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Introduction

Modern War and the Militarization of Domestic Life

THE STATE AND THE HOME

By the summer of 1917, the horrific losses incurred during the First World War had helped forge a stronger alliance between the state and the home, between government officials and British feminists, over a shared interest in reproduction to sustain the nation.[1] A concrete manifestation of this aspect of total war occurred in late June 1917 when Great Britain celebrated its first National Baby Week, the culmination of wartime initiatives to promote infant welfare. Shortly thereafter, Ida O'Malley wrote an editorial – "Bombs and Babies and Reconstruction" – for the feminist paper the *Common Cause*, remarking on the startling set of circumstances that occurred during Baby Week. O'Malley began:

> Last Saturday morning as Baby Week was drawing to a close, Londoners suddenly saw a flight of invaders appearing out of the blue, and the streets that had been decorated in honour of the babies were shaken by the noise of bombs and by London's guns, as she defended herself against the foe. After the battle in the air was over, or had moved away

[1] For more on this comparatively, see Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890–1970: The Maternal Dilemma* (New York, 2005); and Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s–1950s* (London, 1991). For Britain, see Deborah Dwork, *War Is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898–1918* (London, 1987); and Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State in Britain and France, 1914–1915* (Cambridge, 1993), in particular on the expansion of welfare state policies around motherhood during wartime. A classic articulation of state interest in maternity remains Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop Journal* (Spring 1978), 9–35.

> from her immediate vicinity, thousands of London women and girls finished off their week's work in offices and shops and factories and hurried home to see whether their own dwellings were standing and their own families alive.... The day with all its contrasts, its blue sky, and sunshine, and babies, and menace of swift death, was altogether very characteristic of the strange times in which we live, and, very unlike anything we could have imagined before nineteen hundred and fourteen.

This experience prompted O'Malley to reflect on the changing nature of war and its implications for the future. She encouraged her readers to appreciate that since the start of the war:

> things which used to be separate in fact, or in our minds, have been violently thrown together, and, as it were, mixed up. In former days it used to be possible to arrange things in categories. One could still, if one wished, think of the state as separate from the home, of men as separate from women.... [T]hings which used to be thought as only interesting to men, such as military defences, are now perforce of immediate interest to women.[2]

The air raids that fell upon Londoners in broad daylight changed matters intensely and irrevocably. As O'Malley observed, the arrival of air warfare blurred boundaries between home front and frontline. Air raids transformed the relationship between combatants and civilians and, more important, between the state and the home. Those whom air raids affected had to confront an essential feature of modern and total warfare: every home could now come under fire. As a result, civilians mattered in wartime as never before.

Although "the Blitz," a shorthand term used here, as it has so often been, for the extensive aerial campaign that Germany waged against the United Kingdom in 1940, has come to symbolize *the* twentieth-century experience of British civilians under attack, Germany first launched air raids on Britain in 1914 and continued them throughout the First World War. With the advent of aerial warfare, civilians – which contemporaries usually signified as women and children – decisively became targets of war rather than a group shielded from its impact. Denounced initially as atrocities precisely because they attacked such innocents, by the end of the Second World War air raids had become an ever more acceptable military practice. Indeed, as the century progressed, air power came to be seen as a most effective way to conduct war, despite the certainty that aerial attacks invariably killed non-combatants.

[2] I[da] B. O'M[alley], "Bombs and Babies and Reconstruction," *Common Cause*, 13 July 1917.

War has always had consequences for civilians, but something profoundly new happened during the First World War.[3] As I have emphasized in previous work, the war gave rise to the expression "home front," dividing the necessary labor of civilians (gendered feminine) from that of "war front" soldiers (gendered masculine).[4] The air raid shattered this sense of separateness between the two fronts, forcing the state (albeit gradually) to acknowledge both its inability to isolate civilians from war's dangers and its urgent obligation, central to the national ability to wage war, to protect them from this new threat (or at least to attempt to do so). The air raid potentially brought all civilians into the war zone and thus made their ability to survive vital to sustaining the war effort.

