Introduction

When war broke out in August 1914, many German intellectuals and politicians anticipated positive effects on state and society, a regeneration of the nation. 'The Germany emerging from the war will be different from the one which went into it', the sociologist Georg Simmel stated a few months after the beginning of hostilities, assuming that the struggle would lead to 'a separation between what is still viable and procreative and what clings to the past and has no future: humans and institutions, ideologies and moral standards'.[1] Thomas Mann, widely renowned for his fine novels and stories, similarly spoke of a 'great, fundamentally decent, and in fact stirring people's war' and asked: 'This peaceful world which has now collapsed with staggering thunder – had we not all been tired of it? Had it not become rotten with all its comfort?'[2] Both authors belonged to a host of war-inspired enthusiasts who embraced the conflict as a purifying and integrating force bringing an end to the maladies of the period, to party strife and class struggle, to cultural decadence and materialism.[3] Like Kaiser Wilhelm II, they envisaged a civil truce and national solidarity as a consequence of the war: 'Now I know no parties or confessions; today we are all German brothers.'[4] In an early wartime

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[1] G. Simmel, 'Deutschlands innere Wandlung' (1914), in G. Simmel, *Der Krieg und die geistigen Entscheidungen. Reden und Aufsätze*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1917), pp. 7–29 (pp. 9, 18).

[2] T. Mann to H. Mann, 18 September 1914, in R. Winston and C. Winston (eds.), *Letters of Thomas Mann, 1889–1955* (Berkeley, CA, 1990), p. 67; T. Mann to S. Fischer, 22 August 1914, quoted in H. Helbling, 'Vorwort', in T. Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt/M., 2009), pp. 7–25 (p. 8).

[3] K. Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral. Die deutschen Hochschullehrer und die politischen Grundfragen des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Göttingen, 1969); K. Böhme (ed.), *Aufrufe und Reden deutscher Professoren im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 2014); W.J. Mommsen (ed.), *Kultur und Krieg. Die Rolle der Intellektuellen, Künstler und Schriftsteller im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1996); K. Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung. Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg. Ein Versuch* (Berlin, 2000); J. Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000); P. Hoeres, *Krieg der Philosophen. Die deutsche und britische Philosophie im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Paderborn, 2004).

[4] Speech of 1 August 1914, quoted from J.C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900–1941* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 1109. On this particular aspect of German war ideology and related demands for political reforms, see M. Llanque, *Demokratisches*

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essay, the philosopher Leopold Ziegler wrote that the Germans had
become 'one self-conscious collectivity and union of experience, in
which the individual only exists and is real insofar as he participates in
this awakening'. In his opinion, the Germans had found 'a new form of
life': 'We are no longer a crowded herd of servants, subdued and enslaved
for whatever purpose by the almightiness of gold; we are no artificial
association of separate creatures but one single and active human being
with millions of organs.'[5] Together with the outbursts of xenophobia
amongst broad sections of German popular opinion, increased anti-
Semitism, and the circulation of large-scale annexation and resettlement
plans, these and many similar examples have been read as evidence for the
radicalization of German national thought and practice after 1914. Peter
Fritzsche has pointed to another important aspect: 'Over the course of
four wartime winters, Germans would mobilize their energies, vitalize
public life, and rearrange their political conceptions around the nation
rather than the state or the monarchy. More than anything else in the
twentieth century, the First World War transformed German national-
ism by giving it an emotional depth and tying it to social reform and
political entitlement.'[6] The latter part of this statement is somewhat
debatable given the experiences of National Socialism, Holocaust, total
defeat, and the post-1945 division of the country, but it is true that the
First World War challenged substantially the social, economic, and poli-
tical status quo of the *Kaiserreich*. The emperor and his regime increas-
ingly lost authority and prestige to Paul von Hindenburg and Erich
Ludendorff, successful military leaders whose position and influence
were not based on constitutional rights but on popular support.[7] Widely
seen as selflessly representing the will and interests of the nation, the rise
of these charismatic figures reveals the extent to which 'the German
people' had become the source of political legitimacy. However, it is

Denken im Krieg. Die deutsche Debatte im Ersten Weltkrieg (Berlin, 2000); S. Bruendel,
*Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat? Die 'Ideen von 1914' und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im
Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 2003); W. Pyta and C. Kretschmann (eds.), *Burgfrieden und Union
Sacrée. Literarische Deutungen und politische Ordnungsvorstellungen in Deutschland und
Frankreich 1914–1933* (Munich, 2011). With a focus on the activities and debates at the
universities of Berlin, Gießen, and Strasbourg, see now T. Maurer, '. . . *und wir gehören
auch dazu'. Universität und 'Volksgemeinschaft' im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 2015).

