

Introduction to Volume II

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The editors of Volume II of *The Cambridge History of the Second World War* accept as a starting point Carl von Clausewitz's famous definition of war as a continuation of politics by violent means.¹ While the unbound savagery and destruction of the war may have appeared like violence for its own sake, the opposite was true. Why war came and expanded, the way the war was fought and its world-dividing consequences can only be understood if we accept that politics guided thought and action. It is sobering to reflect that across the globe so much inhumanity was done for human purposes.

What determined those purposes? In earlier periods, religious conflict, dynastic glory, state interests and imperial expansion defined the reasons for battle, but the twentieth century was distinctly the time of ideological war. Although the First World War began as a typical geopolitical struggle between the great powers of East Central Europe over the Balkans, its unforeseen duration, magnitude and intensity transformed international relations and domestic politics and blurred the distinction between them.² Industrial total war destroyed empires and sparked revolutions. War waged with increased implacability recast existing ideas of national political, economic and social order, which had shaped the identity of states before, but which now became central to the way in which political leaders and elites understood the world. Ideological affinity or antipathy became the way to identify friends and foes.³ Of the ideologies that configured the great conflicts of the twentieth century, from 1914 to the end of the Cold War in 1990,

- 1 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1976).
- 2 Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).
- 3 Mark L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

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conservatism, liberalism and socialism had roots in the nineteenth century, but fascism emerged from the political, social and cultural trauma of the First World War.⁴ Its rise would be an explosive ingredient in the making of the Second World War, and its legacy would pervade the Cold War. Not dissimilar would be the communist variant of socialism, which had been hardened by its birth in the First World War in 1917 and in its Russian continuation into the murderous civil war.

When we think of the two decades before the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, the word ideology prompts images of the vast industrial complexes of the Soviet Union's Five-Year Plans and massed marching ranks of Italian Fascist and German National Socialist paramilitaries. These regimes and Japan's ultra-nationalists sought to reshape their nations and remake the world according to expansionist visions of race and nation that included the destruction and subjugation of enemy states and peoples.⁵ Even if the policy elites of the aggressors could not agree on a single revisionist international order, nor thought it essential to do so, leaders in Tokyo, Rome and Berlin found common cause in their antagonism to liberalism, socialism and communism. The friend-foe orientation that ideology provides as a framework for understanding the world and for evaluating and changing it worked both ways. The liberal democracies, France, Britain and the United States, emerged from the First World War as the victors, but their wartime unity did not survive disputes over the terms of the peace settlement, including the purpose of the most iconic of all the liberal peace projects, the League of Nations. Yet, even in the crisis years of the 1930s, when quarrels over trade, finance and foreign policy divided them, political elites in France, Britain and the United States shared an interest in upholding the status quo against the threat of the revisionists, and a common identity defined around individual liberty, anti-collectivism and market economics. The response of the liberal democratic powers to the domestic political, diplomatic and strategic challenge of German and Italian fascism and Japanese imperialism was prefigured and complicated by an antipathy to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the consolidation of Stalin's dictatorship in the 1930s. After all, it was the Soviet Union in the early 1930s that led the international effort to isolate Berlin by forming the Popular Front of

4 Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Penguin Books, 2005); Alan Kramer, 'The First World War as Cultural Trauma', in Richard J. B. Bosworth (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 32–6.

5 Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton University Press, 2003).

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centre-left political parties across Europe, and by concluding security pacts with France and Czechoslovakia.

The Great Depression intensified the ideological conflict. The crisis of global capitalism undermined faith in parliaments, markets and international trade as the true path to modernity. Among the smaller states of Europe, for instance, the ambiguity of the relationship between liberalism and nationalism brought crisis upon crisis as the decade wore on. Outside that fringe of Europe that ran from France to Scandinavia, every continental state began to curb the freedoms of its peoples under some form of authoritarian governance. The justification was almost always 'ethnic'. Nation states, it was proclaimed, must not allow subject nationalities to flourish too mightily. In the late 1930s, the future, so it seemed, belonged to an emerging international order of dictatorships, corporatism, command economies and autarchic empires.

