austria, signed at St. Germain-en-Laye, 10 September 1919, <www.forost.ungarisches-institut.de/pdf/19190910-1.pdf> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Cf. Part V, articles 118–155; Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary, signed at Trianon, 4 June 1920, <www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Trianon> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Cf. Part V, articles 102–143; Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria, signed at Neuilly-sur-Seine, 27 November 1919, <www.gwpda.org/1918p/neuilly.html> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Cf. Part IV, articles 64–100; Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Turkey, signed at Sèvres, 10 August 1920, <https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Section_I_Articles_1_-_260> (last retrieved 7.2.2022). Cf. Part V, articles 152–207.

disarming nations regarded as potential threats to peace. To ensure this aim, all military clauses followed the same pattern. They limited the size, recruiting, and structure of armies and navies as well as their warfighting capabilities by allowing only small numbers of mostly outdated weaponry and by completely prohibiting modern weapons like airplanes, submarines, or heavy guns. To enforce these stipulations, the Allies also established Military Inter-Allied Commissions of Control.

Whereas all peace treaties themselves, the developments and events surrounding them and their impact on national and international politics are well-known, scholarly research has very much neglected the military clauses despite their political, military, and psychological importance as *Markus Pöhlmann* rightly argues in his article.⁸ In an era in which powerful armies and navies were not only the means of self-defence, offensive power politics, or power projection overseas, but also important symbols of national pride and the status of states among the powers of the world, these clauses were hardly less humiliating than the *war guilt* article. Of course, this humiliation was probably most felt in Germany whose army and navy had always played an important role in national and international politics as well as in society. In 1920, this once proud army whose strength had amounted to 754,000 men on the eve of World War I had to be reduced to 100,000 men, its navy had to shrink from 80,000 to 15,000 equipped with limited numbers of outdated arms and ships. Austria was allowed 30,000, Hungary 35,000, and Bulgaria 20,000 men. The Ottoman Empire was even only allowed a small palace guard for the sultan. To soothe the feelings of their former enemies, all restrictions were justified as 'the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations.'⁹ Although this preamble reflected the aims which US President Woodrow Wilson, Lord Cecil, and many others deeply shocked by the arms races before 1914 and the violence between 1914 and 1918 had pursued when they laid the foundations for the Covenant of Nations, it was doubtful whether this justification would convince the former enemies in the long-run unless the Allies themselves would start reducing their own armies and navies considerably. Although naval disarmament would indeed make some progress in the 1920s commencing with the Washington Naval Treaty in 1922 and further agreements to follow in 1930 and 1936, general disarmament remained stalled.¹⁰ Collective security and disarmament were too closely intertwined to allow progress, at least from the French point of view, but from other nations as well. Moreover, when the League of Nations finally invited all states to a Disarmament Conference in Geneva in early 1932, the world had again begun to change. Japan's annexation of Manchuria in 1931 was only the first step on the road to a new World War. Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Japan soon left no doubt that they would accept no restrictions on their armaments. Any

⁸ See below, pp. 131–133.

⁹ Cf. Preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany signed at Versailles 28 June 1919, <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles> (last retrieved 7.2.2022).

¹⁰ Cf. Zara Steiner, 'The League of Nations and the Quest for Security,' in Rolf Ahmann, Adolf M. Birke and Michael Howard (eds.), *The Quest for Stability: Problems of West European Security 1918–1957*, Oxford: German Historical Institute, 1993, pp. 35–70.

restrictions would have destroyed their plans of expanding into regions so far dominated by Britain, France, and the United States of America.

The problem of disarmament in general and of partly disarming former enemies were not the only challenges politicians and the military faced after the end of World War I.

The lessons the military had to learn from the war were even more challenging. In 1914, most generals hoped that the war would be short and that the armies they mobilized would be strong enough to achieve victory in a decisive battle. Soon they faced new challenges many of them neither expected nor were prepared for, including trench warfare, the widespread use of gas, the development of tanks, and the role of aircraft on the battlefield, or of the submarine on the high seas, to name a few. Similarly, they soon realized the importance of the steady supply of raw materials and foodstuffs as well, as of an efficient arms industry and the support of the populace in the era of *people's wars*.

