

Military history is no longer a subject solely dedicated to battles and warfare. The field has diversified to examine a myriad of ways that warfare and society have intertwined. The perspectives of women have been added to the field in an attempt to not only tell women's stories of combat, but as support personnel, victims, and peacemakers. How warfare impacts the environment and how the environment steers warfare is another subset worthy of research and examining new perspectives. And as these new topics regarding warfare are explored, they provide new perspectives of past conflicts like World War I. These new perspectives provide the motivation for authors to examine and publish new scholarship that spurs debate and retrospection.

### **Gender and War in Modern Europe**

Women have always been present in warfare. The crux of wartime historiography has traditionally centered around important men and the battles they wage for a myriad of reasons. However, the interaction of gender and warfare provides a rich and diverse field of study. The study of gender and warfare broadly covers the militarization of gender relations throughout history, the roles of men and women in combat as well as support, the cases of women who serve in combat both secretly and openly, and the future of gender and the military. The purpose of this historiography is to show that historically the roles have not been equal, share the experiences of all genders, and explore lessons that can be applied to modern times as equality becomes more important to attain. And eventually warfare cannot be discussed without concepts of peace and women's roles in that process.

The militarization of gender is a fascinating topic with a nearly limitless body of sources to research. Joshua Goldstein's *War and Gender* was a seminal introduction of the way that

society is engineered to provide male warriors and women worth fighting for. Goldstein wrote that war was a constant human experience and that gender roles permanently prepare society for that possibility of war.<sup>1</sup> Society rewards men for their aggressiveness and women for their propriety. Yet, Goldstein did not believe that men or women are biologically more aggressive than the other. He contended that neither men or women were predisposed for combat, but must be conditioned to kill.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, boys are raised to be strong and aggressive without emotion so they can detach themselves from the horrors of combat. Boys who show weakness are likened to women and shunned. War becomes a test of manhood. Goldstein contended that combat is the practical application of the manliness test where the victors assert their dominance over the effeminate enemy that is conquered. Goldstein's militized gender theories should bring immediate relevance to readers as they reflect on their own upbringing in a militarized culture. It should soon become apparent that these gender norms are easy to observe and they apply across the breadth of society.

Jean Elshtain's *Women and War* supported many of Goldstein's conclusions. Elshtain agreed with Goldstein that there is no evidence that men or women are predisposed to combat roles nor do either naturally desire to kill.<sup>3</sup> She believed that society had created the roles for women to be "beautiful souls" and men to be "just warriors", but they have no basis in fact. She contended that these tropes simply exist to justify war and that removing these predispositions would increase peace. Cynthia Enloe's *Maneuvers: the International Politics of Militarizing*

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War: With a New Epilogue* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995), 144.

*Women's Lives* also covered the role of women in supporting men in combat through their various roles as mothers, lovers, and the enemy. In earlier times women were camp followers that literally supported men in combat. As the militaries of the world have taken on that role, women have transitioned to being the patriotic letter writers that keep men morally grounded and motivated to fight to preserve their families at home.<sup>4</sup> All of these authors show that society has created gendered roles for promoting a masculine warrior culture that is contrasted and supported by a feminine dichotomy. Any reader's self reflection of their own upbringing and experiences should confirm the validity of these gender theories.

The historiography of gender and war will invariably move out of the theory stage and into the experiences of men and women in combat. A man's experience at war usually involves combat or combat support, but a woman's experience occurs across many different roles and duties. Women combatants are rarely witnessed in history, but there was a definite exception in the Soviet Union during World War II. Anna Krylova's *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* was written in 2014 and provides an analysis of the development of the Soviet use of women in World War II, their use in combat, and their experiences after the war. Unlike many female soldiers of the past, Soviet women did not enter combat masquerading as men, but as women utilizing their female talents.<sup>5</sup> Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930s was widely preaching the equality of the sexes so women participated in military drill, weapons training, and soldiering. Further coupled with the mechanization of World War II and a soldier

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<sup>4</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, *Maneuvers: the International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Univ. of California Press, 2000), 155.