From 1936 onward, the spiralling arms race in Europe and Asia reinforced the growing sense of a world accelerating toward epoch-making change. According to the accepted military theory of the day, arming for total war required the mobilization of all national resources, state control of industry and regimented societies. Future war would thus be 'totalitarian war'. Anxious that building a war economy in peacetime would buy security at the price of liberty, the liberal powers resisted the totalizing trend by adopting deterrence strategies of limited armaments. With varying degrees of success, the 'totalitarian' states embraced all-out social and economic mobilization. The Soviet leadership saw the Great Depression, the rise of fascism in Europe and Asia, and the race to mobilize war economies as the 'crisis of capitalism' that Marxism-Leninism had foreseen and which would trigger the final showdown between capitalist imperialism and communism. Many liberal thinkers feared that if total war came, the whole world would quickly succumb to a totalitarian nightmare of permanent war and perpetual mobilization.⁶ When it did come, and then expanded and reached the culminating point of 1941, the Western Allies and the Soviet Union adjusted their ideological outlooks to the pragmatic politics of jointly vanquishing the forces of fascism. Once that objective was accomplished, the ideological conflict resumed, but this time between the United States and the Soviet Union as the rival centres of global power.

Considering the central role of ideology in the politics of the Second World War and the legacy of Cold War it bequeathed, this volume examines

⁶ Joseph A. Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: How the Arms Race Drove the World to War, 1931–1941* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

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the complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship between ideology and politics in the war's origins, dynamics and consequences. The twenty-four chapters, organized here into three parts, are written by leading historians who offer readers up-to-date and thought-provoking syntheses of the latest research. In Part I, the first three chapters examine the ideologies of the combatants: the Axis powers, the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. Wars are more than a mere contest between opposing armed forces and a test of national endurance; they are also a struggle of words, ideas and values. The editors have therefore included chapters on propaganda and censorship, the means through which the combatants expressed their rival claims to justice and controlled news from the front, to sustain morale and influence international opinion. All wars come to an end, and waging war purposefully entails the formulation of war aims and a programme for post-war order.⁷ Germany, Italy and Japan waged war with visions of conquest and revolution, but few fixed ideas about how to build a new international system, other than that it should be dominated by their empires.⁸ For the Nazi regime, as Chapter 7 shows, waging total war also meant the radicalization of their pre-war persecution of German Jews to the industrial and bureaucratic mass murder of all European Jewry, known as the 'Final Solution'. For Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, negotiating the post-war peace settlement was as vital to the making of the Grand Alliance as was strategic decision-making. Despite the perceived failure of the League of Nations and collective security, their negotiations included the resurrection of institutionalized international cooperation in the form of the United Nations Organization, which was intended by Roosevelt to have at its core the wartime allies as a global directorate. For the Western powers, one condition of post-war stabilization was the reconstruction of the world monetary system and the restoration of international trade. Building a stable post-war international system and capitalism's rebirth are explored in Part I, as well as the international effort to hold individuals to account for their wartime conduct by the prosecution of war crimes. Although historians now debate how important the revelations of Nazi crimes against civilians were to the codification of human rights in post-war international law, the coinage of the term 'genocide' by the Polish refugee jurist Raphael Lemkin, to define

7 Fred C. Ikle, *Every War Must End* (2nd edn, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

8 Richard J. B. Bosworth, 'Visionaries of Expansion', in Thomas W. Zeiler and Daniel M. DuBois (eds.), *A Companion to World War Two* (2 vols., Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), vol. 1, pp. 77–90.