The papers presented in this volume are the results of a conference held at the Centre for Military History and Social Sciences held at Potsdam in 2019. They address these problems from the perspectives of the military of some of the former belligerents. Although the paper presented on the important developments in France is missing, the articles in this volume, covering a wide range of former belligerents, describe and analyze which lessons the military tried to learn from the war or, perhaps, did not.

For Japan, the outbreak of war in Europe was almost a *golden* opportunity to enlarge its own empire in the Far East. Without any obligation by treaty to enter the war, the Japanese government had, after some internal debate, decided to join Britain and its allies in mid-August. Soon, both the Japanese Army and Navy conquered Germany's colonies on the Chinese mainland and in the Pacific. Although Japan continuously refused all requests to send troops to Europe to fight in the trenches, it nevertheless had a deep interest in the changing nature of warfare. In his article, *Shohei Abe* describes the impact of World War I on the tactical development of the Japanese Army. Even before the fighting had ended in Europe and elsewhere, the Japanese army had even reenacted a battle on the Western Front, 'first to understand the new way of both defensive and offensive tactics adopted in the war; second to study the effects and employment techniques of the new equipment and munitions; and third to establish guidelines for planning and executing the training of this kind for field units.'¹¹ The development and introduction of infantry manuals in the 1920s and 1930s is one way to understand to what extent the impact of Japanese military culture and traditional concepts of fighting prevented the adoption of the experiences of European armies during and after World War I.

In his article, *Dirk Bönker* analyzes the impact of World War I on the United States and its military. The US had only reluctantly entered the war on the side of the Entente in April 1917. Germany's decision to declare unrestricted submarine warfare as well as the publication of the so-called Zimmermann telegram had paved the way for US President Woodrow Wilson to eventually convince Congress to sup-

¹¹ See below, p. 14.

port his decision to join Great Britain and France. US support proved important for the Allied war effort and eventually victory. However, its meaning for US foreign policy in the future would remain a matter of debate for many years to come. Wilson and his successors hoped, as Bönker argues, following Adam Tooze's arguments, to 'frame a transformation of world affairs' and secure their country a position as a 'truly undisputed arbiter' of global politics. The supporters of this strategy hoped that economics and ideology would be sufficient to exercise this power. Accordingly, they tried 'to marginalize the importance of military force, threat, and deterrence as the regulator of international relations, thus avoiding a militaristic transformation of the United States itself.'¹² While the future seemed bleak for both the army and the navy and their hopes of further expansion, this strategy did not mean that US policymakers were ignorant about the value of military force. In the inter-war years, military spending on the armed forces remained significantly higher than before World War I. The development of the US Navy, 'the nation's premier military service and the cornerstone of US defence policy and strategy',¹³ is the best example of this development. Despite the restrictions of the Washington-treaty system as well as the resistance of civilian politicians, the naval leadership managed not only to develop capabilities, doctrines, and understandings, but also to build up a *Two Ocean Fleet* in 1940 which proved necessary to fight successfully new foes only a year later. As Bönker convincingly shows, the US Navy could rightly claim to command the world's seas and thus the world. This was, however, possible only due to the decision of leading US policymakers to 'turn the country's latent military strength into actual military power.'¹⁴ As a result, the United States was transformed into 'a new sort of military "superpower" capable of acts of extraordinary military mobilization and war-making.'

In late 1918, the dream of many Serbs came true: the collapse of Austria-Hungary paved the way for uniting all Serbs under Serbian rule. Since many other ethnic groups like Croats and Slovenes had also lived in these parts of the Balkans, the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia would become a multi-ethnic state like the Dual Monarchy which had just vanished. State-building and nation-building, therefore, also meant building an army which included all ethnic groups. *Dalibor Denda* describes this difficult development in his article. Yugoslavia's political and military leadership faced numerous problems in building up an army as well as a navy and an air force from scratch. Education, training, and organization proved difficult. Similarly, since former Austrian officers were often better educated than their Serb comrades, rivalries were quite common for the Austrians often attained higher ranks than the Serbs. These problems were aggravated by the sympathies which many Croatian officers had for Croatian independence. The impact of French military doctrine with its emphasis on firepower instead of manoeuvre warfare, which had helped the former Serbian Army to be successful in the Balkan wars, and in the war against Austria-Hungary in 1914 and 1915, eventually proved a source of military weakness in 1941

¹² See below, pp. 25–26.