The massive scale of attacks on civilians during the Second World War has to a great degree obscured the significance of the smaller scale, though still terrifying, raids of its predecessor. In his otherwise persuasive and fascinating study of the Blitz, Angus Calder overlooks the fact that many in Britain had been introduced to the idea of air raids, and the need for civilians to be stoical in their face, twenty years earlier.[5] More recently, Sonya Rose has discussed the rise of wartime civic republicanism as the essence of citizenship constructed during the Second World War.[6]

[3] Accounts of war from Herodotus and Thucydides to the present make this point. Recent work has tried to argue that the nature of warfare dramatically changed for Europeans with the Napoleonic wars; see, e.g., David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston, 2007). See also the discussion of parallels between 1792–1815 and 1914–1945 in Karen Hagemann, "Home/Front: The Military, Violence and Gender Relations in the Age of the World Wars," in *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schiller-Springorum (Oxford, 2002). Some of the critical response to Bell and others has suggested the limits to Bell's approach in terms of thinking about totalizing warfare; see, e.g., Peter Paret, Review of Bell in *American Historical Review* 112:5 (2007), 1489–1491. In a brief study of aerial attacks against Germany during the First World War, Christian Geinitz asserts that "bombing thus fulfilled a major prerequisite for total warfare: … eradication of the boundary between military and civil society." See Christian Geinitz, "The First Air War Against Noncombatants: Strategic Bombing of German Cities in World War I," in *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 2000), 224. For more on the concept of "militarization" to decribe war's impact on non-military affairs see John Gillis, "Introduction," in *The Militarization of the Western World*, ed. John Gillis (New Brunswick, NJ, 1989), and Michael Geyer, "The Militarization of Europe, 1914–1945," in *The Militarization of the Western World*, ed. Gillis.

[4] Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999).

[5] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London, 1991), ch. 1, quote from 2.

[6] Sonya O. Rose, "Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain," *American Historical Review* 103:4 (October 1998), 1147–1176. This argument is elaborated in Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime*

Her work makes significant contributions to our understanding of British identity during this war, but the influence of the changing nature of warfare itself on that identity falls outside the range of her study. This book engages constructively with the works of Calder and Rose by showing how the experience of air raids during the First World War prompted the construction of a type of civil identity during that war and in the interwar period that could be resurrected in the Second World War. Technology itself demanded new ways of thinking about the state and the home, producing a newly militarized yet democratic civilian citizen.

State agents sought to direct the process of identity construction and the manufacturing of consent to further state expansion into the domestic realm as they came to understand that modern warfare placed the security of every man, woman, and child among the highest national priorities. Complicating this process were notions developed prior to the First World War, and advanced by feminist pacifists during the war, that the "physical" force of men was distinct from the "moral" force of women but that each could form the core of separate but equal claims to citizenship. By virtue of their wielding a physical force, that is, by serving or even potentially serving in the military, men performed a vital, gender-specific task that earned them the right to participate in the nation's affairs, particularly by voting.[7] This argument was crucial to those who opposed the extension of the franchise to women. Feminists responded less by demanding the right to take up arms than by insisting that they offered the state a comparable, gender-specific, and vital moral force, because a world run by physical force was a dangerous thing. This moral force was expressed by their domestic and especially maternal duties (which were also of national interest), and this implied, moreover, that granting the vote to women and thereby empowering this moral force could lead to a world without war.

The First World War shifted this debate in somewhat unexpected ways. In 1916 military conscription was introduced, albeit in piecemeal form, and over the course of the war, women in Britain for the first time became official members of the armed forces in newly created women's services such as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.[8] Members of such

Britain, 1939–1945 (Oxford, 2003). More recently, Helen Jones has looked at the class-based responses of workers and the question of wartime productivity in light of air raids, in her *British Civilians in the Front Line: Air Raids, Productivity and Wartime Culture, 1939–45* (Manchester, 2006).

[7] That such arguments came into play despite Britain's lack of a conscript army in stark contrast to other European rivals is itself noteworthy.

[8] For a comprehensive study of this, see Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907–1948* (London, 2006).

organizations, as well as nurses serving in military hospitals and ambulance drivers near traditional battle zones, sometimes found themselves in harm's way, and some lost their lives to enemy attacks. The performance of such dangerous national service by women raised questions about the presumed linkage of war service and citizenship. In addition, ongoing efforts to identify and acknowledge the essential contributions of female war workers, particularly in the munitions industry, as a kind of military service prompted claims that such women deserved special recognition. After all, some of these women died in industrial accidents and a few were killed by aerial warfare. As the war progressed, it thus became increasingly difficult to consider either military service or the potential to die for the national cause as belonging exclusively to men.