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the systematic attempt by Hitler and his regime to exterminate Europe's Jews provided an important conceptual tool for understanding this distinctively twentieth-century form of state violence globally.⁹

Part II of this volume looks at politics from the perspective of pre-war and wartime diplomacy. The modern practice of diplomacy originated in the Renaissance, when the warring city states of Italy established embassies to monitor each other's courts and the resident ambassador emerged as a fixture in international relations.¹⁰ Many historians credit the long peace of the nineteenth century to the norm of great-power cooperation established through the diplomatic practices of the Concert of Europe. The erosion of those practices is also often cited by scholars as a contributing factor to the outbreak of war in 1914.¹¹ Could better diplomacy have halted the breakdown of the international system in the 1930s and prevented the slide into war in Europe and Asia-Pacific? Answering this question once again underscores the importance of ideology in understanding the conflicts of the interwar years. Diplomacy can serve as a useful tool for governments that seek to resolve their disputes peacefully. Yet the First World War not only discredited the 'old diplomacy' of military alliances and secret treaties rooted in imperialism and nationalism, it also produced the political challenges of Wilson's liberalism and Lenin's Communism, both of which posited the ideological uniformity of all states as the only way to universal peace.¹² The outcome of the 1914–18 war and the impact of the Great Depression also opened up the divide between those great powers that had a stake in the existing world order – Britain, France and the United States – and those which did not – Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia. This status quo versus revisionist strategic orientation corresponded with the ideological divide in world politics. The former powers had renounced war as a means of resolving international disputes, and the latter powers regarded war as the engine of internal and external revolutions. As Japan's war in China and the European crisis escalated, bridging these divides with diplomacy was

9 G. Daniel Cohen, 'The Holocaust and the "Human Rights Revolution": A Reassessment', in Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde and William I. Hitchcock (eds.), *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 53–71; Mark Mazower, 'Violence and the State in the Twentieth Century', *American Historical Review* 107:4 (2002), 1158–78.

10 M. S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450–1919* (London: Routledge, 1993).

11 Paul W. Schroeder, 'World War I as Galloping Gertie', *Journal of Modern History* 44:3 (1972), 319–45.

12 David C. Engerman, 'Ideology and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917–1962', in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1: *Origins* (3 vols., Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 20–43.

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impossible, because the great powers did not share a common interest in upholding the existing global order and could not possibly agree a common vision for building a new one.¹³

When cannons speak, diplomats do not remain silent. In wartime, the task of diplomacy is to build alliances and to influence neutral states. Alliance diplomacy was crucial to the outcome of the Second World War in Europe and Asia. As historians have long understood, Germany, Japan and Italy were economic featherweights compared to the industrial might and human resources of the British Empire, the Soviet Union, the United States and China.¹⁴ As Richard J. Overy has shown, so long as the Allies fought together, their victory was virtually certain. Despite decades of distrust between London, Washington and Moscow, the Grand Alliance pooled its resources and coordinated its strategies with success. By contrast, the Axis was not an alliance at all. The revisionist powers each fought their own regional wars against an overwhelming global coalition.¹⁵

Part II also examines the ideological paradoxes of diplomacy and strategy by examining the way in which neutrals were treated and behaved.¹⁶ For instance, although France and Britain went to war to defend the rights of small powers, their war plans included violating the neutrality of Scandinavian states to cut Sweden's iron ore trade with Germany. As it happened, the Germans beat them to it by invading Denmark and Norway in May 1940.¹⁷ The pretext for the Franco-British operation in Scandinavia was to help Finland fight Soviet aggression in the Winter War of 1939–40. In 1941, however, authoritarian Finland launched its own 'continuation war' alongside the Axis states against the Soviet Union. As noted earlier in the case of the Soviet Union, which signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany in August 1939 and later aligned itself with the capitalist powers in an anti-fascist coalition, ideological thinking does not preclude pragmatic calculation. The same practical means–ends calculations shaped Spanish policy during

13 Donald C. Watt, 'Diplomacy and Diplomats', in Robert Boyce and Joseph A. Maiolo (eds.), *The Origins of World War Two: The Debate Continues* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 331–41.