¹³ See below, p. 26.

¹⁴ See below, *ibid.*

instead. Finally, the interference of King Alexander I in military affairs also proved detrimental, for his reorganization of the general staff played a crucial role in the decline of military professionalism, as Denda convincingly argues. Thus, though this judgement seems harsh, victory in 1918 was one of the origins of defeat in 1941.

When Britain entered the war in 1914, it could and eventually had to rely upon its dominions and colonies. They supplied men and materiel at an increasingly rate. One of the pillars of British strength was Australia, one of the white dominions overseas. In his article, *James Goldrick* describes Australia's part, as he calls it, in the search for an effective British Empire naval strategy for the Indo-Pacific between 1918 and 1923. This seemed necessary because of the rising tensions between Australia and Japan. Australia regarded Japan's occupation of former German islands in the Pacific with increasing suspicion. Commercial rivalries as well as Australia's intention to protect *White Australia* against Japanese immigrants further contributed to these tensions. The difficulties of any future strategy were manifold. Apart from inter-service rivalries in the Dominions themselves as well as the latter's outright rejection of the idea of the establishment of an Imperial Navy in 1918 for political reasons, the Royal Navy had enormous problems in deploying units to the Far East. To some extent, the development of a strategy which, on the one hand, deterred Japan, and which, on the other hand, contained mechanisms for the Dominions to have a say in both planning and decision-making, resembled the squaring of the circle. Eventually, these problems were overcome. Singapore was to become the main base of a core force 'to serve as the base for both a defensive campaign to preserve British holdings in the Far East and protect the sea lines of communications in the Indian Ocean, as well as screening Australia and New Zealand from the possibility of invasion or major raid.'¹⁵ The Washington Naval Conference, despite its restrictions for British naval building, had, at least, one important result – the replacement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance with a multi-lateral pact which included the United States and France. This new pact soothed feelings in the Dominions, which was not only to improve relations with the United States but to increase their security, for Japan was not allowed to militarize the newly acquired islands in the Pacific. For the time being, 'the main fleet strategy and the development of the Singapore base were both reasonable concepts in the wake of the First World War and they probably together constituted the best means by which the British Empire could pool its limited resources and develop a capability to counter a Japanese offensive.'¹⁶ In hindsight, this strategy proved wrong; however, any such judgement is ahistorical for 1941 was not 1921 or 1923, let alone the fact that no alternative was in sight at that time for an Empire so widely dispersed which depended absolutely on the maintenance of its sea communications.

Like Yugoslavia, Poland did not exist as an independent state before 1918. However, many Poles fought as soldiers during the war albeit on three different sides: Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the German Empire. When the war ended in 1918, none of the empires existed anymore. Most importantly, however, 123 years after it had been divided by these empires among themselves in the 18th century,

¹⁵ See below, p. 62.

¹⁶ See below, p. 67.

Polish politicians declared Poland's independence on 11 November 1918, the same day Germany signed the Armistice with the Allies. In his article, *Roman Kochmowski* describes the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on Poland and its military. The dilemma of Poland's newly regained independence was manifold. First, its long borders with Germany in the West and Russia in the East were difficult to defend, especially if both countries attacked Poland at the same time. Second, Poland did not trust its friends in the West. In Polish eyes, despite all promises, France seemed to prefer an alliance with Russia, which it hoped would eventually free itself from the Bolsheviks. Therefore, the French government had no interest in strengthening its alliance with Poland. Third, Poland's leadership continuously underestimated the Reichswehr until the mid-1930s. As a result, all war games regarded Soviet Russia and not Germany as Poland's main enemy. Fourth, instead of trying to conclude an alliance with either of its more powerful neighbours, Russia or Germany, Poland had only one ally, Romania, which, in turn, was not really very strong. Border disputes with neighbouring Czechoslovakia, and Hungarian revisionism, left no room for strengthening one's own position towards Poland's likely enemies in the West and the East. In any case, the Treaty of Versailles, though it fulfilled the hopes of all Poles after more than a century of oppression by other powers, proved the beginning of a new future conflict in which Poland's existence would once again be at stake.