The linkage of service to the military (or to the state's military ends) and citizenship figured prominently in legislative debates about enfranchising women that began midway through the war.[9] Wartime discussions of the franchise focused on the need to ensure that all men serving in the military could vote and on the possible disenfranchisement of conscientious objectors. Women inserted themselves into these debates.[10] The question of women's service to the nation played a key role in the parliamentary discussions of franchise reform in 1917 and 1918. As one member of Parliament put it, the vote should go to "women who have not only suffered and died for their country in many of the fields of war, but, let there be no mistake, without whose heroism, self-denial, skill and physical strength and endurance, this country would never have successfully faced the crisis."[11] Initially, however, the expansion of the franchise to women was linked to maternal service and sacrifice; the final legislation of 1918 gave the vote only to women over thirty, thus excluding the generation of young women that had literally worked for the war effort

[9] Nicoletta F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (New York, 2002).

[10] Material here and in the previous paragraphs is drawn from Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*; chs. 1, 5, and especially 6 for a general overview of debates over suffrage in Britain. For other accounts of debates over citizenship, particularly the franchise, during the First World War, in addition to Gullace, see Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), ch. 4; Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914–1959* (Houndsmills, 1992); Sandra Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900–1918* (Cambridge, 1986); Martin Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906–1918* (London, 1978). For prewar links between patriotism and women's service to the nation, see Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses, 1854–1914* (London: 1987), 287–288.

[11] *Parliamentary Debates* (*Commons*), 28 Mar. 1917, Vol. 92, cols. 517–518.

in munitions factories and elsewhere. British women would only receive the same voting rights as men a decade later.[12]

The arrival of aerial warfare further complicated such debates because the inclusion of the home in the battle zone gradually forced the state to consider what happened in the domestic sphere to be of central concern to a national war effort. The air raid came to be seen as producing a *new* kind of non-gender-specific civic virtue, the core in many ways of a transcendent wartime national civil identity. After the dust literally and figuratively settled on the First World War, participant states and their inhabitants had to come to terms with this particular aspect of its legacy. As recent studies of interwar Britain by Susan Kent and Richard Overy have asserted, the Great War bequeathed to its survivors a world of trauma and anxiety.[13] And clearly, we can find the influence of such moods on interwar culture and politics. Yet the argument that follows here offers a somewhat different exploration of the paradox of Britain between the wars by focusing on how the concrete experience of aerial warfare shaped interwar culture and politics, inspiring both its deepest anxieties and fears and its more idealistic impulses for remaking the world.

This book therefore seeks to enhance the understanding of both world wars as well as the period that separated them. It traces the effects of the air raid from its origins in the First World War, through the efforts both to prepare for and to prevent its usage in the interwar period, to its more widespread reappearance in World War II. The argument insists that ideas about gender were crucial to how this new type of war was imagined, experienced, remembered, and, crucially, anticipated. In particular, it analyzes how women and men alike attempted to determine what meanings could attach to a citizenry in which all people – regardless of gender, age, or class – could lay down their lives for their nation at war. It also emphasizes that the foundation of this transformation was an altered relationship between the state and the home. With the onset of air raids, the state could fulfill its commitment to protecting its citizens only if all of them – every man, woman, and child – engaged actively in the process. The state's ability, indeed its obligation, to intrude into the home in the name of national security was the air raid's primary consequence, and this became evident from the First World War onward.

[12] See Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, ch. 6, for elaboration.

[13] Susan Kingsley Kent, *Aftershocks: Politics and Trauma in Britain, 1918–1931* (Houndsmill, 2009); Richard Overy, *The Twilight Years: The Paradox of Britain Between the Wars* (New York, 2009).

NON-COMBATANTS, AERIAL ATTACKS, AND THE LAW OF WAR BEFORE 1914

With the arrival of the air raid, a state could guarantee the safety of no space and no one. Women and children – a category of people that had come by the nineteenth century to be one that warring societies were obligated to protect from the worst excesses of warfare – could come under direct fire even if they were far removed from the primary battle zone. At the outset of aerial warfare, propaganda highlighted the fact that those killed in air raids included civilians. Such attacks undermined the responsibility of the state, and especially the role of men as principal state actors, to protect women and children. For example, the destruction of private homes and of a school in London's East End during the daylight airplane raids of Baby Week 1917 contributed to feelings ranging from unease to panic to outraged indignation. Air raids also helped to inspire new political claims for and by women, including new demands on the state. Before examining further how changes in the technology of war altered the relationship between the state and the home, it is important to consider the origins of the militarization of domestic life in the decades before the war.