[5] L. Ziegler, 'Der metaphysische Krieg' (1914), in L. Ziegler, *Der deutsche Mensch* (Berlin,
1915), pp. 9–19 (p. 13).

[6] P. Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, pb. ed. (Cambridge, MA, 1999), p. 28.

[7] See M. Kitchen, *The Silent Dictatorship: The Politics of the German High Command under
Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916–1918* (New York, 1976); R.B. Asprey, *The German High
Command at War: Hindenburg and Ludendorff and the First World War* (London, 1991);
W. Pyta, *Hindenburg. Herrschaft zwischen Hohenzollern und Hitler* (Munich, 2007);
A. v. d. Goltz, *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis* (Oxford, 2009);
M. Nebelin, *Ludendorff. Diktator im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 2010).

unclear whether the often passionate process of national introspection
and the notion of a more inclusive *Volksgemeinschaft* – which became soon
overshadowed by a polarized debate on war aims and political reforms –
also applied to the ethnic Germans living beyond the borders of the
nation-state, or whether it retained an exclusively domestic dimension.

For post-war commentators from the national right, the answer was
evident. In their view, the First World War had been 'the third and
greatest of all the German wars of unification'.[8] Max Hildebert Boehm,
for instance, an important *völkisch* representative of the Conservative
Revolution, claimed that 'the difference between ethnic Germandom
and Reich Germandom' had been overcome 'in the war community of
hardship'.[9] The right-wing historian Wilhelm Schüßler similarly held that
'the wartime experience had put an end to the narrow statist conception'
of the German nation: 'In reality, the World War was a German war. This
is how a *gesamtdeutsch* national consciousness came about.'[10] Such inter-
pretations were advanced with obvious political intent, not least to bolster
German revisionist claims in the interwar period, but the general argu-
ment has proved persistent. In his classic study of the *Mitteleuropa* idea,
Henry Cord Meyer pointed to the protracted experience of the 'economic
blockade and ideological isolation', the novel and exhilarating realization
of 'the vast military-geographic panorama opening to the East and South-
East', and 'the fact of discovering kinsmen in remote parts of the mid-
European area, personally experienced by at least a million men' to
explain the sense of togetherness between Weimar Germans and
Germandom abroad. In his opinion, these events had made 'a permanent
impression on the thinking and attitudes of Germans at a time of acutely
aggravated national sensitivity'.[11] Referring in particular to the popularity
of radical-nationalist dreams of conquest and imperial domination, sev-
eral historians have maintained that 'with the onset of war, Pan-
Germanism was transformed from the fervent creed of a small minority
to a widespread belief'.[12] More recently, Annemarie Sammartino has

[8] W. Grieshammer, 'Review of: Hans Erich Feine, Das Werden des Deutschen Staates seit
dem Ausgang des Heiligen Römischen Reiches 1800–1933. Eine verfassungsgeschichtliche
Darstellung (Stuttgart, 1936)', *HZ*, 160 (1939), 141–5 (p. 145).

[9] M.H. Boehm, *Grenzdeutsch – Großdeutsch* (Dresden, 1925), p. 1.

[10] W. Schüßler, 'Mitteleuropa als Schicksal und Wirklichkeit' (1937), in W. Schüßler,
Deutsche Einheit und gesamtdeutsche Geschichtsbetrachtung. Aufsätze und Reden (Stuttgart,
1937), pp. 149–89 (p. 151).

[11] H.C. Meyer, *Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action, 1815–1945* (The Hague, 1955),
p. 291.