After long internal debates, Italy joined the Entente powers in May 1915. For Italy's future, this decision seemed to offer more advantages than did either neutrality or an entry into the war on the side of its former allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary. Contrary to all expectations, Italy had suffered enormous losses in the battles fought in Northern Italy right until the Armistice in November 1918. Moreover, the war had not only divided the country but shattered its economy, not to speak of the incredible hardships for the great majority of the populace. In his article, *Nicola Labanca* analyzes the challenges of an *easy peace* after a difficult war, as he rightly describes the situation in Italy after the fighting ended. Despite the victory, the situation was, as Labanca rightly argues, by no means easy. Incredible political instability at home, international tensions, economic emergencies, very low military budgets both under liberal as well as fascist governments, and problems within the military were only some of the difficulties the political and military leaderships faced in the aftermath of the war. Traditionalists and modernists in the military academies and schools as well as in military journals and numerous officers in their memoirs discussed the lessons that should be learnt from the last war. Translations of foreign books on the war as well as the writings of theorists like Giulio Douhet and J.F.C. Fuller were also part of this debate. As in other countries, critical debates on the devastating Italian defeat at Caporetto and its lessons were eventually silenced because myths were politically more important than history. Similarly, for example, the political and military leadership never seriously dealt with the feelings of the millions of conscripts who had fought in the war. Many of them were convinced that such a war should happen never again and became pacifists or anti-militarists. As a result, they did not understand why the consent of the masses to any kind of war was crucial to military success. In his conclusion, Labanca concedes that the debate on lessons learnt in Italy is partly unsatisfactory and remains an enigma. How, he wonders,

could military leaders prepare and then wage war against neighbouring countries like Yugoslavia and France, or in the African colonies, with reduced budgets and with armaments inferior to other great powers? The answer to this question does, of course, require further research.

Although Britain had stood with her backs against the wall in early 1918 when the Imperial German Army had launched a great offensive to crush the Allied armies, it eventually won the war together with her Allies. For *Andrew Lambert*, the war had once again proven the overall importance of seapower for Britain despite the victories of the British Army on the battlefields in Flanders, Northern France, and the Middle East. Most importantly from the naval point of view, the High Seas Fleet which had challenged Britain's supremacy as the leading world sea power since the turn of the century had disappeared from the oceans by scuttling its ships in June 1919. Just as in 1814–15 after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain hoped that peace would grant long-term stability and a rapid return to *normal* economic activity. As before, the Royal Navy was to play an important role in achieving this aim. By and large, Britain and its Navy were successful, despite the looming threat of a new arms race with the USA or American attempts to undermine Britain's seapower by establishing the principle of *Freedom of the Seas*. In this case, the British government and its admirals successfully defended Britain's status as the leading seapower of the world, despite some concessions to the United States during the Washington Naval Conference in 1922. They were, as Lambert convincingly argues, due 'to the same deep-rooted commitment to sea power strategy and a seapower identity'¹⁷ that had secured success in the centuries before 1914. This helped to defend Britain's dominance on the oceans of the world for another 25 years. These successes could, however, hardly disguise the important cultural impact of World War I on Britain and its Navy: 'Five long years of large-scale military activity and the unprecedented cost in lives and treasure had challenged the critical cultural base of seapower, and the nation chose to recall the war as one of sacrifice on land, rather than success at sea.'¹⁸ Another world war with even greater losses and fundamental changes in international politics during the Cold War was to prove this change. The golden era of British world and naval supremacy was over. At best, Britain was a medium power despite her nuclear arsenal and permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