Historically nations have turned their male citizens – and their men alone – into warriors, and this, in turn, supported the association of military service with the rights and privileges of citizenship. Yet if we go back to one of the first great modern European calls to arms for all citizens, the *levée en masse* of 1793, we see truly an appeal to "tout Français" – all the French – not all "Frenchmen," as Carla Hesse has rightly insisted.[14] In this injunction, the state commanded some form of military service from all. However, the tasks associated with such service are divided along lines not only of gender but also of age – "young men" are to "go forth to battle" while "married men" are to "forge weapons and transport munitions." Meantime, women must supply them with "tents and clothing" while children "make bandages from old linen."[15] Thus did the revolutionary French state incorporate its entire population into that presumed masculine realm of warfare. The significance of this change was not lost on contemporaries. As Carl von Clausewitz observed in 1832,

[14] Carla Hesse, "Silences and the History of Representations of War: Comment on Peter Paret, 'Justifying the Obligation of Military Service,'" and Michael Howard, "World War One: The Crisis in European History," *Journal of Military History*, Special Issue 57 (1993), 143–144.

[15] All excerpts from the *levée en masse* as quoted in Hesse, "Silences," 143.

the Napoleonic wars had "shown what an enormous factor the heart and sentiments of a Nation may be in the product of its political and military strength."[16] Clausewitz was not merely talking about the need to sway hearts and minds in order to carry out war successfully; he was acknowledging the significance of a shift noted by the *levée en masse* – the state's ability to deploy a nation in its *totality* in the waging of modern war.

Great Britain did not immediately grasp the consequences of this development. Unlike most of its European counterparts, whose citizens had experienced the devastating effects of foreign invasion, it did not maintain a standing army. Perhaps to a greater extent than other nineteenth-century nations, Britain engaged in wars between 1815 and 1914 that did not drastically alter the lives of its non-combatant citizens, because they were set almost entirely either in the imperial theater or in distant European war zones such as the Crimea. To be sure, imperial wars encouraged the expansion of the economy and state in ways that touched the lives of perhaps the majority of Britons, but they were largely shielded from many of the immediate consequences of such warfare. The mainstream media paid little attention to the collateral damage inflicted on non-combatants until the South African or Boer War at the end of the century, but then their focus fell largely on the suffering of "white" colonial populations.[17]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, concerns about the potential consequences of warfare led the major European powers to adopt the Hague Conventions in the hope of establishing rules for war between major powers and protecting non-combatants.[18] The Conventions acknowledged the aggressive military role of the modern

[16] Carl von Clausewitz, "On the Character of Modern War," *On War* (1832, Rpt. and trans. Harmondsworth, 1982), 295. I am grateful to Joe Ward for this citation.

[17] See Laura E. Nym Mayhall, "The South African War and the Origins of Suffrage Militancy in Britain, 1899–1902," in *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation, and Race*, ed. Ian Christopher Fletcher, Laura E. Nym Mayhall, and Philippa Levine (London, 2000), 3–17; and Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge, 1999), for information on domestic campaigns over the British treatment of Boer civilians. For a compelling case study linking imperial warfare – in the German case – with the First World War, see Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY, 2005). For a brief narrative overview of nineteenth-century conflicts, see Lawrence James, *Warrior Race: A History of the British at War* (London, 2002), pt. 4.