14 Mark Harrison (ed.), *The Economics of World War II: Six Great Powers in International Comparison* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

15 Richard J. Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).

16 Neville Wylie (ed.), *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

17 Joseph A. Maiolo, "'To Gamble All on a Single Throw': Neville Chamberlain and the Strategy of the Phoney War", in Christopher Baxter, Michael L. Dockrill and Keith Hamilton (eds.), *Britain in Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 220–41.

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the war. Despite an ideological affinity between General Franco's regime and the Axis powers and Vichy France, as well as a debt to Hitler and Mussolini for assistance in the civil war, Spain was not drawn into a European war fought for German purposes.

In Part III, the volume turns to the influence of states, politics and ideology on the fate of individuals as occupied and liberated peoples, collaborators and resisters, and as British and French colonial subjects. In the opening phase of the war, Axis victories in Europe and Asia, and the advance of the Red Army into Poland, the Baltic states and Karelia, brought tens of millions under the control of foreign armies. The unfolding of the harsh, punitive and genocidal occupations, especially in Eastern Europe, China and East Asia, offers an insight into what the future would have looked like had the Axis powers realized their visions of expansion. The occupation policies of the aggressors reflected their ideological objectives, and they also reflected a deeper century-long normative shift in world politics, from a focus on demarcating frontiers to managing populations. After the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the Vienna peace of 1815 supported dynastic rule over multi-ethnic, multi-confessional empires. After the Ottoman, Romanov and Habsburg Empires collapsed, the Paris Peace of 1919 endorsed national self-determination in Eastern Europe; and the peace treaty with Kemalist Turkey, the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, sanctioned the forced deportations of a million Christians from Anatolia to Greece and 350,000 Muslims from Greece to Turkey. By affirming the principle of national self-determination and the ideal of national, ethnic and racial homogeneity within a sovereign state, post-war international relations legitimized what Eric D. Weitz has called 'population politics'.¹⁸ In the making of the Paris Peace, the liberal variant of population politics expressed itself in the international protection of minority rights and the establishment of the League of Nations mandates to legitimize the acquisition by the victors of former Ottoman and German colonies. During the Second World War, for the aggressors, the politics of treating whole population groups, however defined, as assets to be expended or dangerous minorities requiring solutions found expression in the wartime practices of forced labour, what would later be called 'ethnic cleansing' and genocide.

Ideology also shaped the liberation-occupation policies of the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. For Stalin, the imposition by advancing armies of

¹⁸ Eric D. Weitz, 'From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions', *American Historical Review* 113:5 (2008), 1313–43.

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competing socio-economic systems on occupied territories made the Second World War distinct from earlier conflicts.¹⁹ The Kremlin's first wartime experiment in the Sovietization of occupied states occurred in 1940, when Moscow imposed communist regimes on the Baltic states under the terms of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939. British and American policy-makers framed the occupation of their Axis foes as one of liberating captive populations from the enslavement of dictatorial regimes to allow democratic politics and markets to flourish. Incompatible Western and Soviet policies clashed most tellingly in the post-war joint occupation of Germany, the breakdown of which was as much a cause as a consequence of the Cold War, but was also evident in the occupations of Italy and Japan and the partition of Korea.²⁰ As in international politics, Moscow, London and Washington made pragmatic choices to support irregulars fighting the Axis. In the Sino-Japanese War, Stalin sent aid to Mao Zedong's communist guerrillas and what he thought would be the more effective nationalist army of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Britain sent military aid and offered training to communist partisans in Yugoslavia, Greece and Malaya. The United States helped the communist-dominated Viet Minh to fight the Japanese. Of course, that did not mean that London and Washington wanted this military support to assist communists in power. In December 1944, for instance, British troops intervened in Greece to back the anti-communist government. In a similar fashion, the Red Army eagerly supported partisan formations behind German lines to pave the way for the advance to Berlin. However, Moscow did not offer support to the Polish Home Army, which was loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London, because it would resist the Soviet Union's post-war domination of Poland and the radical redrawing of its frontiers westward.²¹

For the Poles, the Red Army's liberation of 1944 was no less brutal than the Soviet occupation of 1939–40. The experiences of Axis occupation varied. In Eastern Europe, the Balkans, most of China and East Asia, the Axis occupiers responded to resistance with savage repression. Where the resistance formed irregular armies that inflicted losses on the occupiers and disrupted their communications, the violence meted out to civilians in reprisals was greatest. Ideology made a difference as well. In Poland and

19 Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (London: Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 90.