[12] A.P. Thompson, *Left Liberals, the State, and Popular Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*
(Oxford, 2000), p. 374. With a similar tendency, see, for example, W.D. Smith,
The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism (Oxford, 1986); M. Peters, *Völkisches
Gedankengut und deutsche Kriegszieldiskussion während des Ersten Weltkrieges*

4   The First World War and German National Identity

demonstrated the wartime interest in the situation of the Baltic and Volga
Germans of tsarist Russia which 'encouraged fantasies of territorial
expansion' and challenged 'the imagined unity of nation, state, and
territory' in Germany.[13]

Focusing on the relationship between Imperial Germany and the
Habsburg Monarchy, this book explores such conceptions and investi-
gates how far German wartime nationalism really constituted a break with
pre-war statism and national thought. In the view of many contempor-
aries, the Dual Alliance between Berlin and Vienna was not
a conventional coalition. In most cases, states enter into such diplomatic
agreements on the basis of shared aims and interests regarding foreign
affairs and questions of national security. There can also be common
economic concerns and sometimes, too, certain values and ideologies
which underlie joint actions and strategies. All this holds true for the
partnership between the German Reich and Austria-Hungary, but, com-
pared to the Triple Entente, it stood out because of the historical and
ethno-cultural ties between both countries. Informed by recent theories
of nations and nationalism, this work studies the character and evolution
of this special relationship under the conditions of war and analyses the
impact of comradeship-in-arms on German national identity. It examines
the attitudes of senior decision-makers, politically active groups, and
intellectuals towards their 'fellow' Germans in the Habsburg Monarchy
to establish the essence and intensity of the spirit of solidarity between the
allied powers, often described in terms of *Nibelungentreue*, and asks to
what extent it led to a re-evaluation of the *kleindeutsch* paradigm and more
openness to different conceptions of the German nation. It is quite
remarkable that this subject matter has so far gone almost completely
unnoticed. To be sure, several authors have already dealt with the com-
plicated and often tense situation between the two allies during the war,
most notably Gary W. Shanafelt. However, like most works on the
Entente experience or the coalitions of the Second World War, these
accounts concentrate on alliance politics and diplomacy, on economic
issues or matters of military cooperation rather than patterns of percep-
tion and public debates. Exploring the various disagreements and con-
flicts about joint warfare and strategic planning, the occupation of Poland

(Nordhausen, 2007); V.G. Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East, 1800 to the Present*
(Oxford, 2009); S. Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from
Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge, 2011). With a focus on German anthropological science:
A.D. Evans, *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany*
(Chicago, IL, 2010).
[13] A.H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914–1922* (Ithaca, NY,
2010), pp. 11, 3.

and Romania, or the *Mitteleuropa* project, they show how the Dual Monarchy gradually fell into the position of a junior partner.[14] The centenary of the outbreak of the First World War has led to the publication of several new books on the Central Powers. The revised edition of Holger Herwig's classic volume provides an excellent political and military history of Germany and the Habsburg Monarchy during the war.[15] It is complemented by Alexander Watson's social history of the two belligerent countries, which offers a wealth of new information and fascinating insights.[16] In both cases, however, there is relatively little on the cultural history of the war. Apart from military and, to a lesser extent, diplomatic aspects, Imperial Germany and Austria-Hungary are discussed separately from each other; questions of national identity and the impact of the wartime experience on the relationship between Reich Germans and Austro-Germans are not considered. It is one of the aims of this study to fill this gap.

Reflecting the shift from a political and military to a social and cultural history of the First World War, several recent studies have examined German war nationalism.[17] But while enemy images, for example, have been well investigated, other important features of German war ideology, such as the renaissance of the Reich myth, have been overlooked.[18]