For Austria, the end of World War I was a turning point both in its political and military history. The Dual Monarchy fell apart, and so did her once proud Imperial and Royal Army. *Christian Ortner* describes the developments from the signing of the Armistice on 3 November 1918 and the buildup of a new, preliminary *Volkswehr* in the last days of the Empire in 'German-Austria' until the founding of the *Bundesheer* in 1920. It is indeed striking to see the gap between provisional planning and reality as well as between political and military goals. Whereas the military wanted a proper army capable of fighting enemies in neighbouring countries like Moravia or Yugoslavia, members of the political left only wanted a *Volkswehr* to defend the new order at home, thus ignoring the apprehension of the people in the border regions in

¹⁷ See below, p. 112.

¹⁸ See below, *ibid.*

the tumultuous months of the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy. In the event, the *Volkswehr* did, however, protect Austria's borders in the Burgenland, in Carinthia and in Styria. Lack of personnel, materiel, and finance also haunted the new *Volkswehr* in its early days. Following the signing of the Treaty of St. Germain which stipulated the size and structure of Austria's army the *Volkswehr* was finally dissolved and replaced by the *Bundesheer*. Despite all problems, the *Volkswehr* was a success because it saved the new Republic from coups either from the political left or right. Whereas the integration of the so-called *Red Guards* helped prevent a Bolshevik uprising, the social democratic orientation of most members of the *Volkswehr* was an important instrument against any reactionary coups. The *Bundesheer* followed this example. Apart from supporting local authorities during natural disasters, it also fulfilled its main task - namely defending the Republic - in the uprisings of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

In his article, *Markus Pöhlmann* goes back to the final days of the war, describes the negotiations at Versailles and the different concepts of the Allied powers of German disarmament, before analyzing their impact on the Reichswehr and how its leadership tried to find solutions which would enable it to keep up with future enemies despite these restrictions. He contends that it would be wrong to explain the structure and spirit of the Reichswehr by only referring to the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Rather, 'the four and a half years of an increasingly total war had already left their traces and had triggered change that could not be undone.'¹⁹ Pöhlmann also rightly argues that the whole architecture of the treaty contained *military clauses* without using this term. Territorial losses, for example, not only entailed the loss of military bases like Danzig, but also demographic losses which in turn had a deep impact on the recruitable or even war-experienced male population. Similarly, the demilitarisation of border areas prevented a military infrastructure against France. Contrary to the intentions of the victorious powers, the military clauses had a paradoxical impact on the Reichswehr as well as on German society. On the one hand, they shifted 'the military discourse into the civilian world, which - in turn - became more bellicose than ever before.' On the other hand, they 'created an officer corps that, despite all external traditionalism, was critical and focused on its profession like hardly any other in the military modern period.'²⁰ Most importantly, however, 'since the military itself had become the subject of the Peace Treaty, it had not only a general political but a vested professional interest in a revision of this peace - if necessary by cheating, by passive obstruction, or by the use of force.'²¹ The history of the Reichswehr as well as of the Wehrmacht was soon to prove the resolve of Germany's political and, of course, military leadership to revise the treaty and make Germany a great, if not supreme power again - with disastrous consequences not only for its neighbours but for Europe and the world as a whole.

Like Australia, South Africa, another British dominion, also fought on the side of the British despite the scars the Boer War had inflicted upon many South Africans

¹⁹ See below, p. 145.

²⁰ See below, p. 147.