[18] For a summation of the Hague Conventions and other aspects of international law on the eve of World War One, see Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War," *American Historical Review* 102:3 (1997), 714–747.

state (and perhaps of the brutal practices of imperial warfare that might have to be curtailed), recognized that this could foster future conflict between nations, and reflected the desire to discriminate between legitimate and illegitimate military tactics. Among other challenges, the Conventions had to grapple with probable as well as existing military techniques and weaponry. The potential of bombardment from the air as a new means of attacking civilians was discussed in terms of the rules of engagement set forth in the Convention of 1899, which prohibited "the throwing of projectiles from a balloon or an airplane on cities, villages, habitations or buildings that were not defended." Such "open" cities were to be protected from violence "even for the purposes of reprisal."[19]

Following upon the Russo-Japanese War and recurring tensions between the Great Powers over their imperial holdings, the Second Hague Convention of 1907 took place against a backdrop of heightened potential for international conflict. At the outset, the British were cautiously optimistic about the Convention's potential to curtail war. The *Times* celebrated "the remarkable spectacle of a gathering of very eminent representatives of all the sovereign States of Europe, Asia, and in the present instance, of South as well as North America … assembled not to discuss any acute question of international relations but to examine general principles and, if it may be, to decide upon regulations which may help to prevent international conflicts, and, in the event of their outbreak, to mitigate their ferocity."[20] As one of the opening speeches further asserted, international opinion could only favor decisions that reasoned that "[i]n order to ensure that wars shall be short and of rare occurrence … the nations engaged must be made to bear the whole burden thereof." At this time, "the whole civilized world" felt a "sentiment of international amenity" that fostered the idea of limiting war's effects and reducing the chance that a state might be thoroughly destroyed by modern warfare.[21]

Such hopes found expression in the petitions and proposals brought forward by peace societies and other extra-governmental organizations excluded from addressing the conference and partaking in its

[19] See Articles 62 and 63 of the Hague Conventions of 1899. It is worth noting that the declaration was binding for only five years in the case of war between signatory parties. For an overview of this and other laws concerning aerial warfare, see Tami Davis Biddle, "Air Power," in *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World*, ed. Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark R. Shulman (New Haven, CT, 1994). For a contemporary overview, see Harold Hazeltine, *The Law of the Air* (London, 1911).

[20] "Latest News: The Second Peace Conference," *Times* 15 June 1907.

[21] Speech of President Nelidoff, "The Hague Conference," *Times*, 17 June 1907.

discussions. A notable exception was made to such rules in order to permit delegates of the International Council of Women to offer their support for "universal peace and disarmament." The exception was justified both because this group represented "millions of women all over the world" and because "the Conference wished to reduce as much as possible the suffering which war entailed upon all, and especially upon women."[22] Nonetheless, discussions at the Convention focused very little direct attention on such issues, concerning themselves instead with such questions as whether obligatory arbitration could be used to settle disputes.[23]

In terms of the bombardment of civilians, the agreements approved at The Hague in October 1907 embodied only a few modest changes to the 1899 Convention.[24] For instance, the restriction on throwing objects from a balloon was maintained. However, modifications to Article 25 of the Land Warfare Convention stressed that attack "by whatever means, of towns, villages, dwellings or buildings which are undefended is prohibited."[25] Significantly, the Naval Convention of 1907 differed from its Land Warfare counterpart, and while it prohibited the bombing of "undefended ports, towns, villages, dwellings, or building" by naval forces, it permitted the naval bombardment of "military works, military or naval establishments, depots of arms or war materiel, workshops or plants which *could* be utilized for the needs of the hostile fleet or army, and the ships of war in the harbor."[26] In other words, one aspect of the agreement protected "undefended" locales, but another made anything that even potentially served a military purpose – anything that helped the army or navy – a legitimate target.

[22] Quoted in "The Peace Conference," *Times*, 19 June 1907. It is relevant to this discussion that Bertha von Suttner, author of the popular and widely translated novel, *Die Waffen Nieder* (1889), or *Lay Down Your Arms*, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905 for her work on disarmament. Part of the appeal of her fiction was her emphasis on the war-induced suffering of wives and mothers.

[23] See the press coverage summarizing the Second Hague Convention in *Times*, October 1907.

[24] "The Second Peace Conference: Its Results and Lessons," *Times*, 21 Oct. 1907.

[25] Amendment of Article 25, Hague Convention 1907, in "The Laws of War," at "The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/hague04, and in E. A. Whittuck, *International Documents: A Collection of International Conventions and Declarations of a Law-Making Kind* (London, 1909); see also Biddle, "Air Power," 142.

[26] "Article 1 and Article 2," "Bombardment by Naval Forces in Time of War (Hague IX), 18 October 1907, in "The Laws of War," at "The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/hague09, Whittuck, *International Documents*, and also quoted in Biddle, "Air Power," 143. Emphasis mine.