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[14] See the classic studies by G.E. Silberstein, *The Troubled Alliance: German-Austrian Relations 1914–1917* (Lexington, KY, 1970); I. Gonda, *Verfall der Kaiserreiche in Mitteleuropa. Der Zweibund in den letzten Kriegsjahren (1916–1918)*, trans. by P. and T. Alpári (Budapest, 1977); G.W. Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy: Austria-Hungary and the German Alliance, 1914–1918* (New York, 1985); W.J. Mommsen, 'Das Deutsche Reich und Österreich-Ungarn im Ersten Weltkrieg. Die Herabdrückung Österreich-Ungarns zum Vasallen der deutschen Politik', in H. Rumpler and J.P. Niederkorn (eds.), *Der 'Zweibund' 1879. Das deutsch-österreichisch-ungarische Bündnis und die europäische Diplomatie* (Vienna, 1996), pp. 383–407. Also see D. Stevenson, 'The Politics of the Two Alliances', in J. Winter et al. (eds.), *The Great War and the Twentieth Century: Reflections on World War I* (New Haven, CT, 2000), pp. 69–96. Lothar Höbelt's recent and perceptive study of Austria-Hungary at war refrains from depicting the Habsburg Monarchy as a mere vassal of the German Reich and does better justice to the complexity of the alliance relationship between Berlin and Vienna: L. Höbelt, '*Stehen oder Fallen?' Österreichische Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 2015).

[15] H.H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914–1918*, 2nd ed. (London, 2014).

[16] A. Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914–1918* (London, 2014).

[17] We are now witnessing a trend towards the global and transnational history of the war. For recent historiographical overviews, see J. Winter and A. Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2005); H. Jones, 'As the Centenary Approaches: The Regeneration of First World War Historiography', *HJ*, 56/3 (2013), 857–78; A. Kramer, 'Recent Historiography of the First World War', *JMEH*, 12/1–2 (2014), 5–27, 155–74.

[18] See, in addition to footnote 3, A. Reimann, *Der große Krieg der Sprachen. Untersuchungen zur historischen Semantik in Deutschland und England zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Essen, 2000); S.O. Müller, *Die Nation als Waffe und Vorstellung. Nationalismus in Deutschland und*

Scholars interested in Austro-Hungarian developments have, on the other hand, established the significance of the link with Imperial Germany for the debate on war aims and the reorganization of the multi-national empire. The alliance was highly popular with many Austro-Germans, who expected a strengthening of their domestic position from the association with the powerful German nation-state.[19] Certainly, one question that arises from these findings is whether the coalition played a similarly prominent role for Reich Germans.

More generally, it appears that German-Austrian relations after 1866–71, especially when it comes to questions of national identity and sociocultural interaction, have been rather neglected.[20] The few existing works concentrate primarily on diplomatic and economic affairs, focus largely on the Dual Monarchy, or disregard the period of the World War.[21] The only English-language monograph on the topic was published almost forty years ago by Peter J. Katzenstein, a political scientist.[22] Standard accounts of the history of German national identity, such as Stefan Berger's authoritative survey, usually ignore the Austrian

Großbritannien im Ersten Weltkrieg (Göttingen, 2002); U. Sieg, *Jüdische Intellektuelle im Ersten Weltkrieg. Kriegserfahrungen, weltanschauliche Debatten und kulturelle Neuentwürfe*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 2008); E. Piper, *Nacht über Europa. Kulturgeschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Berlin, 2013); S. Bruendel, *Zeitenwende 1914. Künstler, Dichter und Denker im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 2014).

[19] G. Ramhardter, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Patriotismus. Österreichische Historiker im Weltkrieg 1914–1918* (Munich, 1973); B. Morgenbrod, *Wiener Großbürgertum im Ersten Weltkrieg. Die Geschichte der 'Österreichischen Politischen Gesellschaft' 1916–1918* (Vienna, 1994); G. Streim, '"Wien und Berlin" in der Zeit der "Waffenbrüderschaft". Positionen der österreichischen Kriegspublizistik 1914–1918', in P. Sprengel and G. Streim, *Berliner und Wiener Moderne. Vermittlungen und Abgrenzungen in Literatur, Theater, Publizistik* (Vienna, 1998), pp. 244–97; P. Ehrenpreis, *Kriegs- und Friedensziele im Diskurs. Regierung und deutschsprachige Öffentlichkeit Österreich-Ungarns während des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Innsbruck, 2005).