20 Hans-Peter Schwarz, 'The Division of Germany, 1945–49', in Leffler and Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1, pp. 133–53.

21 Evan Mawdsley, 'Anti-German Insurgency and Allied Grand Strategy', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31:5 (2008), 695–719.

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the Soviet Union, the German invaders arrived as a master race intent not only on ruthless economic exploitation, but also on mass murder and mass deportations to change the demographics of their eastern 'living space'. Planners cheerfully talked of the death of '30 million' people in the immediate term and implied more later. Everywhere the Axis found collaborators among local peoples to act as auxiliary police and even to fight as fraternal combatants in the Waffen-SS. The Croatian Ustaša acted as a ruthless Axis proxy in Yugoslavia. In France, the collaborationist Vichy government espoused authoritarian values and sought a place in the Nazi New Order. As occupiers, the Japanese likewise employed mass violence and terror to prevent unrest, and collaborationist regimes to control the Chinese and the other conquered peoples of East Asia. In exacting moral and material support from local populations and punishing collaborators, resistance groups could be as brutal as the occupiers in their use of terror and violence. Ideological disputes, local feuds and private vendettas often resulted in fighters from different national guerrilla organizations turning their guns on each other. In Greece, the conflict between nationalists and communists escalated into a very bloody civil war. On the scale of the small local wars of collaboration, resistance, repression, reprisal and retribution, which brings into sharp focus individuals as victims, perpetrators and witnesses, Clausewitz's definition of war as purposeful political violence loses much of its clarity.

In the final three chapters, Part III examines the French and British empires and surveys the varied experiences of Islamic peoples, most of whom were under European colonial rule at the start of the European war. One way to look at the British and French empires is in the same way that pre-war planners in the metropolises did, as sources of men and raw materials to feed the imperial war machines. In this respect, the British Empire was more beneficial to Britain's war than the French Empire was to France. After France's sudden defeat in May–June 1940, its empire splintered and became the arena for a civil war between Vichy and Free France. Another way to view the empires is from the perspective of imperial peoples, who suffered starvation, mass migration, economic exploitation and repressive violence and terror from colonial security forces. There was, of course, no singular experience of the war in the empires or reactions to British and French imperial rule, which could equally inspire loyalty, stir resistance and inflict great suffering. India, for example, fielded a huge volunteer army, witnessed violent and non-violent resistance to British rule, and lost millions to famine because of the colonial regime's extraction of resources and mismanagement. From a wider perspective, a crisis of

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legitimacy that predated the war, but which was exposed by it, was fundamental to the end of the British and French Empires. In 1919, the Paris Peace settlement affirmed the principle of ethnic self-determination, but the peacemakers did not apply it to their colonies. The League of Nations mandate system instead recast the expansion of British and French imperial rule as an international trusteeship to elevate backward colonial populations to modernity. The hollowness of this ‘civilizing mission’ provoked violent insurgency, repression and organized political opposition, from Africa to the Middle East and Asia. By the outbreak of the war in Europe, political unrest and economic deprivation had rendered large parts of the British and French Empires ungovernable. Wartime mobilization, imperial defeats and the Axis occupation of colonial territories fuelled the political crisis. In victory, London and Paris would fight to rebuild their empires against the opposition of nationalist movements, but a world war fought to liberate Europeans from fascist tyranny had underscored the illegitimacy of the prolongation of French and British colonial rule.²²

²² Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and their Roads from Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2014).