<sup>5</sup> Anna Krylova, *Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 14.

shortage, many combat roles were opened to women.<sup>6</sup> Krylova does not go into great detail on the individual experiences of women in combat and spends a good deal of her book analyzing a few positive cases. She concludes that it only took a generation to change traditional gender roles by utilizing proper educational and institutional policies. Despite this shift towards inclusion of women in combat, the Soviet Union needed women at home in a domestic role to fight the Cold War and these women's experiences were largely suppressed and new policies precluded them participating during the Cold War.

These few works are only a small sampling of the works available in this historiography. Gender and warfare is a growing field that has significant relevance to modern society as gender roles shift and develop today. Warfare will continue throughout time and all human beings will participate no matter what their gender is. How gender develops warfare, is applied during warfare, and gender's impact on the peace process will continue to be an important and relevant field of study for years to come.

### **Environment & Warfare in the 20th Century**

The environment and warfare have always been studied together. On a very simple level, the impacts of weather and terrain on decisive battles are required knowledge for war application and understanding history. However, new studies about how the environment impacts warfare and how warfare impacts the environment have created new historical perspectives in a developing historiography. Readers might conclude that the environment is always negatively impacted by warfare, but these studies often prove otherwise. Although warfare can be destructive to the local environment, it is often the desire to continue wartime production and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 30.

profits into peacetime and economic development that is the most harmful long term.

Additionally the desire for security zones often provide natural refuges devoid of this permanent development.

A reoccurring theme in this field of study is the development and impact of chemical use for warfare. Chemical use varies greatly and does not simply cover the use of chemical weapons, but also chemicals used to eradicate pests and diseases. Richard Tucker and Edmund Russell's *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally* is a collection of articles and essays that explore war as a "major distinctive force in environmental change, as well as the environment as a force in shaping warfare."<sup>7</sup> Warfare's impact on the environment has progressed as warfare has grown in its size and scope. Industrialized warfare now has the potential to have a global impact on the environmental world. Russell outlines these impacts in his article "'Speaking of Annihilation': Mobilizing for War Against Human and Insect Enemies, 1914-1915" where he addresses the desire to control disease carrying pests. Although he addressed the expected relationship between trying to kill malaria through the harmful use of DDT, his more interesting point was how the war on insects was used as propaganda against enemy populations. The enemy was also viewed as a pest for extermination and the psychological transition made killing and bombing entire populations similar to pest eradication.<sup>8</sup> Russell's earlier work *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring* also covered the connections between the wartime chemical industry and their desire to continue profits during peacetime. The "war on pests" was brought to the consumer market so the wartime stockpiles

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Tucker & Edmund Russell, *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of Warfare*. (Oregon State Univ. Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 165.

could be sold and manufacturing profits would continue.<sup>9</sup>

Another important theme in the field is how warfare is not as destructive to the environment as development and how warfare can be beneficial for preservation. David Biggs' "Managing a Rebel Landscape: Conservation, Pioneers, and the Revolutionary Past in the U Minh Forest, Vietnam" explores how the locals saw the U Minh Forest as a "wasteland" full of mosquitos and disease that needed development to become productive and useful.<sup>10</sup> The efforts to destroy this habitat were thwarted by the Communist rebels who wanted to keep the U Minh wild as a refuge against attack. In turn the United States Army sought to defoliate and destroy the U Minh. Once the war was over, it was not the defoliation that would be the greatest threat to the forest, but an influx of refugees and land development. Lisa Brady's "Life in the DMZ: Turning a Diplomatic Failure into an Environmental Success" investigates the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. Although the DMZ was viewed as a diplomatic failure, it was an environmental success.<sup>11</sup> After the ravages of war, the DMZ was effectively turned into a nature preserve and the local environment flourished again. Brady was concerned that as the two Koreas improve their relations, the pressure to develop the DMZ to show international cooperation will directly threaten these important environmental preserves.