[20] There is no space here to discuss the Erdmann controversy of the late 1980s. See, however, K.D. Erdmann, *Die Spur Österreichs in der deutschen Geschichte. Drei Staaten, zwei Nationen, ein Volk?* (Zürich, 1989), and G. Botz and G. Sprengnagel (eds.), *Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte. Verdrängte Vergangenheit, Österreich-Identität, Waldheim und die Historiker* (Frankfurt/M., 1994).

[21] R.A. Kann and F.E. Prinz (eds.), *Deutschland und Österreich. Ein bilaterales Geschichtsbuch* (Vienna, 1980); H. Lutz and H. Rumpler (eds.), *Österreich und die deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Probleme der politisch-staatlichen und soziokulturellen Differenzierung im deutschen Mitteleuropa* (Munich, 1982); M. Gehler et al. (eds.), *Ungleiche Partner? Österreich und Deutschland in ihrer gegenseitigen Wahrnehmung. Historische Analysen und Vergleiche aus dem 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1996); H. Leidinger et al., *Streitbare Brüder: Österreich – Deutschland. Kurze Geschichte einer schwierigen Nachbarschaft* (St. Pölten, 2010); U. Schlie, *Das Duell. Der Kampf zwischen Habsburg und Preußen um Deutschland* (Berlin, 2013).

[22] P.J. Katzenstein, *Disjoined Partners: Austria and Germany since 1815* (Berkeley, CA, 1976).

factor after the creation of the nation-state.[23] Of the many studies of
the extreme right in the *Kaiserreich*, only Michel Korinman's and
Peter Walkenhorst's analyses cover the issue to a greater extent,
particularly in connection with Pan-German *Mitteleuropa*
conceptions.[24] Interestingly, it has been primarily scholars of the
Habsburg Empire who have stressed the need to study 'the ongoing
and important interaction among German speakers in the various
states of Germany and those in the various provinces of
Cisleithanian Austria before 1918', to quote Nancy M. Wingfield.
Mark Cornwall has similarly insisted that it is 'rather difficult to
interpret many aspects of German history without reference to
a framework that was also Habsburg – whether the Holy Roman
Empire, the German Confederation or the economic and cultural
interactions of 1900 *fin de siècle*'.[25] However, while in the wake of
a 'polycentrist' and transnational turn in German historiography
there has been a veritable explosion of interest in regional and bor-
derland identities as well as in colonial imagination and practice, the
actual role of Austria in German national discourse after 1871 up to
1918 (and beyond) still very much remains a desideratum.[26]

[23] M. Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany, 1800–1945* (London, 1988); J. Breuilly
(ed.), *The State of Germany: The National Idea in the Making, Unmaking, and Remaking of
a Modern Nation-State* (London, 1992); O. Dann, *Nation und Nationalismus in
Deutschland, 1770–1990*, 3rd rev. and exp. ed. (Munich, 1996); H. James, *A German
Identity: 1770 to the Present Day*, 3rd pb. ed. (London, 2000); S. Berger, *Inventing the
Nation: Germany* (London, 2004); T. Rohkrämer, *A Single Communal Faith? The German
Right from Conservatism to National Socialism* (New York, 2007). For a recent overview,
see P.M. Judson, 'Nationalism in the Era of the Nation-State, 1870–1945', in H.W.
Smith (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford, 2011), pp.
499–526.
[24] M. Korinman, *Deutschland über alles. Le pangermanisme 1890–1945* (Paris, 1999), pp.
79–127; P. Walkenhorst, *Nation – Volk – Rasse. Radikaler Nationalismus im Deutschen
Kaiserreich 1890–1914* (Göttingen, 2007), pp. 203–26. On German right-wing politics
and radical nationalism, see, with further references, U. Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung
im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich. Sprache – Rasse – Religion* (Darmstadt, 2001);
L. McGowan, *The Radical Right in Germany, 1870 to the Present* (London, 2002);
C. Geulen, *Wahlverwandte. Rassendiskurs und Nationalismus im späten 19. Jahrhundert*
(Hamburg, 2004); J. Retallack, *The German Right, 1880–1920: Political Limits of the
Authoritarian Imagination* (Toronto, 2006). Stefan Breuer has published numerous
works on the topic, including *Die radikale Rechte in Deutschland 1871–1945. Eine politische
Ideengeschichte* (Stuttgart, 2010).
[25] Both Wingfield and Cornwall contributed to a recent debate on the state of Habsburg
history: R. Evans et al., 'Forum: Habsburg History', *GH*, 31/2 (2013), 225–38 (pp.
235–6). For a notable exception, see C.E. Murdock, *Changing Places: Society, Culture,
and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870–1946* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2010).
[26] For a recent plea for 'polycentrist' approaches to the study of German history, see H.G.
Penny, 'German Polycentrism and the Writing of History', *GH*, 30/2 (2012), 265–82.
For references to recent scholarship on regionalism and colonialism, see Chapter 1.