²¹ See below, p. 148.

barely more than a decade earlier. Almost a quarter of a million South Africans of all races loyally served in South-West and East Africa and France, in the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. Former Boer leader and South African Minister of Defence General Jan Smuts played an important role during the Paris peace conference. When the war ended, South Africa had to demobilize. Thean Potgieter describes the challenges of demobilisation, the question of Imperial defence, which continued to be of great importance for Britain, the British Empire, and South Africa, and the problems of the reorganisation of the Union Defence Force (UDF). Although South Africa was secure due to its position at the southern end of the African continent, it was not unlikely that South Africa would again be involved in a future European or even global war due to her enormous resources. South Africa, however, not only had to prepare for such a scenario but also for domestic unrest. After many ups and downs, international developments in South African defence thinking became more ambitious, though without achieving much success. When World War II broke out, the UDF was not ready, for political leaders had focussed on internal issues and hoped to remain neutral, while the military essentially considered operations in the sub-region as its primary focus. Hardly astonishing General Smuts regarded the period since the end of the war 'as a time of neglect, without visionary leadership and a thorough military intellectual discourse.'²² Though this judgment seems true in many respects, Potgieter nevertheless argues that the UDF made some progress by transitioning 'from a colonial army to a proper defence force which created a permanent land, air, and naval force along with the regulatory and bureaucratic infrastructure necessary to sustain it.'²³

Romania entered the war on the side of the Allies in August 1916. Despite the military defeat and finally the signing of a peace treaty with the Central Powers in April 1918, it eventually belonged to the victorious powers which, as *Carmen Rîjnoveanu* describes in her paper, benefitted from a 'significant increase in terms of Territory, population, and economic resources.'²⁴ On one hand, this success increased Romania's military potential. On the other hand, the fact that Romania was now surrounded by three revisionist powers, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Russia was a challenge for its political and military leaders for they always had to reckon with attacks from one, two, or even three sides. Although alliances with the Allies could help deter possible enemies from attack, Romania had to reshape its defence doctrine and both reorganize and enlarge as well as modernize its army. In the event, Romania's military was only partly successful because these tasks somehow resembled the squaring of the circle. Their attempt to achieve this aim nevertheless by 'developing manoeuvre tactics to allow more efficient deployment of means, capabilities, and forces towards the most threatening direction' proved unsuccessful.²⁵ Romania not only lacked an efficient infrastructure. The army also suffered from shortages in terms of equipment, capabilities, and modern technologies as well as an efficient arms industry, all of

²² See below, p. 163.

²³ See below, p. 164.

²⁴ See below, p. 165.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 176.

which were necessary to fight a modern war. Rîjnoveanu leaves no doubt that these deficiencies contributed to Romania's weak position on the eve of World War II. Her conclusion that 'Romania could not realistically reach the objective of securing the territorial defence within an exclusive military paradigm' seems true from an historical perspective.

All these examples show that the impact of World War I on armed forces is indeed interesting from a national, transnational and international perspective. For the first time in history, peace treaties tried to prevent new wars by both limiting the military capabilities of future aggressors and by developing new international organizations to secure peace. For those who advocated law and not simply power as the main principle of an international order, the system created by the statesmen who had convened in Paris in 1919 and 1920 to make peace, was the most important lesson which had to be learned from the war. Despite its many loopholes and its eventual failure in the 1930s, this development was a huge step forward in establishing the rule of law and creating a system of collective security. The founding of the United Nations in 1945 was an attempt to try to learn from history once more with more success than before despite many setbacks.

The military, of course, had different opinions of the lessons that had been learnt. Trench warfare had finally shattered the long-lasting concepts of a quick war with all its repercussions on society, industry, politics, and the military. Manuals had to be rewritten for successful warfare on the battlefield, new bases to be built for imperial defence, and new social classes to be integrated into the armed services. Similarly, mindsets had to change just as much as armies, navies, and air forces had to adapt to the new realities not only of future people's wars but also total wars. Finally, memory and commemoration had both to learn from the past as well as to honour the dead and wounded. Japanese aggression in the Far East in the early 1930s, Italy's attack on Ethiopia in the mid-1930s, and eventually Germany's decision to wage an expansionist and racist war in 1939 aiming at changing the map of Europe, perhaps even the whole world, are examples of countries whose main lesson learnt was how to prepare for, how to start and how to win the next war. Fortunately, these attempts which were responsible for incredible human losses and great destruction on all sides proved futile again.

It is an interesting challenge to add further examples to those dealt with here and to thus draw a more precise *map* of the impact of lost wars and peacemaking on politics, society, economics, international law, and, of course, the military in every single respect.