## World War I

World War I is an excellent example that history is far from settled and that continuing

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<sup>9</sup> Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to "Silent Spring"* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), 64.

<sup>10</sup> David Biggs, "Managing a Rebel Landscape: Conservation, Pioneers, and the Revolutionary Past in the U Minh Forest, Vietnam." *Environmental History* 10, no. 3 (07, 2005), 460.

<sup>11</sup> Lisa M. Brady, "Life in the DMZ: Turning a Diplomatic Failure into an Environmental Success." *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 4 (09 2008), 585.

scholarship reshapes the way history is viewed. World War I has been concluded for over a century now, yet the causes, course, and aftermath of the war is still open for interpretation and debate. The most prominent topic written about World War I revolves around the start of the war and assessing blame. Numerous authors have a variety of claims of who is primarily to blame and their motivations. The degree of culpability has been debated since the outbreak of the war and continues to shift from author to author to this day.

Joachim Remak ultimately assigned the blame to Austria in his book *The Origins of World War I, 1871-1914*. He believed that Austria's ultimatum was designed to be rejected and that they actively sought a war with Serbia.<sup>12</sup> He believed that despite Serbia's role in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Russia's imperialist ambitions, Germany's blank check for Austria-Hungary, and Britain's inability to control Russia, it was still Austria that was chiefly to blame. Even then Remak does not believe any of the responsible nations actively sought a global conflict, but that "such things happen."<sup>13</sup> Paul Schroeder responded to Remak with his article "World War I as a Galloping Gertie: a Reply to Joachim Remak". He was critical of Britain's role in failing to support Austria-Hungary and cleaving them to Germany.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately he agrees with Remak that Austria-Hungary shares most of the blame though there was no single cause of the war.

Franz Fischer had proposed a theory in the 1960s that German imperial ambitions were the sole cause of the start of the war. Mark Hewitson criticized Fischer in *Germany and the*

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<sup>12</sup> Joachim Remak, *The Origins of World War I, 1871-1914* (Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001), 133.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>14</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, "World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak" *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 3 (09 1972), 337

*Causes of the First World War* that there was no alliance of industrialists and financiers that drove Germany to war, but this group would find the war and its instability disruptive to good business.<sup>15</sup> However, Hewitson does believe that the German population saw an inevitable war on the horizon and that their military might led Germany to believe they could win a war against any of their rivals. This led Germany towards a foreign policy centered around brinkmanship and eventually led Germany down the path towards war. For this reason Hewitson assigns the blame to Germany for deciding to mobilize against Russia before the Russians had finally decided to mobilize their own forces. Sean McMeekin's *July 1914: Countdown to War* rehashes many of the previous authors points with a more nuanced view of blame based on omissions and commissions.<sup>16</sup> McMeekin painted a complex situation where the various European nations involved made decisions, errors, and blunders that ultimately led to the start of World War I. Unlike Fischer or Hewitson he did not believe Germany wanted war, but were dragged into it "kicking and screaming as the Austrian noose snapped shut around their necks."<sup>17</sup>

Although this is but a small sample of the historiography of World War I, examining authors and their claims of who was to blame for The Great War provides a microcosm of the overall historiography of the subject. Authors continue to debate those causes to this day. Nothing in history has changed, but the available evidence and varying perspectives have. As authors participate in this debate, they give each other new material to cover and publish. This self-generating process of scholarship will continue to provide more years of study into World War I. When studying through the filter of gender and war and the environment, World War I

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Hewitson, *Germany and the Causes of the First World War* (Berg, 2004), 35.

<sup>16</sup> Sean McMeekin, *July 1914: Countdown to War* (Basic Books, 2014), 390.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 405.



scholarship will continue to develop and provide material for future historians.

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