Against this background, this work not only presents the first attempt of an intellectual and cultural history of the Dual Alliance during the war (from the point of view of Imperial Germany), but it also raises fundamental questions about the German idea of the Habsburg Monarchy and investigates the pervasiveness of civic and ethnic notions of the German nation. The study demonstrates that the wartime solidarity between Berlin and Vienna created new conditions and enabled certain interest groups to present an alternative idea of the German nation. Catholic and South German publicists as well as some left-liberal advocates of a closer political and economic union between the Central Powers endeavoured to challenge the *kleindeutsch* paradigm and to bring the Greater German idea with its federalist connotations back to the fore. They were, however, not driven by ethno-national sentiments and distinguished themselves from most politicians and intellectuals with a liberal-nationalist or conservative leaning by greater sympathy for the demands of the non-German nationalities. To some extent, the discussion about Austria-Hungary thus mirrored the positions in the German debate on war aims and domestic reforms. Remarkably enough, *völkisch* attitudes played hardly any role in the glorification of the alliance and the discussion about the future relationship between both empires. During the war, the radical right advocated a state-centred rather than ethnic nationalism and ignored Austro-German aspirations whenever they clashed with the interests of the German Reich. The widespread notion of a breakthrough of *völkisch* thinking in wartime Germany has, at least as far as the German-Austrian relationship is concerned, to be corrected: not the war itself, but defeat was decisive for the shift towards the ethnic idea of the German nation.

Identity politics and mass mobilization: war and the nation

The essential role of armed conflicts for nation-building and state formation has repeatedly been studied, including civil wars, wars of national liberation, ethnic clashes, or the break-up of multinational empires as a result of military defeat. But the actual relationship between war and nation or nationalism has long been neglected. Modern war is often brought about by nationalist sentiment and generates, fosters, or radicalizes it at the same time. On closer inspection, however, a more complex picture emerges.

The nation, here deemed to be a modern concept that helps to explain and organize social reality by denoting a group of people as belonging together, is not a primordial entity which can be defined by certain

permanent qualities. Rather, it has to be understood as a socially con-
structed, 'imagined community' which gains authority because of
a shared belief in its real existence, the need for orientation in the modern
world, the search for a sense of belonging and security. National identity
is closely related to the political and social context; its situational and
inconsistent disposition allows new definitions and interpretations in the
competition for conceptual hegemony. By referring to the nation, various
groups attempt to legitimize their interests and enhance their position in
the struggle for authority and influence. However, it is only under parti-
cular circumstances that certain political and ideological agendas, visions,
and interpretations receive social recognition. Such moments, setting
new conditions for the redefinition of national identity, can be political
and social crises, revolutions, and, last but not least, wars.[27]

Since the late 18th century, many wars were no longer fought for the
benefit of dynastic interests but in the name of the nation.[28]
The implications were manifold. First, national wars drew on new
resources by involving whole societies or significant sections of it, thus
often transforming the abstract idea of the nation into a felt community of
solidarity. This sense of togetherness was fostered by several elements:
intensified social interaction, the experience of threat and insecurity, the
demonization of the enemy, and recurring 'moral' appeals to give up the
personal interest for the national weal. By providing future generations
with 'glorious' examples of common efforts and sufferings, of bravery and

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[27] E.J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983);
B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*,
rev. and ext. ed. (London, 1991). Recent overviews include A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and
Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London,
1998); H.-U. Wehler, *Nationalismus. Geschichte, Formen, Folgen* (Munich, 2001);
P. Spencer and H. Wollman, *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London, 2002);
P. Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (Harlow, 2005); R.-U. Kunze, *Nation
und Nationalismus* (Darmstadt, 2005); S. Weichlein, *Nationalbewegungen und
Nationalismus in Europa* (Darmstadt, 2006); H. Borggräfe and C. Jansen, *Nation –
Nationalität – Nationalismus* (Frankfurt/M., 2007); U. Özkırımlı, *Theories of
Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, 2010); J. Breuilly (ed.),
The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism (Oxford, 2013).

[28] See, with further references: H.-U. Wehler, 'Nationalstaat und Krieg', in W. Rösener
(ed.), *Staat und Krieg. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Moderne* (Göttingen, 2000), pp. 225–40;
J. Leonhard, 'Nation-States and Wars: European and Transatlantic Perspectives', in
T. Baycroft and M. Hewitson (eds.), *What Is a Nation? Europe 1789–1914* (Oxford,
2006), pp. 231–53; J. Leonhard, *Bellizismus und Nation. Kriegsdeutung und
Nationsbestimmung in Europa und den Vereinigten Staaten 1750–1914* (Munich, 2008);
D. Moran and A. Waldron (eds.), *The People in Arms: Military Myth and National
Mobilization since the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2003); J. Hutchinson, 'Warfare,
Remembrance and National Identity', in A.S. Leoussi and S. Grosby (eds.),
*Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of
Nations* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 42–52.

self-sacrifice, of legendary victories and desperate resistance – apparently
made for the sake of the nation – modern wars have generated myths,
shaped collective memory, and become an essential element of national
identity. In wartime, the nation appears as an important protagonist,
responsible for the war effort and constituting the supreme good to be
defended by all means. It is mainly by referring to the national community
that military events receive a higher meaning, that existing political,
social, and ideological divides are overcome, and that wartime burdens
appear justified.

In turn, however, such endeavours and sacrifices raise the issue of
legitimacy and participation. The appeal to collective solidarity and abso-
lute commitment can cause discord and destabilization. War not only
fosters communal spirit but also uncovers conflicts of interests. Behind
the rhetoric of unity and harmony, it offers the opportunity to renegotiate
the dominant idea of the nation and to enforce certain interests and
values. It is in this regard that war as a discursive act, as a moment of
intensified communication, and as a projection surface for competing
interpretations reflects issues of national identity. What is important
is that, in the struggle for ideological hegemony, the articulation of
national(ist) messages and standpoints is seldom based on pure inven-
tions but on latent attitudes and beliefs which are reformulated and
combined in a novel way. The concepts that come to the fore can draw
on former narratives and adapt them to the new situation. They can also
produce new interpretations, or – and this is what is of interest here –
vindicate suppressed or marginalized designs, such as the Greater
German idea that had come to seem insufficiently plausible and substan-
tial in the pre-war period to shape German identity and to play
a significant role in practical politics.[29]

Press, public opinion, and censorship in wartime Germany

In contrast to many other studies of German war ideology and national-
ism, which concentrate on certain prominent thinkers or specific party-
political camps, this book adopts a more comprehensive approach in

[29] For the wider context, see J. Leonhard, 'Vom Nationalkrieg zum Kriegsnationalismus –
Projektion und Grenze nationaler Integrationsvorstellungen in Deutschland,
Großbritannien und den Vereinigten Staaten im Ersten Weltkrieg', in J. Leonhard and
U. v. Hirschhausen (eds.), *Nationalismen in Europa. West- und Osteuropa im Vergleich*
(Göttingen, 2001), pp. 204–40, and S.O. Müller, 'Die umkämpfte Nation.
Legitimationsprobleme im kriegführenden Kaiserreich', in J. Echternkamp and S.O.
Müller (eds.), *Die Politik der Nation. Deutscher Nationalismus in Krieg und Krisen,
1760–1960* (Munich, 2002), pp. 149–71.